Thesis for Doctor of Philosophy in Asian & Middle Eastern Studies

Men and Masculinities
in the Changing Japanese Family

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Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit of the relevant Degree Committee.
Acknowledgments

Without her ever knowing, my grandmother provided the initial inspiration for my research: this thesis is dedicated to her. Little did I appreciate at the time where this line of enquiry would lead me, and I would not have stayed on this path were it not for my family, my husband, children, parents and extended family: thank you.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

‘It is best to live close to wives’ parents. Everyday life will settle harmoniously.’
(by one of my male informants, aged in his late thirties)

Reflecting on our discussion on family relationships during our interview Taku, one of my informants aged 37, a father of three young children, explained that living close to his wife’s parents leads to a comfortable, settled family life. He explains that his parents-in-law are intertwined in the daily life of his immediate family, leading to close relations across the three generations. While this may be seen clearly to point to the importance of family relations beyond his wife and children, to include parts of his extended family, his parents-in-law, this raises the issue of what the everyday practices underpinning his family relations are, and how this leads him to feel content about himself in the family.

Yet this story unfolds against a backdrop of significant social changes in Japan affecting families and men in the family. Broad changes such as parent-child relationships, demography, marriage, ageing, child-care, residential patterns, and gender roles, as well as the decline of Confucian worldviews have affected family relations. This makes it important to understand the implications for men and their sense of masculinity in the family. In this dissertation, therefore, I explore how men negotiate their family relations. I focus not only on men’s relations within the nuclear family, as husbands and fathers, but also across the extended family, as brothers, sons, and sons-in-law and as grandfathers. I address how men situate themselves in the wider family relationships. I pay particular attention to everyday practices associated with childrearing and elderly care, as well as household tasks and their link to men’s sense of masculinity. I aim to understand men’s everyday practices and how these are affected by and in turn shape their family relations. This is important and timely because the broader social changes underway while in some ways potentially challenging men may also provide them the opportunity to construct their desired family relations.

Indeed, relations across the extended family are changing, as are family residential patterns. In an ethnographic survey of residential aspirations among retirees and those approaching retirement, Anemone Platz (2011) reports that the proportion of retirees wishing to live with their younger generation has declined sharply in recent decades, from 69 percent in 1980 to 45 percent in 2005 (MHLW 2006). Moreover, Platz discusses that while most grandparents wish to maintain their own separate lifestyles and would not want to live together in the same household with their adult children, the older generation still hopes to maintain relations of ‘familial support (kazoku to no sasaeai)’ with their extended family through
strategies of ‘living apart together’ (Platz 2011:262–268). Thus, changes in living arrangements reflect changes in desired lifestyle as well as family relations.

Further, anthropologists Lynne Nakano and Wagatsuma Moeko (2004) argue that the basis of family relations, particularly those between parents and adult daughters, is shifting away from duty and filial piety towards intimacy, love and affection. Further, intimate mother-daughter relations that persist after daughters’ marriage increasingly affect residential choices as well as patterns of childcare and elderly care provision (Long et al. 2009). Relatedly, recent ethnographic evidence demonstrates that parents living with daughters provide essential support to daughters’ work-family balance and subjective well-being, especially by contributing to childcare (Roberts 2011). Indeed, anthropologist Naomi Brown (2003) documents a gradual but steady increase in the proportion of elderly couples living with their daughters. This increase is in marked contrast to what might be expected from traditional notions of elder care, in which the care of parents fell to the eldest son and his wife.

While these discussions emphasise changes in family relations in so far as they affect women in extended families, it also bears asking how men’s family relations are changing. The evolution of men’s position in the family is reflected in the changing neologisms that describe family status and family relationships. For instance, examples of terms used for parents include kaminari oyaji (‘thundering father’), ganko oyaji (‘obstinate father’), mai hōmu papa (‘my home papa’), shūmatsu dadī (‘weekend daddy’), monsutā pearentsu (‘monster parents’), kajimen (‘men doing house chores’), ikumen (‘nurturing men’), while husbands have been disparagingly characterised as ugoku ATM (mobile cash machines). The emergence of such terms suggests a degree of mutability in men’s family relations. Further, the popular usage of these terms suggests some degree of break with the past. The relational aspect of these terms, however, is generally a descriptive label rather than a subjective identity; that is, they are indicative of how men in the family are referred to, in particular, and not necessarily of how men view their family relations themselves.

These recent terms describing men in the family and the anthropological evidence on familyhood invite taking a historical perspective on the evolution of manhood in the family. Further, notions and legal institutions of family have been transformed over time, thus I ask how ‘family’ has changed since the institutionalisation of the ie family system in the Meiji period to the present day.

1.1. Historical Transitions in the Family in Japan

The Japanese stem-family system referred to as the ie has historically been a fundamental aspect of Japanese society. The Meiji period (1868–1925) that followed the close of Japan’s feudal
Edo period (1603–1868) represents an important moment in shaping families in terms of various legal reforms carried out with the express purpose of modernising Japanese family relations, including residential, work, marriage, and birth patterns as well as the effects of Confucian beliefs. The historical development of the *ie* family system is important given the influence of the *ie* system on attitudes and behaviours in the contemporary family.

The work of historical demographers has done much to reveal historical trends in family, marriage, residence patterns, and household registrations in premodern Japan (e.g. Hayami 2009; Kurosu et al. 2012; Ochiai 2015). Moreover, such studies have in recent years also exposed the regional diversity that existed across the Japanese archipelago prior to the Meiji period – a diversity which to some degree persists in contemporary Japan (Kumagai 2008), but not for household registration which was standardised in the Meiji period. Nevertheless, by the Meiji period there had also been considerable convergence towards the stem family pattern that was legally institutionalised in the Meiji Civil Code. Since the modern pattern of the stem family is what most of my informants would consider to be the ‘traditional Japanese family,’ in this section my discussion prioritises the most prevalent and universal aspects of the modern *ie* system, leaving aside the question of regional variation.

Japan’s Civil Code (1889) abolished the formal class system that had prevailed during the Edo period, establishing the modern family system in its place. During the Edo period, the family system, like society itself, had been feudal in nature – hierarchically structured with reference to priority of gender, age and birth. It was a patriarchal stem family system grounded in Confucian doctrines (Tokuhiro 2010). However, whereas the institutional *ie* during the Edo period had been characteristic of samurai and noble families, during the Meiji period the *ie* system became universal. The new system placed the emperor at the top of the *ie* family system with all other *ie* families, including those who had been commoners, considered as the Emperor’s subordinates under familistic nationalism. This signified a transition of political power to the Emperor from the feudal rulers, the shogun and daimyos, who held authority during the Edo period (Koyama 1962; Ōhashi and Matsuda 1968; Maykovich 1978). This has led some to argue that rather than heralding egalitarian modernisation, the Meiji Restoration in fact resulted in the reinforcement of the hierarchical aspects of the *ie* family system (Iwakami 2007:71; Kumagai 2008:10).

The Meiji period also saw moral standardisation of Confucian doctrines, previously pervasive only amongst the samurai warrior class during the Edo period. Codes of conduct, inspired by and attributed to samurai, were developed and promoted as masculine ideals for men, not just for an elite but for all men (Mason 2011). Such notions took precedence over religious belief and were integrated into the educational system. Confucian teachings such as
loyalty (chū) towards the emperor and state, filial piety (kō), faith in family and friendship, and respect for seniority came to be highly regarded. In particular, an important part of filial piety (oya-kōkō) was children’s obedience to their parents and for daughters-in-law to obey their parents-in-law (Sussman et al. 1980). The emphasis placed on obedience as a moral virtue foregrounded the parental contribution of bearing and raising children and of permitting marriage as debts of obligation to be repaid by children (Izuhara 2000:19–20). These teachings reconstructed human relationships vertically, and placed Confucian doctrines at the centre of the ie system (Morishima 1988; Kumagai 2008:10).

The legal status of the ie family system under the new Civil Code, which recognised the authority of the male head of household over other family members, served as an institutional base for patriarchy, subordinating the status of female family members (Iwakami 2007:71; Tokuhiro 2010:17). A clear and rigid status stratification was established based on gender and generational age (Goode 1963). Within family relationships, members with lower status were obligated to obey members with higher social status. This obligation was part of a complementary relationship in which the latter were enjoined with a duty to protect the former – family relationships were thus effectively hierarchical chains of patronage and obedience. This ideological basis was preserved in the modern ie system.

The inheritance system and the authority conferred on the head of the household provided the fundamental basis by which the ie system was sustained (Iwakami 2007:70). The Meiji Civil Code thus reinforced the hierarchical aspect of the ie system through an inheritance law by which all property rights were inherited by a single household member. In most cases, eldest sons succeeded to the headship of the household, inheriting the family estate, including the family name, assets, social status, and occupation (Goode 1963; Fukutake 1981:34; Izuhara 2000:21). If there were no suitable male heir, the family may have adopted a son (muko-yōshi) who would often have married a daughter (Yanagida and Terry 1957; Sugimoto 2014). Succession rules thus maintained the structure of family authority symbolically and literally. For instance, a principal responsibility of the head of the household was to administer family graves and Buddhist altars in the household to perpetuate the worship of ancestors of the lineage (Yanagida and Terry 1957). In general, it was expected that the head of the household and his wife would live with their eldest son, his wife and their children, as well as any unmarried (or in some cases divorced and widowed) adult children (Izuhara 2000:21). Once a new head of household took over, which was often at the 60th birthday of the prior one, there was a clear transfer of authority, also represented by the new head and his wife taking the corresponding seats at the family hearth. Thereafter, the elderly parents could expect to live with or near to
their families as pensioners. Thus, it was heads of household who were the prominent men, whereas their father, though an elder, ceded authority (Yanagida and Terry 1957).

The term *kazoku* (family) was first coined during the Meiji period (Iwakami 2007:70). In Japan’s Civil Code, ‘family’ referred to the group consisting of the head of the household (*koshu*), his spouse, and any relatives who belonged to the *ie* (Morioka 1993:82). The greatest change experienced by the former commoner classes was the disappearance of what had previously been relatively egalitarian family relationships. During the Edo period, commoners had not participated in the *ie* system; the basis of family continuity was not lineage but economic activity. Commoner family relationships extended to include tenants and servants. Moreover, succession to the headship was not necessarily to the eldest son but also to the most talented man, including adopted sons. Succession patterns also varied by type of economic activity – whereas some merchant families often established branch families (*bunke*) that were considered distinct from main families (*honke*), many farming families chose not to fission upon succession of the headship, as other family members were considered precious labour resources, gender and age notwithstanding (Kumagai 2008:9). However, under the *ie* system in the Meiji period, the head of household, was formally also above other sons, who might stay within the *ie* or establish a branch, though in practice the extent of authority over branches varied (Yanagida and Terry 1957).

For women, the *ie* system led to a very clear demarcation between a woman’s natal household and that of her husband. In the *kanji* writing system, the character used for *yome* (bride) is a composite of radicals signifying ‘woman’ and ‘*ie*’ (house), signalling that a *yome* is a woman for the *ie* family, whereas the character for *shūtome* (the wife of the head of household, mother-in-law to the bride) is a composite of radicals signifying ‘woman’ and ‘old.’ Thus, hierarchical family relations of the feudal period extended into the Meiji period within kinship terminology as well. Moreover, the young bride was considered in relation not only to her husband but also to his entire household, with the wife of the head of household enjoying superior status relative to her younger counterpart, whom she would introduce to the *ie* customs (Yanagida and Terry 1957; Vogel 1963; Lebra 1984). Because daughters generally married out of the household, they were considered to be only ‘temporary’ members of the household, and as a result were not accorded the same status as sons (Koyano 1996).

Marriage was undertaken with the goals and necessity of the *ie* family as a main reference. During the Meiji period, nuptial practices that had once been the exclusive preserve of the samurai class and rich merchants became common across all social classes (Kumagai 2008:8; Maykovich 1978; Tokuhiro 2010). For these upper classes, the *ie* system had dominated family life, taking precedence over the wishes and desires of individuals with regard to selecting or
divorcing their spouses (Nakane 1974; Maykovich 1978). As in the Edo period, the ie system prioritised the corporate continuity of the household. Thus, the fundamental criteria for prospective husbands were wealth, social status, occupation, and income; whereas for prospective wives, health, appearance and social status were priorities (Hareven 1982). Parents played a central role in mate selection (Kumagai 2008), with women, in particular, expected to defer absolutely to the head of the household as to their marriage trajectory. A young bride’s value was judged on her ability to bear a male heir, and she was compelled moreover to adjust to the family customs of her husband’s ie. A marriage was considered to be fully consummated only with the birth of a male child as successor. The primary roles of men and women in the context of a marriage were thus father and mother rather than husband and wife (Blood 1967:82).

Marriage was an institution in which people were expected to perform a family role and fulfil their family responsibility (Goode 1963). In particular, brides generally received affection and social acceptance only after bearing children (Blood 1967; Sechiyama 1996). Young brides unable to bear children or incompatible with their husband’s family were often forced to divorce and return to their natal household. Marriage tended to occur at a relatively early age: For example, the average age at first marriage in 1882 was 22 for men and 19 for women. Even so, the unmarried rate was very high despite the priority given to marriage under the ie system: 38.5 percent of men in their 30s and 21.5 percent in their 40s, and 24.3 percent of women in their 30s and 21.4 percent in their 40s remained unmarried (Prime Minister’s Office 1886).

A significant turning point in the family system came with Japan’s defeat in the Second World War. Under the New Civil Code enacted in 1947, the statutory ie system was abolished, with Article 24 of the law expressing individual dignity and gender equality in marriage. The institutional definition of ‘family’ thus shifted towards a nuclear unit consisting of a husband, a wife and their children. By the time they marry, adult children become independent of their parents’ household. The basis of family thus has become the spousal relationship rather than the patriarchal lineage of ie family system. The new notion of family enshrined in the 1947 Civil Code has been recognised as a key aspect of the post-war modernisation of the Japanese family. In practice, however, equality and independence have not entirely supplanted the former hierarchical aspects of the ie family system, either in the family or in society at large (Izuhara 2000:24).

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1 The text of code is: ‘Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes, and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis. With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes’ (The Civil Code 1947, Article 24).
More broadly, the sweeping legal reforms introduced with the new Civil Code also ushered in a significant shift in the statutory treatment of inheritance (Izuhara 2000), with the spouse of the deceased and any child(ren) now being allowed to inherit (Articles 887 through 900 of the Civil Code). Under the Civil Code, a spouse is entitled to receive half of the estate, with the remaining half to be divided equally among the surviving children, except in certain special cases. Thus, inheritance is distributed across the surviving nuclear family rather than concentrated in the possession of the inheritor of the ie.

These legal reforms nullified the collective responsibility of the ie household to maintain property by managing marriages, leaving the question as one of individual inclination. Nonetheless, ‘matchmaking’ marriages remained mainstream well into the late 1960s (Wagatsuma and De Vos 1984; Tokuhiro 2010). Marriage practices took time to align with the intent of the law. Additionally, this shift in the way that marriage partners were selected was accompanied by an evolution of family relationships within the nuclear family.

Indeed, sociologist Ochiai Emiko (1994) proposes a ‘post-war family system’ characterised by the increased prevalence of women as housewives, the standardisation of the birth rate, which she refers to as ‘reproductive egalitarianism’ (saiseisan byōdō shugi), and the fact that nuclearization was compatible with the successor’s family living with his parents, as in the ie family system. Ochiai also points out that while the relative proportion of three-generation households declined, the absolute number of such households remained fairly constant.

Amongst nuclear families, Japan’s industrialisation resulted in the standardisation across society of a gendered division of labour wherein men tended to work outside the home while women were occupied with the domestic concerns of housework and child-raising. Masako Ishii-Kuntz and Nerida Jarkey (2002) highlight the constructed role of sengyō shufu (full-time or ‘professional’ housewife) as a key aspect of the modernisation of Japanese society, arguing that this gender role has enjoyed the encouragement of the Japanese government since the Meiji period. Modernisation has resulted in the gradual separation of productive from reproductive labour, with a corresponding increase in the respective specialisation of gender roles. Further,

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2 Compared to the pre-war period, when some women bore many children but others not at all, the post-war period saw a shift towards women having an equal chance to bear children. Ochiai argues that the emergence of a ‘low birth rate’ for individual women coincided with a shift towards more women having two children. Ochiai eschews the term ‘low birth rate’ in this context, preferring to term this the ‘two-child revolution’ (Ochiai 1994:33–55).

3 The increase in nuclear families for the most part reflects an increase in the number of siblings (i.e. family size) for the birth years 1925–1950, most of whom went on to establish nuclear families of their own, while one sibling, usually the eldest son, and his family continued to live in the house(hold) of his parents. Since the mid-1970s there has been a continued decline in the proportion of three-generation households, from 16.9 percent in 1975 to 6.6 percent in 2013. Remarkably, however, the proportion of nuclear families has barely changed, rising only slightly from 58.7 percent in 1975 to 60.1 percent in 2013, whereas it is the proportion of solitary (single person) households that has increased most significantly (IPSS 2014).
the gendered division of labour became dominant in the discourse of post-war economic development. The category of *sengyō shufu* has been considered an occupation in its own right, encompassing the domestic responsibilities of caring for husband, children and home, within the male breadwinner family model (Imaura 1987).

In parallel, the salaryman (*sararīman*) life course, which became increasingly prevalent over the first few post-war decades, entailed a working life of dedication to one’s company, whether large or small, with salarymen are sometimes referred to metaphorically as corporate warriors (*kigyō senshi*). The hallmarks of the salaryman career – life-time employment and the seniority system – were added in the post-war period to firms, which since the Meiji period had been characterised in a ‘firm-as-family’ discourse (Izuhara 2000:20). Firms provided salarymen with housing, health and welfare services, and expected a close nexus of work and private life, even if not formally regulated by the firm. In the post-war period, salarymen, selected white-collar full-time employees, enjoyed a relative degree of stability and predictability in their career paths and featured centrally in accounts of the development of middle-class post-war Japan (Dore 1958; Vogel 1963; Plath 1964, 1983; Rohlen 1974). Furthermore, workers other than salarymen found the notion of salaryman appealing. Gerteis (2011) argues, for instance, how over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, with focus on railway workers, younger blue-collar union workers’ aspirations shifted. Rather than be drawn to the class based roles put forward by their union, these younger employees aspired to join the middle-class lifestyle embodied by salarymen. Since the end of the economic bubble, however, salarymen careers are less accessible and not as secure as in the past, though still markedly more so than for the increasing temporary workforce (Takeuchi 1997; Matanle and Lunsing 2006; Taga 2006; Cook 2013). Nonetheless, ‘salaryman’ continued to be a significant marker not only of a particular profession but more generally of aspired to social status (Matanle 2006; McCann et al. 2006).

With salarymen expected to stay with a company from entry level onwards, firms aim to develop salarymen as fully responsible adult social beings (*shakai jin*) (Lunsing 2001; Dasgupta 2013a). The transition to become a salaryman, a focus of the literature (e.g. Rohlen 1974; Clark 1979; Beck and Beck 1994), includes Dasgupta’s (2013a) portrayal of how young graduates

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4 For instance, Sakurai Yuki (2011) documents the career path of employees of a provincial merchant house during the Meiji period. The employees, all male, first joined as boys and were typically not first sons. Their career path usually included long-term postings at branch locations, and the firm provided substantial support, such as housing and healthcare, while also significantly regulating their private life, such as not being allowed to marry early in their career. Indeed, they were expected to retire early enough to marry and form their own household. In practice, though, most either dropped out earlier or stayed longer in the career yet did not marry. Such firms thus expected substantial devotion to the firms by their employees while providing a paternalistic approach to relations with their employees.
hired are sought to be crafted into salarymen. At the beginning of their careers, training courses aim to mould behaviours and mindset, including daily work-life, such as greetings, and dependability and regularity in daily routines. The relational aspect of work is emphasised through ‘the way the individual embodied and enacted the expected “role” correctly, in interacting’ with others (Dasgupta 2013a:67): thus, the importance of the firm’s organisational culture, associated practices and work relations (Beck and Beck 1994; Ogasawara 1998; Sakai 2000). The most significant work relations involve homosocial male bonding (Rohlen 1975; Atsumi 1979; Allison 1994), including the significant hierarchical senior-junior (senpai-kōhai) relationships, in which leaders look after grateful and loyal followers (Rohlen 1974). Such relations are also nurtured out of the office, such as over drinks and other corporate sponsored activities (Atsumi 1979; Allison 1994; Linhart 1998). Thus, salarymen are embedded into their work both in terms of sheer hours of work and work-related activities, and the attendant work-based social relations.

The expectations of salarymen extend beyond careers and work to the familial sphere, to include social reproduction through heterosexual marriage (Dasgupta 2000a). Indeed, as Wim Lunsing discusses, the social pressure to conform to the ideal of heterosexual marriage means that even homosexual men may marry and have children in order for them to be trusted as a full adult person at work, and live their homosexual identity away from work and home (Lunsing 2001). Indeed, ideologically these men were characterised as daikokubashira, after the central pillar that sustained the traditional Japanese house, as widely seen to fulfil a central role in supporting both their immediate families and the nation at large (Gill 2003; Roberson 2003; Hidaka 2010). Work thus became their contribution to family life and also the foundation of their ikigai (which means ‘that for which life is most worth living’) and sense of personal well-being (Mathews 2003). However, men working long hours further increased by lengthy commutes resulted in their limited involvement in domestic matters (Ishii-Kuntz 1993; Allison 1994). This led to the seeming paradox of a ‘fatherless society’ (Doi 1971) in which the moral and authoritative influence of absent fathers (Vogel 1963; Ishii-Kuntz 1992) was mediated by mothers in the home (Wagatsuma 1977). Remedying father’s absence has included highlighting of alternative approaches to fatherhood (Ishii-Kuntz 2003; Nakatani 2006) and the challenges of reconciling work and family (Fuyuki 2003; Yazawa et al. 2003; Matsuda 2006; Niwano 2007; Taga 2011).

Yet, because salarymen’s professional devotion also limited the time available for personal hobbies and led to domestic absence during their working lives, upon retirement many men did not know what to do with their spare time and were estranged from their families. They came to face substantial difficulties adjusting to retired life at home (Alexy 2007). This struggle
came to be reflected in derogatory metaphors like *sodai gomi* (useless ‘large rubbish’ that takes up a lot of space) and *nure ochiba* (‘sodden fallen leaves’ that cling annoyingly to wives’ feet),\(^5\) both terms that emerged in the 1980s as popular euphemisms for retired men who had lost the guiding sense of purpose they had enjoyed in their professional self-identities. Thus, men’s family relations have been seen as problematic, as husbands and fathers during their careers and in retirement. Over time, then, Japanese society has seen substantial changes to family relations with broader transformations that have taken place in society as a whole.

### 1.2. Theoretical Frameworks

The transformation of the Japanese family that is now underway invites us to ask questions about men’s everyday practices within the contemporary family. Men’s practices in turn are inter-linked with those of women, pointing to the importance of focusing on gender relations. Also, men’s family relations are not solely about fulfilling socially defined notions of men’s roles in the family but result from men’s actual everyday practices. Further, men’s relations in the family are pluralistic in the sense that they are more than simply husbands to their wives, fathers to their children, but include the extended family.

Thus, in this dissertation I aim to contribute to two different theoretical discussions. First, I study men and masculinities within the family from a gender studies approach. Second, I look at men’s family relationships from the perspective of kinship studies, as what constitutes family is integral to the understanding of kinship.

#### 1.2.1. Gender and Sexuality: Men and Masculinities

Studies on men and masculinities have come to be seen as an important area of inquiry comparatively recently. In gender studies women were initially *the* subject: indeed, gender studies were women’s studies, with intensive discussions of women accelerating in the 1970s, reflecting in part the emergence of women’s movements. Central to the initial debates in the anthropology of women and gender were concepts of binary oppositions such as nature/culture, domestic/public and reproduction/production (Ortner 1974; Rosaldo 1974; Meillassoux 1981). Although women were the focus of these analyses, the fact that the models sought to explain women’s subordinate positions relative to men meant that at a conceptual level, at least, they included both men and women. Such theoretical models appealed to universal models in which gender relationships were considered synchronically. From the mid-1980s, men’s studies

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\(^5\) The popular critic Higuchi Keiko used these two terms to describe retired men based on stories she heard from full-time housewives (Cabinet Office 2002). The terms became very popular and were selected as buzzword-of-the-year in 1981 and 1989, respectively.
developed and gained attention in Western academia (e.g. Kimmel 1994; Connell 1995) with a similar trend echoing subsequently in Japan (e.g. Itō 1996; Taga 2006).

An important theme running through masculinity studies argues to study men in their broader social context. Michael Kimmel defines masculinities as ‘the social roles, behaviours, and meanings prescribed for men […]. Masculinities are produced within the institutions of society and through our daily interactions’ (Kimmel 2004:503). In particular, he emphasises: ‘Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical. Manhood is not the manifestation of inner essence; it is socially constructed. Manhood does not bubble up consciousness from our biological makeup; it is created in culture. Manhood means different things at different times to different people’ (Kimmel 1994:120). Kimmel thus focuses on masculinity as an ongoing social construct located in time and space. For my study of men and masculinity in the family, this points to the importance of understanding contemporary practices in everyday life that construct notions of masculinity, as such notions need to be understood in the context of current conditions in Japanese society and, more specifically, of family in Japan.

Further, the social construction of masculinity is, as argued by Micaela di Leonardo, (1991), not to be viewed as uniform across men but rather as dependent on the impact of social factors as ‘in any particular population, major social divisions – race/ethnicity, class, religion, age, sexual preference, nationality – will crosscut and influence the meanings of gender of division’ (1991:30). Thus, masculinities, not masculinity in the singular, are important to recognise, which indicates the value of understanding the meaning of gender in a specific social context. For my study, this highlights the value of a primary focus on middle-class men, married and living in one part of Japan, as this allows a clear understanding of their masculinities to emerge. While placing attention on such men, as argued by Karen Pyke (1996), masculinity should not be studied as a single dimension abstracted from its social context, but rather that gender is one dimension alongside other dimensions: gender practices should be recognised as arising in specific social contexts. For my research, I embed an understanding of my informant’s masculinity in the context of men’s family relations, an important aspect of their life course. Thus, my primary focus is on men’s sense of masculinity arising from their practices in everyday life in the context of their family relations.

In studying Japanese masculinities, Hidaka (2011) and Dasgupta (2013a) argue that while a major stream of literature has concerned men at work and in particular salarymen, the masculinity of salarymen was usually not the central focus (Hidaka 2011:113; Dasgupta 2013a:5). An important influence on salaryman masculinity is argued by Anne Allison (1994) to be ‘corporate masculinity’ – masculinity constructed within a corporate ideology – that stems from corporates’ influence over the activities, such evening drinks with colleagues (settai), that
underpin salarymen’s relations with colleagues. Placing a spotlight on salarymen as ‘men’, Dasgupta characterises the notion of ‘salaryman masculinity’ as incorporating not only the ideal of the white-collar employee typically hired into a model of employment based on lifetime tenure and graduated seniority but also including an expectation of heterosexual marriage with children (Dasgupta 2000a). Hidaka emphasises, through her three-generation study of salarymen, the continuity of being *daikokubashira*, a key pillar of the economy and their family, as central to the masculinity of salarymen (Hidaka 2011). Thus, while salarymen masculinity as derived from work and comprising a link to family through marriage has been addressed, there has been comparatively less attention to how daily practices in the family shape salarymen’s masculinities. Further, for my enquiry, as most of my informants are middle class, with my male informants mostly working, or retired from full-time work, and married or widowed, their domestic practices are relevant to juxtapose to such notions of salaryman masculinity.

Yet, the significant economic and social changes that have meant fewer men becoming salarymen and a marked increase in men in temporary positions, referred to as *freeters*, leads to a consideration of such men’s sense of masculinity. While an understanding of *freeters* is important per se, given the magnitude of the phenomenon, such men also provide an understanding of some of the key tensions and trade-offs men face as salarymen or when pursuing alternative life-courses. As discussed by anthropologist Emma Cook (2013), the contrast between salarymen and *freeters*, men with short-term and unstable work patterns, is an example of the tension and inter-linkages of alternative models of masculinity: ‘although ideas of gendered adulthood, social expectations and norms infused all the narratives as each male *freetter* grappled with the ideals of what adult men should do and be in Japan, this does not mean that they decided to uncritically conform to expectations’ (Cook 2013:40).

Contrasting *freeters* to *seishain*, those in permanent employment with seniority-based career path, Taga Futoshi (2011), a leading scholar in men’s studies (*dansei gaku*) in Japan, argues that the growing gap between these types of workers points to the widening gap between their masculinities. The family life style of men able to support financially their wives is prestigious yet increasingly unattainable for *freeters*, even though many of them wish to do so: therefore, the gap between salarymen and *freeters* reinforces the manliness associated with salarymen’s life course. Most *freeters* recognise the salaryman career and lifestyle represents the dominant reference group, whether they aspire to it or view themselves as tracing an alternative path. Some wish for a career path more akin to a salaryman but find employment as *freeters*, potentially due to broader social and economic factors that determine employment opportunities. Those who choose to be *freeters*, in what they see as a marked contrast to
salarymen, tend to emphasise personal choice and the ability to pursue individual interests and passions, including potentially alternative career paths such as artistic ones. A related contrast to salarymen is provided by Tom Gill (2011), who focuses on the homeless in Japan, who are overwhelmingly male. Gill highlights how ‘self-reliance’ is central to their notions of masculinity, in part in juxtaposition to how such homeless men perceive men in full-time employment, such as salarymen (Gill 2011:178). While flexibility and independence could be viewed as a trade-off versus economic security, Taga (2011) argues for a similar contrast though at the other extreme of economic outcomes. He argues that men, inspired in part by the fluidity of Euro-American career paths, who are able to pursue high income, high risk careers based on personal autonomy, as compared to salarymen’s careers that are controlled by their companies, are putting pressure on the idealised manhood of salarymen as a reference point in post-modern Japan. Thus, an important variation across men in how they associate masculinity with work relates to autonomy and the pursuit of their own needs and interests.

The plurality of masculinities need not be tied primarily to work patterns but also shaped by other factors. For instance, Kumagai Keichi (2015) discusses diverse masculinities, including of herbivore boys and otaku men, which he argues have emerged in response to men’s increasing difficulty since the early 1990s to become salarymen. As such men do not have access to the basis for salarymen masculinity, Kumagai considers what constitutes their manhood, with particular emphasis on place (basho) and home (hōmu). Herbivore boys are young men who are relatively less assertive, such as in pursuing their careers or girlfriends: they do not aspire to salarymen careers and often have a relatively limited set of social relations. Kumagai argues that for such men their home is central to their masculinity: this domestic orientation is the mirror-image of the salaryman. Thus, their masculinity is associated with a domain most often considered as female. Thus, for my enquiry, this indicates the importance of understanding how men’s relations shape everyday practices undertaken, including potentially practices usually associated with the female domain.

Masculinity may also be rooted in men’s pursuit of their interests and passions, which for some substantially shape their daily lives. For instance, for otaku men their manhood is deeply associated with technology and representations of a technologized world, such as in the virtual worlds of manga, animation and PC games: Akihabara in Tokyo provides a physical epicentre for otaku (Napier 2011; Kumagai 2015). Their social interactions are often highly mediated by technology: indeed, their emotional engagement and affection may be directed to fictional characters, such as anime (Condry 2011). Thus, Otaku men’s manhood is not based on social relations and commitments to others. Furthermore, Kumagai puts forward that for such otaku men, in addition to their home, cafés, such as ‘maid-café’ in Akihabara, become a partially
domesticated space. For instance, in such cafés the waiters’ greetings to customers are ‘welcome home (okaerinasai)’ – the cafés are assumed to be homes with customers as the family living there. While the domestication of such a place is bounded by the time during which they are customers, nonetheless this points to the importance for such men of carving out a space that they feel to be in control and appropriate for themselves, such as through familiarity with the setting and receiving recognition.

Thus, Kumagai argues that herbivore boys and otaku men rely on a domestic space, which is the main central space for them, that they are familiar with and they believe that they can control. This reflects such men’s pattern of social interactions: they construct their masculinity in their domestic space and by domesticating selected public spaces, even if just temporarily as customers. During such a process, Tim Cresswell argues, ‘space’ become ‘place’: People change space by relating themselves to the space, and have become to understand it as place (Cresswell 2004). In turn, this raises an issue for men in the family of the link between space at home and their sense of masculinity. For married men, home is a shared space that they use for just part of the time. As men transition to become fathers, retire, or start to live with parents and parents-in-law, they adjust their use of space at home. Through their family relations, men transform such space into a place at home: understanding men’s practices as related to use of space at home contributes to understanding men’s family relations and, thus, men’s sense of masculinity.

As I have discussed, a plurality of masculinities has been evidenced in the Japanese context, including workers in precarious models of subsistence, such as day labourers (Fowler 1996; Gill 2001), homeless (Mugikura 2006; Gill 2011), freeters (Cook 2013), men pursuing alternative lifestyles, such as herbivore boys and otaku men (Kumagai 2015), as well as homosexuality (Yajima 1997; McLelland 2000; Lunsing 2001). Further, the economic decline that began in the 1990s following the bursting of the so-called ‘bubble economy’ initiated a critical process of social change within which men’s identities have been increasingly challenged (Mathews 2003; Roberson and Suzuki 2003; Dasgupta 2013a). A focus has been on the recognition and understanding of marginal and alternative masculinities. Notwithstanding this attention, the development of gender remains a contested field of study, with the salaryman model remaining the common reference point for comparison and contrast.

Thus, in the context of Japanese masculinity in post-war Japan, the model of salaryman masculinity is important beyond the proportion of men who in fact closely fit the ideal model: this has remained the basis for what may be termed ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Allison 1994; Dasgupta 2000, 2005; Gill 2003; Roberson and Suzuki 2003; Hidaka 2011; Cook 2013). The concept ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is defined in the influential theoretical approach by R.W.
Connell as the ‘configuration of gender practice’ that represent an ideal in relation to social and cultural conditions (Connell 1995:77). Further, Connell places emphasis on the relational aspect in the construction of hegemonic and other masculinities, in particular the relation between different masculinities:

To recognize the diversity of masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity, relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are contested through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity (Connell 1995:37).

Connell’s emphasis is not only on categorising masculinities, which risks treating them as separate phenomena, but also on the contested relations between them, especially between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. Rather than simply attesting binary oppositions between hegemonic and subordinate models, analysing men’s various family relations and paying attention to the corresponding modes of masculinity that attend to each allows for a multiplicity of masculinities. Seemingly static structural relations between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities are actually in a constant state of negotiation, which suggests the possibility of challenging monolithic binary relationships between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities (i.e. salaryman masculinity versus its alternatives). Thus, understanding the relational construction of masculinities requires an integrated consideration of the social and cultural context in which they emerge, and how in response to social changes gender identities have been disrupted and transformed.

Connell accounts for the effect of other social factors on the relations amongst masculinities, arguing that ‘hegemony, subordination and complicity … are relations internal to the gender order. The interplay of gender with other structures such a class and race creates further relationships between masculinities …’ (Connell 2005:80). Echoing these arguments, James Roberson (2003) discusses how Japanese working-class men recreate a class-based masculinity by examining how class and gender relationships intertwine. Working class carve out their masculinity to some degree distinct to that of salaryman, as for them leisure-time activities are not necessarily linked to work, in contrast to salarymen who often have drinks with colleagues and play golf with business contacts. Nonetheless, Roberson argues working class men are complicit with notions of masculinity based on the salaryman model in terms of aspirations, such as to support financially their family and children. At the same time, as Connell (1995) argues, individual men will be consistent with and accepting of the archetype
to differing degrees, which means that there is inherent scope for contestation of hegemonic masculinity.

Indeed, while salaryman masculinity is hegemonic in the Japanese context, this model is not uncontested. For instance, Romit Dasgupta (2000) finds, in contrast to prior generations, that current younger salarymen do not fully identify with their professional selves in the performance of their roles as salarymen. The younger generations of salarymen are perceived as more tentative in embodying the ideal of the salaryman, while nonetheless fulfilling the functions at work of a salaryman: this gap between their lived experience and feeling towards it evidences a dislocation in relation to the external hegemonic masculine identity (Dasgupta 2000).

The changes in masculine identity across recent generations of salarymen are a focus of anthropologist Gordon Mathews (2003). He discusses the shifting significance of masculinities with reference to the Japanese concept of *ikigai*. Whereas prior generations (in their fifties and sixties in 1989–90) privileged workplace identity in line with hegemonic salaryman masculinity, Mathews argues that the younger generation (in their thirties to fifties in 1980–90) are seeking new ways of life in which to pursue their values and hopes. They do not feel as constrained by the expectation of the salaryman’s role as a breadwinner, and are less likely than their predecessors to consider career as an *ikigai*. Nevertheless, Mathews finds that men seem to resist using the discourse of *ikigai* with reference to their families, tending rather to emphasise *ikigai* with reference to self-actualisation, which means the pursuit of what gives them personal satisfaction, such as their hobbies and personal interests. Furthermore, inter-generational differences in these life signifiers notwithstanding, the youngest generation in his ethnography are also employed as salarymen. Mathews’ study not only brings out how notions of masculinity depend on contemporaneous social conditions, but also points to a variety of sources of meaning, based on work, family and self, such men draw upon. Importantly, for middle-class men, while there is evidence of contestation of the hegemonic salaryman model as related to notions of work, this evidences scope for contestation of other aspects of the model, notably on aspects related to family relations and domestic life. Yet, in Mathews’ approach the focus remains primarily on meaning and purpose for the man in question from his perspective. This leaves open the question of the implications of family relations, such as husbands and fathers. I intended to address this gap through an understanding of the extent to which such middle-class men are contesting hegemonic notions of masculinity in the domestic context.

In addressing salaryman masculinity, placing emphasis on the relational aspect of masculinity is important as there is a tight coupling of devotion to work with a corresponding notion of heteronormative marriage (Dasgupta 2000, 2013; Mathews 2003; Hidaka 2010).
Lunsing (2001) discusses various constructions of marriage, starting with a ‘common sense’ perspective. A widely held, common sense view among many Japanese is that marriage is an important step in the path to becoming a fully responsible adult social being (ichininmae no shakaijin) (Hendry 1986:115 and 206–7; Edwards 1989:124–9; Fu 2011). A core ideological assumption underlying hegemonic salaryman masculinity is that mature (‘real’) men work in order to take responsibility for supporting their families: for salarymen, their primary contribution to their families is financial. Thus, their responsibility is towards their careers and thereby they address their responsibility to their families. Conversely, women can attain the status of being fully adult women (ichininmae no onna) by getting married and having children (Lebra 1984:87–100; Hendry 1986:100). Lunsing argues that the wife and husband ‘become one person and this person, which is represented by a married couple, is the ichininmae’ (Lunsing 2001:75). This view is often expressed, for instance, during wedding speeches by senior bosses from their work place congratulating new couples on having achieved their full potential as social beings and wishing for the couple’s prosperous future (Edwards 1989).

The implicit corollary of this view, however, is that unmarried people are thought to be immature quasi half-persons (hanninmae) who lack a true sense of responsibility. Useful in this regard is Walter Edwards’s concept of gender as ‘complementary of incompetence’ (Edwards 1989). Edwards argues that ‘Japanese notions of gender make marriage necessary because individuals – both men and women – are always incomplete; their deficiencies, moreover, are complementary. Men need women to manage both their money and their domestic lives, such as taking care of the children as well as frail or sick family members. Women need men to provide economic security and proper representation for the family in the public domain’ (Edwards 1989:123). Such marriages’ constitutive relations are underpinned by highly gendered expectations with regard to the support a person provides for significant others. Thus, the hegemonic salaryman model is based on a particular form of married life as a complement to men’s dedication to corporate life.

An illustration of the coupling of work and family can be seen by revisiting Cook’s (2013) analysis of freeters, in which she discusses not only the tensions between competing notions of masculinity as embodied by men, but also tensions arising from these men’s social relations with women. In particular, girlfriends and partners often seek at least some elements of the salaryman life course, notably stable employment, as a basis for marriage. Even for the men who resolve the tension in favour of freeter employment over salaryman career, the pull from the social relation introduces a different challenge as to what it means to be a man, as these men aim to reconcile desires for companionship and marriage with their work. Thus, Cook provides evidence not just of tension between notions of masculinity but also of the important influence
on masculinity of other social relations. Thus, from a conceptual standpoint, to study hegemonic salaryman masculinity and alternative masculinities necessitates an understanding not only of their work life but also of their family life. Yet, there is a dearth of ethnographic evidence on the everyday practices by which men and women (re)construct masculine identity.

While scholarly discussions of hegemonic salaryman masculinity have tended to focus on men’s work experiences and related issues, their home lives – to the extent that these are discussed – serve primarily as a foil to emphasise how men’s lives are centred around work, and consequently more or less away from family life: men’s domestic experiences are left largely as implicit assumptions. The lack of concrete ethnographic portrayals of their everyday life in the family makes it difficult to understand constructions and negotiations of masculinities in domestic settings. Further, this is of current importance as in contemporary families spouses are more likely to work, which places the fundamental gender division, which is a core element of hegemonic salaryman masculinity, in question. Hence, there is substantial scope for broadening and deepening inquiry on men in the domestic context, which is a gap I aim to address in this dissertation.

In addressing men’s sense of masculinity in the family, the importance of relationships with women in the construction of masculinities is evident. In Japan, Itō Kimio, a sociologist and pioneering theorist of men’s studies, observing that masculinity is contingent on social conditions, has argued that women’s challenges to hegemonic masculinity have been a key part of the social changes undergone by Japanese society since the 1990s. Itō proposes three main elements of masculinity in relation to women, namely men’s orientation towards superiority (yūetsu shikō), power (kenryoku shikō), and possession (shoyū shikō) over women (Itō 1993:166‒171). While these orientations could be discussed in the context of structural models of gender relations, such as those of Ortner (1974) and Rosaldo (1974), Itō’s emphasis is elsewhere. He argues that these three elements of men’s sense of masculinity trace important origins back to industrialisation. In particular, at the time, physical strength was important for industrial work and men’s authority at home was rooted in their work:

What women were allotted was nothing other than “shadow work” … as a form of auxiliary labour. […] The site of such expression of male authority was … in fact the home itself. This relationship between men and women in the home, between domination and subordination, is further reinforced by the predominance that wage labour has achieved in the context of industrialisation (Itō 1993:113‒114).
Thus, it was ‘the family’s dependency on the husbands’ income’ (Itō 1993:113) that gave men authority. Itō’s main argument is, hence, that women influence men’s sense of masculinity, and therefore that masculinity is fundamentally relational and mutable. In Itō’s view, in present times, men are feeling deeply insecure as women increasingly challenge men’s sense of masculinity through becoming economically and psychologically independent from men. This leaves open to investigation as to how this plays out in terms of everyday practices in the contemporary family. Women’s increased participation on the wage-based workforce potentially affects diverse family relations, including as wives, sisters and sisters-in-law. Further, it is not just the income that women earn that is likely to matter but also the time associated with this work: indeed, in the context of the family, claims on time are also potentially determinant of family relations, as such tasks as care for children and elderly are often time intensive. Thus, the implications for the construction of masculinities ramify across the extended family, not just within the nuclear family or husband-wife relations.

Indeed, an intriguing feature of the family is that men fulfil multiple and diverse relational masculine roles – such as husbands, fathers, grandfathers, brothers, sons and sons-in-law. Although research on a single relation is undertaken (e.g. Ishii-Kuntz 2003; Nakatani 2006), to provide a fuller picture it is important to examine multiple relations. This multiplicity allows addressing specific issues, such as men’s actual practices as fathers, married couple’s negotiation over elderly care for their parents, and grandfathers’ daily activities in retirement when work as a source of masculine identity recedes for them. At the same time, a focus on different family relations allows for a decomposition of what masculinity means for men in the family: a man may well be a son, brother, husband and son-in-law, though there is no reason to presume that the construction of masculinity is the same across the relations. Also, men’s family relations may be considered in time order, such as a husband, father and grandfather, thus contributing to unpacking men’s masculinity across men’s life course. Thus, an enquiry into men’s masculinity in the family is not limited to addressing the domestic aspect of, say, salaryman masculinity which is for the most part rooted in the nuclear family. Rather men’s masculinity in the family depends on family relations across the extended family.

Thus, a main contribution I aim for is to understand the everyday practices and processes underlying men’s sense of masculinity for diverse gender relations in the context of family. I provide a view into notions of masculinity in a domestic context, which remains relatively understudied. My emphasis disrupts the possibility of seeing gender as static as through an understanding of men’s sense of masculinity in the contemporary family I place (re)constructions of gender identities in response to social changes in context.
Through this approach I posit that to discuss masculinity in the domestic context benefits from a perspective accounting for family. Building on Connell’s argument that ‘masculinity is an aspect of institutions, and is produced in institutional life, as much as it is an aspect of personality or produced in interpersonal transactions’ (1993:602), family serves as an institution that could play a significant role in developing our understanding of the social construction of masculinities. For my study, the family provides an institution within which to demonstrate the processes of negotiating masculinities that includes both men and women as a way of coming to a fuller understanding of gender relations and the consequent sense of masculinity. In turn, placing attention on this range of men’s family relations raises the central question of what ‘family’ actually means.

1.2.2. Family Relationships from a Kinship Perspective – from Structure to Relatedness

In addressing masculinity in the context of family relations requires an approach to analysing family. Family and familial relationships are central to kinship, which is related to other social institutions such as politics and economy. The study of family and kinship has changed its methodological approach substantially over time, something that is perhaps not surprising given that family has been a central focus of anthropological enquiry since the discipline’s birth. By the end of the nineteenth century, Lewis Henry Morgan had established kinship as an intrinsic concern of anthropological study. An important stream of research focused on social structures, notably of African societies by Alfred Radcliffe-Brown and his student Meyer Fortes in the 1950s and 1960s (Holy 1996:5), but ultimately emphasis on descent and lineage led to theories viewed as increasingly divorced from empirical reality and not replicable to other places (Kuper 1988; Holy 1996). A provocative major critique of kinship by Rodney Needham, in the 1970s, highlighted the problems inherent in an approach overly focused on generalisation, classification, and sociological laws based on the assumption of commonalities across societies (Needham 1971). This critique indicated that anthropologists must study kinship not as a stand-alone institution but rather placed in context – an approach that entailed making recourse to history, language, moral concepts and many other contingent particulars.

In a cultural analysis of American kinship that constituted another major critique of the structural-functional approach to kinship, David Schneider (1972) argued for kinship as a category through which to analyse the meaning of symbols in local perspective. Here, again, was an argument that kinship should not be considered or classified separately, but rather analysed in context so as to look at culture as a whole system. One problem with this injunction, however, is raised by Shimizu Akitoshi (1991) who pointed out that Schneider’s perspective
was Euro-centric, giving too much emphasis to consanguinity, which represents only one aspect of kinship in the context of the ie system.

Indeed, in the study of Japanese kinship, the debates in the 1960s were re-focused by Nakane Chie (1967) and related to alternative theories of descent and lineage. For instance, she claimed that distinctions, such as those between ‘ritual kinship’ and ‘true kinship’ (e.g. Befu 1968), that sought to circumscribe what should be included in the study of kinship were found to be inconclusive in mapping to established concepts. Nakane argued to consider Japanese kinship as unique with reference to kinship systems elsewhere, positing a theory of Japanese kinship that, ultimately, extended the notion of the ie system, as a metaphor for Japanese society as a self-contained cultural and symbolic system.

A further impetus for the critique of kinship based on a structural-functional approach reflected a more general re-direction of anthropological interest. The emergence of feminist discourse in the 1980s contributed to kinship discussions moving away from a focus on specialist considerations within the domain of kinship towards an engagement of kinship with other related social aspects: in particular, concerns with the implication of kinship in the processes of production, reproduction, exchange, ethnicity, self and personhood, and the construction of gender and sexuality (Holy 1996). In this regard, my own enquiry addresses kinship so as to understand how men are (re)constructing their masculinity in the family.

I privilege an understanding of family grounded in my participants’ own voices. This reflects the ‘reflexive turn’ in anthropology that led the discipline towards greater recognition of subjectivity among informants and researchers. This means in kinship, for instance, privileging participants varied perspectives on their family relations rather than, say, seeking to delineate abstract kinship structures. Fundamentally, classic kinship studies assumed relatively stable and fixed categories based on consanguineous and affinal relations. The move away from analysing kinship from a structural-functionalist perspective was towards a consideration of meanings, which are examined through the processes and practices of social life. Further, this provides a vocabulary for describing change and fluidity in relations.

To address relations in kinship, Janet Carsten (2000) focused on to what she calls ‘relatedness,’ which has breathed new life into ‘new kinship’ studies by expanding the scope of enquiry. Contextualising interpersonal links through the lens of relatedness allows for a broader set of terms such as ‘substance’ or ‘shared corporeality’ that is able to capture the basis for such relationships (Carsten 2004:29). These terminologies are tools to more accurately understand and describe particular local views of the world not set into standard typologies (Parkin 1997:8), thereby revealing key aspects of culture and society (Carsten 2004:18). Carsten criticises the Western assumption of the independence of social and biological aspects of human
relationships as unfounded, demonstrating how this assumption has also underlain the collection of genealogical data and other analytical methodologies. In contrast, according to Carsten, a relatedness approach identifies relations that ‘matter’ as defined by local contexts, a flexible perspective that has proven workable in small-scale as well as in complex modern societies. A relatedness perspective privileges everyday practices and processes, which is a shift in the focus of anthropologists’ methods. For my study, considering kinship through relatedness may shed light on gender, for example, by revealing aspects of the social and cultural production of gender differences. Relatedness offers a kinship approach that problematises the process or processes by which relations are generated between people both in the present and over time. Moreover, the focus on *everyday practices*, peoples’ actual activities in their daily life, means that relatedness cannot be an autonomous domain of analysis, but represents a single aspect that intertwines with other social domains. To illustrate, for a couple with both spouses working, the practices underlying the couple’s relation are not just those enabling, for instance, inter-personal communication between the spouses, but also practices that enable each to address their own personal interests and work.

In taking an approach grounded in the broader notion of relatedness, several crucial points of distinction arise in contrast to earlier kinship paradigms. First, whereas the newer approach is able to describe lived experiences of kinship based on daily-life practices, these were not an emphasis of the classic focus on the function and structure of social organisations and institutions. Second, the scope that relatedness allows for expressing local kinship perspectives that transcend biology, while present to some degree in the idea of ‘fictive’ kin relations recognised by older kinship paradigms, is better able to reflect local perspectives than the forced constraints of abstract kinship theory. Finally, a relatedness perspective avoids the pitfalls of Eurocentrism by instead revealing differences in the nature of kinship, such as of how nature and culture are intertwined, as viewed in Western and non-Western societies.

An approach founded in relatedness allows for a plurality of mechanisms upon which relations may be based. For instance, Helen Lambert’s (2000) study of India highlights non-procreative links among people. From a local perspective, sharing substances such as breast-milk and food, not necessarily blood (i.e. the caste system), can create moral and affective ties, and these processes of commensality are what constitute relatedness (Lambert 2000:86). For my study, this implies not presuming what forms the basis for developing and sustaining men’s family relations, but to place emphasis on identifying the relevant everyday practices, potentially including the sharing of food, as in the case of Lambert. Further, the relevant practices in everyday life include those that from the perspective of both parties, such as husbands and wives, sustain their relationships. The importance of reciprocity comes through
in Charles Stafford’s (2000) study of a small village in north-eastern China, in which he characterises the maintenance of relatedness through two distinct cycles of reciprocity which he refers to as yang and laiwang. The former describes the mutual obligations between parents and children and the latter relationships between friends and neighbours. Stafford demonstrates how relatedness can be a means to understand kin beyond the confines of China’s patrilineal system. Relatedness thus enables us to apprehend relations beyond those evident from a structural approach, and accordingly entails that the observer must avoid preconceived categories and remain open to what may constitute interpersonal relations.

Yet, the very question of what constitutes a kin relationship is an open issue when taking an approach based on relatedness. Returning to Stafford (2000), the argument that relatedness is constructed with friends and neighbours raises the question of the nature of the boundary of relatedness. Also, Lambert (2000) considers relatedness as based on commensality – a category of everyday practice that may include wet nurses as well as friends and colleagues. These cases raise the issue of where the outer bounds of relatedness are found, at least in so far as it relates to the notion of kin. Indeed, men’s relatedness is an issue of interest, for instance, how are working men related to others, potentially including colleagues, friends, neighbours, others in the local community, as well as their extended family. While this is a relevant concern, such scope is beyond my main aim, which is to contribute to understanding men’s sense of masculinity in the family.

At the same time, I aim to take a broader perspective than men in their nuclear family through taking an extended family perspective. This is important to address a gap in understanding of men’s relations in the family: to the extent that family relations are specified, such as for the salaryman model, substantial attention is often within the nuclear family. Yet, pressing cross-generational issues implicate the extended family, notably elderly care. The increasing necessity of providing care for elderly relatives suggests that relationships are themselves being reformed across generations, of which the increased prevalence, discussed above, of parent-daughter intimacy are an important example (Nakano and Wagatsuma 2004). Further, an extended family perspective enables an understanding of how grandfathers establish their family relations, in particular as they transition out of work and into retirement: for instance, grandfathers’ connections to their grandchildren and children, and how this affects their sense of masculinity. This leads me to place emphasis on men’s relatedness within their family, in particular their extended family.

A relatedness perspective is apposite for understanding the varied basis of such relations. Relatedness provides an opportunity to map out what family means from the perspective of the individual subject, and underscores the need to consider the everyday practices underpinning
relatedness for each family relation. Specifically, I take a participant-centric perspective to understanding which amongst their family relations matter most to my informants and the basis for this importance. This is a new kinship approach focused on what matters to individual subjects, where the specific context sets the boundaries of enquiry. This facilitates consideration of new ways of being related in society, in particular through interlinking gender and kinship as explained in the above discussion of gender studies. Hence, rather than study relatedness as a stand-alone issue, I place emphasis on understanding how men’s family relations shape their sense of masculinity.

A relatedness perspective that seeks to understand men’s experience in the institutional context of the Japanese family necessitates that we study men’s diverse relations within and across the extended family. For men in the family, becoming a brother, husband, son-in-law, father, grandfather each in its own way is a transformation of the person in relation to others, and understanding the ways in which practices do and do not change at such times would hold promise for the project of understanding the constitution of such relations. Further, all such relations involve negotiations across generations or with women through the daily practices that underpin these relations, becoming constituent of men’s sense of masculinity as sons, husbands, fathers, grandfathers, and sons-in-laws, and thereby elucidating masculinities in the family.

To understand men’s sense of masculinity in the family relations, I take an approach grounded in relatedness. For each of men’s family relations, I address: What are the everyday practices by which men take part in family life? How are these practices negotiated with other family members, such as wives, siblings, parents, and parents-in-law, and what are their respective roles in these relationships? How do men reconcile address the needs of others with their own notions of masculinity, and what choices do they make in contributing to their families? Through this analysis of practices in daily life and ensuing relations, I address specific questions related to the emergence of novel masculinities and the re-construction of masculinities in the family.

First, for men as husbands, I ask how couples negotiate everyday practices, given that often both spouses have work commitments, which makes the issue of broader significance as linked to women’s workforce participation. Further, such practices potentially re-shape couples’ relationships, especially in contrast to the canonical model of gender separation of tasks. Thus, I contribute a fine-grained perspective on the domestic practices of middle-class men as husbands, which yields a perspective on men as husbands’ contestation of received notions of masculinity in the family.
Second, for men as fathers, whether from a concern about absent fathers or the implications of fatherhood on the low birth rate, fatherhood has received much attention. Yet for middle-class men on there is scant evidence on actual experiences. Thus, I focus on the actual practices men undertake as fathers and what type of relation they aspire to with their children. Further, through teasing apart men’s practices as husbands and fathers, I provide a novel perspective on the re-constructing of men’s masculinity in the family.

Third, for men as grandfathers I analyse how in the context of family they navigate their transition into retirement, when work no longer serves as the main basis for their masculinity, addressing a research gap in understanding of older men’s masculinity in the family. Building on the re-orientation of parent-adult child relations, I focus grandfathers’ relations with their grandchildren and daughters. I contribute an understanding of the practices associated with these relations and the motivations for such practices, thereby elucidating such extended family relations.

Lastly, through the prism of elderly care I address men’s family relations across the extended family. The need for elderly care is a major societal issue that involves the family; yet there is limited insight in how extended family members coordinate and negotiate care, such as siblings for their parents and married couples for both sets of parents. Given the pressures and benefits of providing elderly care, I address how men reconcile engagement with care, a domain associated with femininity, with their sense of masculinity. The practices associated with elderly care also bring to the foreground sons-in-law, which hitherto have been largely in the background of Japanese family relations, thus shedding light on a fundamental re-shaping of relations across the extended family.

Such an enquiry contributes to the anthropological literature on the Japanese family in a number of ways, leveraging the new perspectives afforded by the ongoing transformation of the Japanese family in response to changing socio-economic conditions. Highlighting men’s relatedness across the extended family on the basis of daily practices addresses a notable gap in the literature, which has historically emphasised the structural continuity of the family as an institution, or, more recently, men at work, and those of women in the family and workplace. I contribute to understanding across these relations the common and diverse ways in which men’s sense of masculinity is adapting to the changing Japanese family. While men as husbands and fathers have received much implicit attention, as the domestic side of working men, by focussing on these relations I address the extent to which my informants are reconstructing notions of masculinity, in particular I aim to delineate where my informants’ everyday practices challenge hegemonic notions of salaryman masculinity. For men as grandfathers and sons-in-
law I place attention on relatively understudied men’s relations, which allows me to contribute to understanding the emergence of the associated masculinities.

Thus, my approach provides diverse lenses through which to analyse masculinities, based on addressing men’s family relations as sons, husbands, fathers, grandfathers, and sons-in-law. My approach is grounded in the theoretical concept of relatedness, specifically the nexus of gender and family relationships. Through an analytical focus on daily practices I understand men’s negotiation and coordination with family members, with the pattern of men’s practices revealing how men (re)construct for each of their family relations their sense of masculinity in the family.

1.3. Methodology

The purpose of my dissertation, therefore, is to address men’s sense of masculinity in the contemporary Japanese family through the everyday practices that construct and reconstruct their family relations. To understand such men’s practices in the family, I used a mix of research methods chosen contingently according to situational context, but centring primarily on narrative interviews and participant observation complemented by the collection of other primary source materials. I carried out two rounds of ethnographic fieldwork over the summer months in 2013 and 2014 in the city of Hōjō in Hyōgo Prefecture in central Japan.6

My case is on the one hand of a researcher engaged in fieldwork in her native city, as I was born and raised in Hōjō and lived there until the end of high school. On the other hand, through my subsequent life course I have gained distance and time away from my home town, notwithstanding visits over the years: Undergraduate studies and non-academic work experience led me to live in various large cities in Japan, and for over a decade I have lived continuously outside of Japan, including in the United States, Singapore, France and the U.K., during which I have raised three children in a multi-cultural family and have pursued my Masters studies and the PhD. During these past years, I have tended to return to Japan once or twice per year, at times to my home town, in part as my parents and one brother continue to live in Hōjō while my other siblings have moved away, and as my social network in Japan has expanded elsewhere and contracted over time in Hōjō. Mindful of the issues raised by my conducting research in my home city, I selected Hōjō based on its suitability as a research site and my ability to effectively set up and conduct the fieldwork, as well as practical considerations, such as ready access to accommodation and childcare through my parents.

6 I have changed the names of the city and my respondents to preserve their anonymity.
I consider Hōjō suitable for fieldwork as improved transport links to major cities, including a new highway, have brought the city relatively close to the major urban centres, recent developments in communication technologies (e.g. mobile phones and the Internet) have increasingly blurred rural-suburban-urban distinctions, and the flux of people in the city leads to a large variety of family relationships. Marriages are just as likely to be with local partners as with people from other rural or urban areas. Accordingly, the geographical distribution of extended families can be quite spread out. Yet, remnants of the *ie* family system once so strongly rooted in the area coexist and combine in Hōjō with new forms of family relationships emerging.

Hōjō is a regional city located in a mostly rural area an hour or two away from the major cities of Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto. The city was established in 2004 following the merger of six township municipalities, and its overall population as of 2016 was approximately 66,000 people in 25,000 households (Hōjō city website 2016) spread across the clustered communities of the former townships. Notwithstanding modern conveniences, the public face of Hōjō is that of a beautiful rural castle town (*jōka machi*) surrounded by nationally famous black bean and chestnut tree plantations, traditional pottery workshops, and traditional samurai houses. Such images of Hōjō are to some degree artfully romanticised, reproducing nostalgic tropes associated with the Japanese countryside. This has resulted in the recent influx of people coming from nearby major urban areas to ‘live the country life’ (*inakagurashi*), a term frequently cited in connection with such reconstructed images and fantasies of rural life.

Indeed, I was initially extremely surprised to see many relatively young people (in their late twenties to early forties) who had moved to Hōjō from large centres cities, found work (e.g. with a range including as company employees, shop-keeping, arts and crafts), and settled down to live with the intention of staying for many years. The move away from large cities may recall the ‘U-turn’ phenomenon in the 1970s and 1980s, in which people fled the cramped over-population of major urban cities, drawn to nostalgic images of their *furusato* (old-home village) for a calm life. As noted by Jennifer Robertson, this move was ‘motivated by a nostalgia for nostalgia, a state of being provoked by a dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of a remembered, or imagined, past plenitude’ (Robertson 1988:495). In contrast, in the case of Hōjō, the more recent phenomenon is referred to as an ‘I-turn,’ in which urban residents are seeking to relocate, perhaps permanently, to regional areas other than those from which their families originally came. An attractive aspect of life in Hōjō for those participating in the so-called ‘I-

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7 Another related phenomenon, known as the ‘J-turn’ involves people settling down in urban areas close to their home town after a time spent working in a major urban city. Collectively, the three patterns characterising such moves from large urban centres to local areas are referred to as the ‘UJI-turn’ (Kotobank eDictionary).
turn’ is the chance to live in traditional Japanese houses. There is a sense in which I-turn is about home-making, with ‘…its appeal to contemporary feelings of ‘homeless’ among many urban Japanese …’ (Creighton 1997:239). Indeed, a number of real estate companies specialise in helping people from urban areas such as Osaka to move into such houses, while a non-profit organisation (NPO) run by ‘I-turn’ veterans offers information to facilitate the process of settling in Hōjō. Also, young people who leave the area to attend university in Osaka, Kyoto or Tokyo often return to Hōjō to work after graduation. Indeed, I was struck to find younger and middle-aged people so very actively engaged in social and community activities such as the monthly street markets (e.g. Happiness Market), and to discover that major universities (e.g. Kansei Gakuin University) have established research institutes in this regional city.

Thus, my fieldwork site is a mid-sized city with relatively good access to large urban centres. Though I have emphasised participants’ practices in everyday life, these have clearly been shaped by local geographic factors to some degree. For instance, a key means of transport is by car, not public transport such as subways, and the notion of domestic labour most often includes tending a garden. While members of the extended family across multiple generations may be in the local area, others are likely to have moved away due to marriage or career considerations. The fieldwork site is thus relatively representative of many such cities across Japan, but less so of major urban centres.

1.3.1. Set Up of the Fieldwork and Complementary Research Activities

To set up the fieldwork during the summers of 2013 and 2014, I conducted a visit in November 2012 so as to make initial contacts and start the process of seeking informants. My aim was to build a network of informants by snow-balling, seeded by my personal contacts as well as through contacts at child and elderly day care centres in residential neighbourhoods and at the local government welfare department. During the set-up visit, my focus was on meeting people that during the summer could introduce me to potential informants, such as the Head of Welfare Policies at City Hall and other local government officials. I for the most part approached these officials directly, given the scale of Hōjō, with the aim of explaining to them my research purposes and aims, and thus the types of informants I was seeking to reach. Even though I lacked direct personal connections to these officials, my local connection I recognise made them inclined to support my study. Through these officials I also gained contacts to follow-up with, such as day-care managers at elderly care centres and child-care facilities, as well as gaining an understanding of such care facilities across Hōjō city: such facilities have largely developed since I left Hōjō and, in any case, I am more familiar with the town I grew up in, which is a part of what is now Hōjō city.
To prepare for snow-balling to seek informants during the summer, I also re-kindled personal contacts, so as to explain to them my research and see if they could help me through some introductions. At a practical level, I made contact with schooling options for my children during the summer months, approaching the local elementary school Principal for the eldest two daughters and kindergarten access through the Local Town hall services for the youngest. It is now common for schools to support hosting Japanese students who live abroad during visits to Japan: indeed, the Principal was supportive conditional on the Local City Education Officer approval, as they would verify issues such as insurance coverage. I was particularly keen to set up appropriate schooling for my children to ensure I had ample time to devote to my research, supplemented by occasional support by my parents, and that this start right away: indeed, my children were in school the day after we arrived in Hōjō. Further, I anticipated, and indeed this was the case, that contacts made through the children’s schooling would be fruitful for identifying informants and, importantly, gaining an understanding of and access to various community and social events. Finally, I took the opportunity of the visit to conduct a few initial preliminary discussions, such as with friends of my parents, so as to gain a feel for how the issues I was interested in are discussed by local people.

Over the course of the two rounds of fieldwork, I built up a set of informants that comprises 58 interviewees, 25 men and 33 women, attendance at a variety of community events, classes, and informal get-togethers, as well as a longer list of informants with whom I had shorter discussions typically in the social context where we met. For the 58 interviewees, I conducted narrative interviews usually two to four hours in length, which I recorded with consent except when my informants did not wish to be recorded in which I case I only took notes. The Appendix provides an overview of the profile of interviewees, including their family and work situation, how I met them, and the context of my interactions with them. The informants cited in the main text are drawn from the interviews included in the Appendix. Other informants not included in the Appendix are those with whom I had shorter or more casual interactions and discussions. The interviewees include men and women who are: middle-aged, married, and usually with young children; older married men and women; elderly at day-care centres and at their homes; staff at day care centres for children and the elderly, care managers of the local city hall, staff at local non-profit organisations (NPOs), and neighbours in their different social contexts. Also, in the subsequent chapters, as I introduce informants I provide relevant explanation of their family and work background, as well as how I came to meet them and the interview conditions. In most cases I held such interviews at my informants’ houses, the venues of events we were attending, or at local cafés or casual restaurants. Additionally, I carried out informal and conversational interviews as and when opportunities arose. During
these interviews, I identified the specifics of informants’ everyday practices and the issues they faced. I sought to understand how my informants make sense of their situations by examining the ways they narrate and express their own views of their everyday practices, including their motivation, feelings of fulfilment, and problems.

I have tried to understand practices not only in substantive terms, but also how my informants conceive of them in the context of family relations. Placing emphasis on informants’ voices, I privilege their definition of what constitutes, for instance, long-term care of the elderly, rather than consider their practices through pre-defined categories. While this approach limits my cases in terms of comparability, the grounding of my research in informants’ lived experiences may inform the redefinition of such care categories in future research. However, as broadly speaking my informants are primarily drawn from middle-class couples, my ethnography does not provide evidence on other social classes, including blue-collar workers or freeters.

I analysed narrative interviews based on semantic analysis, a process involving the relation of syntactic structures from words and phrases to their language-independent meanings, thereby allowing for interpretation of cultural meanings (cf. Spradley 1980). Importantly, semantic analysis is suitable for informants who may be hesitant to reveal aspects of their everyday family life experiences, as it also allows the identification and distinction of what informants say, what they think, and what they think they should do (cf. Goodman 2002) based on analysing internal inconsistencies in the interviews.

I supplement this fieldwork data with reference to primary and secondary sources written in Japanese, including analysis of aggregate survey data relating to topics such as family, gender, and societal change: I draw on statistical data compiled by the Japanese Cabinet Office, White Papers published by the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office, and health and welfare data from sources such as the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (hereinafter MHLW). While I acknowledge that the policies I consider represent only a handful of the myriad policies on childcare and long-term care provision being continuously launched and implemented in recent years, these remain beyond the scope of my analysis. In particular, while I have considered selected government policies as a part of my attempt to contextualise and understand my informants’ practices, this should not be regarded as a systematic policy analysis. My focus, rather, is to compare and contrast the practices implied by policies to my informants’ actual practices. Also, I analyse manuals, magazines, and books of advice intended to help men deal with issues involved in childcare, marriage and family relations, published by private publishers as well as local city governments. I selected appropriate texts through visiting local bookstores and libraries and asking relevant staff members for advice, assessing popularity through
rankings and ratings, and reviewing myself the materials. The purpose of introducing these materials is to understand how in popular media the issues I address are treated and represented, so as to provide reference point against which to understand my informants’ practices.

1.3.2. *Day-to-Day in the Field*

The day-to-day activities in the field were driven by availability of informants for scheduled interviews and attendance at events, and by the familial rhythms that, while necessary for my own children, facilitated the fieldwork by providing opportunities for making contacts and acquaintances from which to identify informants. Most mornings I joined the daily communal summer morning calisthenics (*rajio taisō*), which brings together a broad mix of the local community. The youngest I took to and from kindergarten, the first year by car and second summer by walking to the kindergarten bus stop, with those pick-up and drop-off moments presenting opportunities to communicate with and to observe those who were involved in such activities. The elder children went to and from school on foot, together with children they had befriended: in the afternoons, they would usually play at their friends’ houses and other children’s meeting points (e.g. *dagashiya* which is akin to a confectionary shop, by a small river, and at a local shrine), so through them I came to meet a diverse set of children and parents.

Early in the field work, during the day my main focus was on following up with the various contact people through whom I aimed to snow-ball to informants. Thus, I visited the town hall, elderly and child-care facilities so as to speak to staff. Through them, and parents I had met, I also came to hear of one-off events for parents and children that I joined, such as a weekend cooking class, and a weekly evening calligraphy class with around twenty children and their parent(s). I also sought contacts through my past acquaintances, and when possible followed my children so as to meet corresponding parents. With the snow-balling underway, a part of my time became devoted to following up with potential informants and conducting the narrative interviews.

I took part in local community and school events, including theatrical performances by local children, a local community BBQ, a community game of catching fish, and a summer camp, among others. Such occasions provided me not only a chance to meet people and have more informal discussions, but also to observe who was taking part and in what way, as these events were largely for families. I also interacted with elderly residents at day care centres by accompanying them on walks, visited childcare centres, and attended summer festivals and various local symposia. I also observed daily family life, in part as a number of my interviews were held in homes and so afforded some visibility into daily family life, also through informal access through my children’s friendships, and in some instances by informants inviting me to
social occasions at their homes. In identifying key social settings, I paid attention to ongoing interactions between men and other family relations, both directly and as mediated through other family members. In particular, I sought to engage a broader perspective on these family relationships by soliciting the views of other family members, as well as friends and neighbours.

1.3.3. Being an Anthropologist-at-Home

While I believe many of the social settings I experienced in Hōjō are representative of many other cities in Japan, Hōjō is also where I was born and raised, which raises the question of my positionality as a researcher conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Several layers of issues relate to native anthropology and anthropology-at-home. While a starting point is to contrast the study of others by a non-native versus native anthropologist, the distinction is recognised as not so straightforward. While a native researcher may be born and grow up in the country of fieldwork, they need not be from the specific fieldwork site: while a typical example is an urban-based researcher engaged in rural fieldwork, this pertains more generally, such as Jeanette Edwards’ (2000) study of a town in the UK. While such researchers are native as compared to foreign-born researchers, they are non-native as compared to those researched, which makes the concept of native anthropologists relational (Kuwayama 2003). Further, the researcher may be native by birth and upbringing, yet have lived substantially away so as to place some distance between themselves and their home (Kim 1987). Thus, distance between fieldwork site and the researcher depends on several factors, not just place of birth and where they were raised.

In my case, my home town, now merged to form a city, is a place that I was familiar with from the past and with some sense of changes over time, yet my experiences as an adult through work, studies and family have taken me physically and culturally quite far. Thus, while not a ‘halfie’ in the sense of mixed origins, I relate to Dasgupta’s sense of being neither the detached outsider but nor fully an insider:

The experience of revisiting a familiar space in a new incarnation, and occupying the status of “insider/outsider” as I negotiated new relationships and re-negotiated old ones, forced me to confront issues, including notions of home, self and identity. […] The researcher is just as important to the process as the informant/respondent/subject. Rather than being a “neutral”, detached, interviewing/note-taking machine along lines presented in the more positivist research manuals, the researcher comes into the situation as a fellow social individual with their own complex personal baggage (Dasgupta 2013b:103–104, 108).
Not only did I engage with Hōjō in light of my experiences in quite diverse foreign countries, but also due to my academic training across these foreign settings. Indeed, rather than just place the locus of attention on the researcher’s cultural proximity to the fieldwork site, in the debate on native anthropologists an important focus is on epistemological aspects. One perspective is provided by the connection between the researcher, those researched, and those who the researcher communicates with about the research. Considering this last group, a non-native researcher is likely to engage with an academic community that is largely foreign relative to the research site; in contrast, a native researcher is more likely to engage with native scholars and native society (Peirano 1998; Kuwayama 2003). In my case, while I engage with scholars both in and out of Japan that publish in English and Japanese, I recognise that my academic training and the main discourse I aim to connect to that of the international scholarly community. In the field to some extent this proved to me an advantage: while my informants typically understand the notion of academic research, an international academic community is somewhat abstract and detached in a way that to some degree I found eased participation.

Notwithstanding my connection to the broader academic community, my personal connection to Japan raises the question of how I address aspects of my fieldwork that connect to broader social phenomena in Japan. In the context of anthropology at home, a perspective, and to some degree a caution, is that it is not just research focused on political issues that may be drawn into political discourse, but also many aspects of culture and society may also be, such as life style and education (Greverus and Römhild 1999; Löfgren 1999). Indeed, my research relates to several themes, such as elderly care, marriage, fertility, which evidently feature in the broader social and political discourse in Japan. In approaching fieldwork and engaging with informants and other local stakeholders, such as those who introduce me to informants, my approach is, while recognising this aspect of potential local engagement, to make clear that the purpose of my research is as a contribution to the broader academic community. In this regard, my stance as researcher from a foreign university has the benefit of being readily understood by informants and other local contacts, in contrast to, say, being a researcher for media or policy making purposes.

While on several broader social themes I could clarify my position to those I interacted with, one aspect was evident, namely that as a woman I am studying men. With respect to the issues faced by an anthropologist at home, while recognising that for some the issue of gender

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8 Such considerations may be placed in a broader disciplinary discourse, which stem from and lead to a broader critique of anthropology (Kuwayama 2003). Further, there are diverse patterns as to how native anthropologists are embedded in their social context and in native and non-native academic discourse (Peirano 1998).

9 At the same time, I recognise that some of those I interacted with were somewhat puzzled as to what motivates academics, such as wondering why I would find their accounts of such interest that I spend my time with them.
leads to a personal implication such as with some feminist anthropologists (Ryang 1997), I approach my fieldwork without such an aim. At the same time, the issue of gender points to a difference between myself and the main focus of my research, in particular the male subset of my informants: this difference means that for me the research subject is a relative other. This is an example, as argued by Ryang (1997), that rather than place emphasis on the native/non-native difference to recognise that difference could arise along many dimensions, including class, ethnicity, and gender.

While one aspect of the link between researcher and informants is how informants understand the researcher, such as background and purpose of the research, the issue of gender also raises the question of my access to male informants and to their accounts. The interaction of the researcher’s gender with that of informants includes, for instance, Lila Abu-Lughod’s (2000) study in which as a woman she could access everyday domestic routines of Bedouin women, which men were prohibited to join. In my case, conversely, access to male informants was a first concern, as a woman interviewing men about their practices in a domestic setting. At first, I was concerned about access in several regards, less so with elderly informants and more so with middle-aged married informants: for instance, whether female contacts would be willing for me to interview their husbands; conversely whether men would feel at odds speaking to me without first also involving their wives. In practice, I found that my male informants came through several approaches, including through their wives or through meeting directly, such as at classes and events. I believe that several factors helped, including my local connectedness, my informants knowing of my children and family, and their understanding that I was undertaking a substantial research project of which they were a part just like other men.

Beyond gaining access, questions may arise as to how forthcoming men would be in disclosing practices related to their masculinity to a woman. As compared to what my informants would reveal to a male researcher, they could project their manhood by emphasising practices they perceived as more masculine. Conversely, as my focus was on domestic practices, it is also possible that they might feel more comfortable elaborating on their involvement in such practices to a woman. Most importantly, though, I find that while I focus on men, my core interest remains with dynamics of negotiation and the relational aspects of masculinity. Accordingly, my informants included family members, both men and women, in a variety of relations to each other (as sons, daughters, wives and husbands). Thus, while methodological concerns about the relative genders of researcher and informant applied in different ways to interactions with each informant, the fact that my informants included both men and women meant that such complications were mitigated to some degree.
In my case, when discussing relations with family members my local knowledge (i.e. of family histories and connections) risked biasing my informants’ views. However, having lived away from Hōjō for many years, my social network in the area has grown somewhat attenuated with the passage of time. While I had contacts to initiate the process of identifying informants, I readily reached out to people with whom I had no prior connections, such as through the Town Hall and school connections. In particular, I concentrated on building rapport with families with whom I had no direct prior connection. Such factors serve to bolster the validity of my sample.

In terms of engaging with informants in the field, my approach also reflected considerations highlighted in the context native anthropologists. Familiarity with the language eases access and understanding, but risks a lack of objectivity, such as non-recognition of taken-for-granted aspects or informants leaving too much explanation as implicit (Kim 1987; Kuwayama 2003). Given my upbringing, I do have an understanding of the social and cultural practices and history related to my fieldwork site which, together with the benefit of being a native speaker, supports my understanding informants. At the same time, my adult life course has de-familiarised me to some degree with the local experiences related to my research. I find such experiences help me find, hopefully sufficient, critical distance to avoid the pitfall of sharing the unstated assumptions of my informants, thus easing my ability to approach my informants’ accounts with a not too internalised perspective.

Notwithstanding my aim to mitigate the risks and leverage the benefits of connection to the research site, I recognise that all ethnographies are subjective (Strathern et al. 1987), which relates to the reflexive turn in anthropology during the 1980s. An important contributor to this debate, James Clifford (1986) highlights ethnographies as ‘partial truths,’ that is, as consisting of multiple partial stories and dialogues between ethnographers and their various informants, with emphasis on the rhetorical constructions of knowledge in ethnographic texts and ethnographers’ self-reflexivity. Ethnographic works should emphasise multiple voices (‘polyphonic’) because culture is a contested entity and representations differ among people (Clifford 1986:2). Thus, inherent to the research process is the difficulty that the ethnography is necessarily from the ethnographers’ perspective, even when aiming for an objective representation. In my approach, I seek to leverage familiarity and distance from the local community in my interaction with individual informants: to interact with people with whom I do not have direct personal connections, and where possible to speak to family members and observe social processes involving my informants’ families.

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10 For instance, regarding marriage, amongst my friends and extended family I have come to know married couples from a wide range of countries that has heightened my awareness of the extent to which, say, couples’ relationships are culturally constructed.
A main concern I had during the fieldwork was whether or not my informants would be sufficiently candid. As a Japanese native speaker, my concern was not one of comprehension. Rather, I expected difficulty in having informants reveal their conflicts with other family members, especially regarding care for their elderly family members. My own perception before starting the fieldwork was that Japanese tend to think it is shameful (haji) to share family issues with strangers (tanin). In the field, however, I was very surprised to see how open interviewees were to share their experiences of such matters with me. While my informants were open to share, some provided expansive narratives, including most of my female informants and a good part of my male informants. Other male informants tended to give brief views, so requiring me to ask more questions so as to understand their experiences. Indeed, several interviewees ended up thanking me for the opportunity our interviews presented them to talk about their feelings and family issues. In one such case, one woman in her mid-forties even told me that ‘after talking to you about whatever I am feeling, now I feel great! I feel that I am detoxed! You are like a psychological counsellor,’ though I was simply listening without interjecting on any of the issues that the informant wanted to discuss. Other interviewees appreciated how the interviews provided them with an opportunity to think about their overall relationships within their families. Some of the interviews led to ongoing contact that helped me better understand my informants, such as one retired man who teaches Japanese water-painting as a hobby after the interview invited my children and I for a lesson. In another instance, after my interview with one female informant in her sixties at her home, she asked me if I was interested in having lunch with her and her own mother, whereupon the three of us spent an enjoyable time chatting over lunch. The day before I left Japan at the end of my final round of fieldwork, another informant called to tell me with a buoyant voice that she had solved an issue with her son-in-law that she shared with me during my interview with her: ‘The problem is now solved! Thank you and have a safe journey back!’ I am grateful for the willingness of the informants to share their experiences, feelings and thoughts.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises five chapters, in addition to this introductory chapter. In Chapter 2 Caring Husbands? Expectations and Everyday Practices, I focus on men as husbands, seeking to understand the basis for marriage, starting with men’s and women’s expectations of marriage partners. I then draw on my fieldwork to offer insight into how couples negotiate their relations, paying attention not only to the basis of the marital relation but also how this relation contributes to men addressing their personal well-being. In Chapter 3 An Evolution of Fatherhood – Nurturing Fathers?, I turn to discuss fathers, first analysing the government’s recent programme
on fatherhood and guide books to surface the practices asked of fathers. I then contrast this discourse with ethnographic evidence on fathers’ relations with their children, including how fathers’ coordination with mothers affects this relation. In Chapter 4 Grandparenting as a Means for Achieving Well-being among Recently Retired Men?, I turn to grandfathers and their involvement with grandchild rearing – especially their involvement with their daughters’ children. My starting points are government-sponsored programmes that have implied or prescribed notions of how grandfathers should relate to their grandchildren. I compare these with my informants’ experience, giving particular attention not only to grandfathers’ relations with their grandchildren but, importantly, on the consequent relation with their daughters and sons-in-law. In Chapter 5 Who Cares for Frail Parents? Negotiating Masculinity in Elderly Care, I address the provision of elderly care, with specific attention to the implications for sons and sons-in-law of the increased emotional intimacy of daughters with their parents. Through my fieldwork, I first address the negotiation amongst siblings to organise care for their parents, providing a perspective on sons’ involvement in elderly care, to then turn to how sons-in-law are drawn into novel patterns of elderly care of their parents-in-law. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes by drawing together insights and findings from across the four main chapters based on the theoretical perspectives of masculinity and relatedness, and discussing indications for future research.
Chapter 2. Caring Husbands? Expectations and Everyday Practices

Men’s family relations as husbands are in a substantially different social context as compared to the prior generation. While the hegemonic salaryman model places career and work as central to men’s well-being, over the past few decades, the satisfaction men have derived from their work has come under pressure. Since the burst of the so-called ‘bubble economy’ in 1992, Japan has weathered several economic recessions punctuated with limited periods of only modest economic growth, a sharp contrast to the high growth of the preceding four decades. Whereas the proportion of people that reportedly found their work worthwhile between 1978 and 1984 was consistently greater than 30 percent, this had declined to 16.6 percent by 2005 (MHLW 2008). This substantial drop in work as a source of satisfaction for men invites us to consider by extension the contribution of family relations to men’s well-being.

Men are forming families later and with fewer children, as compared to the prior generation. Given overall trends in fertility, couples are having less and potentially no children: the overall fertility rate fell from 3.65 births per woman in 1950 to reach its lowest rate of 1.26 in 2005. While the fertility rate was 1.43 as recently as 2013, it remains well below the 2.1 considered necessary for population maintenance (Cabinet Office 2015). Fertility has fallen for a variety of reasons, with more people either choosing to remain single, delaying marriage until later in life, or, once married, delaying or deciding against having children. In part these trends reflect the increasing levels of achievement by women in higher education and rising female participation in the work force, as well as increasing employment insecurity. The increasing diversity in women’s life course and changes in family composition point to the importance of understanding husband and wife relations, as part of situating men in the family.

Men’s involvement in the domestic sphere, to the extent that it occurs, might be expected to have some impact with respect to women’s situations. Men’s time available for domestic matters has increased: whereas male employees’ average annual working hours from 1987 to 1997 increased from 2,319 to 2,508 hours, from 1997 to 2012 this declined to 2,149 hours, which is about one hour less per day (Cabinet Office 2014). Throughout this period the time spent by men on household chores has gradually increased, in particular rising from 18 minutes per day in 1986 to 43 minutes per day in 2011. In particular, for men and women aged 30‒49 over the decade 2001 to 2011 the time spent on household chores for men increased from 30 to 39 minutes per day and for women decreased from 294 to 276 minutes per day (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2006 and 2011a: hereinafter MIC). Thus, notwithstanding the large absolute differences in time spent on household chores, perhaps men have contributed to alleviating the problem of the ‘double burden’ of working and raising children (cf. Nakatani
There is evidence from statistical analysis of survey data of married women feeling happier with their marriage the more their husbands perform housework, even if not at all an egalitarian split (Kaufman and Taniguchi 2009). The survey data, however, does not provide a fine-grained view of what self-rated marital happiness means to the respondents or what household tasks are performed. Thus, these trends and patterns do not reveal specifically in what way men have contributed to household chores, notably the process by which this occurs within the couple, nor what has motivated their involvement, which is a focus of my fieldwork.

In particular, I address men’s perspectives on domestic chores in the context of their marital relationships. Considerable attention has been devoted to the various aspects of attitudes, behaviour, roles and images of Japanese women as wives, mothers, and single mothers (e.g. Lebra 1984; Allison 1996; Creighton 2007; Nagase 2006; Nakano 2011; Goldstein-Gidoni 2012). While such studies discuss men as husbands through the relational lens of their wives, aside from the notable exception of a study of divorce among older couples (Alexy 2011), discussions of married couples are substantially underrepresented in the literature based on qualitative studies. Accordingly, in this chapter I explore relationships between men and women as husbands and wives.

My aim is to understand the ways that masculinity intersects with men’s everyday practices as husbands. Through ethnographic fieldwork conducted among married men and women complemented by my consideration of a mix of other sources, including opinion surveys, government documents, and books targeting a popular audience, I address the following questions. What expectations are placed on men as (potential) husbands? What everyday practices are men as husbands involved in? How are these practices established with their wives, and how does this affect the couple’s relationship? In what way do these practices reflect and affect men’s notions of masculinity? The answers to these questions provide insight into how men’s practices emerge given husbands’ and their wives’ mutual expectations and the pressures and aims from other aspects of their life, such as work. In the following sections, I first document the basis for the spousal relationships based on survey data so as to understand broad trends in marriage, starting with contrasting women’s and men’s expectations vis-à-vis their marriage partners and then discussing advice to married couples in popular media. I then turn to my ethnographic evidence of the everyday practices of husbands and wives, and how they live as a married couple.

2.1. The Basis for Spousal Relationships

Spousal relations are, from a relatedness perspective, based in the everyday practices of husbands and wives. Before addressing the basis for couples’ relationships in marriage, I first
assess unmarried men’s and women’s expectations of their marriage partners and the reasons for marriage. These expectations of marriage are against a backdrop of trends in marriage formation and dissolution, and fertility. The tendency for both men and women to marry later in life, the increasing instability of marriage, and the rise in proportion never marrying could be interpreted as a sign of increased unwillingness to marry.\footnote{The average age at first marriage has gradually but continuously increased: for men, rising from 27.0 years old in 1975, to 28.4 in 1993, and 31.1 in 2011; and for women rising from 24.7 in 1975, to 26.1 in 1993 and 29.4 in 2011 (MHLW 2011). At the same time, the proportion of unmarried men and women is increasing. From 1985 to 2010 the proportion of unmarried 30–34 years-old has increased from 10.4 to 34.5 percent amongst women, and from 28.1 to 47.3 percent amongst men (MIC 2011b). Further, from 1980 to 2010, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of people who never marry, from 2.6 to 20.1 percent for men and 4.5 to 10.6 percent for women (Cabinet Office 2016). Also, the number of the divorces doubled from 142,000 in 1980 to 290,000 in 2002 (a historical peak), before stabilising to around 236,000 in 2011 (MHLW 2013a).}

Nonetheless, young adults do in fact report their intention to marry eventually: based on a 2010 survey, 84.8 percent of single men and 87.7 percent of single women do wish to marry at some point in their lives (IPSS 2010a). Despite their stated desire to marry, a rising proportion of young people are not doing so, whether by choice or otherwise. This leads to inquire as to men’s and women’s expectations of marriage, which I assess based on broad survey data so as to provide context to understanding married couple’s relationships that I investigate through my ethnographic fieldwork.

\subsection*{2.1.1. Single Women: Changing Situations and Expectations towards Husbands}

Women’s expectations of prospective husbands in part reflect women’s desired life paths. An influential characterisation of women’s life courses two decades ago was the one put forward by Mary Brinton (1992), a key feature of which was the uniformity of this life course for the majority of women, such as aiming to marry before age 25 (Brinton 1992). A typical life course would be for a woman to attend two-year college, largely to prepare for family roles, and then work for a few years, to then marry by her mid-twenties, often having a first child within a year or two of marriage, with the woman returning to work part-time once the children had grown up (Iwakami 2010). Since such a characterisation of women in the 1980s and early 1990s, a multiplicity of alternative life paths has opened up for women, who are increasingly faced with more choices in their life. Women’s tertiary education changed from primarily based on two-year colleges mostly just for women to mixed gender four-year university courses: The student population at two-year colleges dramatically shrank over the course of two decades.\footnote{In 1990 there were 593 two-year colleges with 479,389 students, whereas by 2014 this number had declined to 352 two-year colleges with 136,534 students; and, by comparison, in 1990 there were 507 four-year universities with 2,133,362 students, increasing by 2014 to 781 four-year universities with 2,855,529 students (MEXT 2015).} After college, despite the tough post-bubble economic conditions, full-time careers attract more and more young women (Rebick and Takenaka 2006). Alternatively, some women may be capable
of working in highly skilled careers but prefer to become stay-at-home mothers rather than find work outside the home (Sasagawa 2006). Also, marriage and fertility choices have shifted to a new position later in women’s life course. The increased availability of such options for women relating to career, marriage and fertility, is also testament to the inherent and ongoing difficulty women face in making such choices, in particular with respect to dedicating themselves to professional career paths. Although women face significant difficulty in combining marriage, raising children and pursuing a career, they do have more options than in the past.

Whereas amongst married women the return to the work force was once undertaken largely for economic reasons, at present for some women other motivations lead to activities outside the home. For instance, in her book *The Conditions of Marriage (Kekkon no jōken, 2012)* published by Asahi Newspaper Press, the highly popular critic and psychologist Ogura Chikako makes the case that middle-aged women find increasingly desirable a ‘new full-time housewife mentality’ (*shin sengyō shufu shikō*), in which women take care of the housework as well as pursuing hobbies or employment related to their hobbies. Thus, for such women employment is not driven by income but rather to address their personal interests. Such women, suggests Ogura, are opening up to the voice of their autonomous self, and have begun to express their desire for social recognition (‘*seken ni mitomeraretai*’) through activities related to their hobbies, such as flower arrangements or essay writing (Ogura 2012:40). For such women, even though they remain largely responsible for housework, this does represent a marked difference to the characterisation of the prior generation of professionalised full-time housewives (cf. Imamura 1987; Goldstein-Gidoni 2012). The professionalised housewife had an absorbing role, as was that of salaryman for husbands, which left limited scope for addressing the needs of the self, other than through expression of their role as housewives. In contrast, Ogura’s emphasis on women’s personal interests place attention on addressing the needs of the self, not just fulfilling their role. Yet, for the wives Ogura addresses, their husbands are expected to be employed outside the house and be the main provider of household income, and, importantly, also help with housework. Thus, the life course Ogura points to may only apply to women whose husbands can generate sufficient income to support their families.

Indeed, the income of a prospective husband has remained an important criterion for single women considering marriage partners, even while the other criteria upon which they place emphasis have changed. In the 1970s and 1980s, the popular criteria in selecting a husband were the ‘three heights’ (*san-kō*) of high stature, high income, and a high level of education (Nakano 2011:136). Whereas these criteria emphasised the husband’s characteristics, by the 1990s popular criteria had somewhat qualified desired income and started to emphasise the husband’s relationship with his wife and his role in the family. These ideals were
encapsulated in the ‘three Cs’ (san-shī) of comfortable income, communicative character, and cooperation with housework and childcare (Mathews 2003:116). Relatedly, in the 15th edition of National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS) survey on marriage and fertility (‘shusshōdōkō kihon chōsa’) in 2015, single women aged 18–34 were asked about prospective marriage partners.13 Significantly, the proportion of women prioritising prospective husbands’ housework and childrearing ability has substantially increased from 43.6 percent in 1997 to 57.7 percent in 2015, the largest change over this time period in the IPSS categories (IPSS 2015).

Notwithstanding this shift in emphasis, young women still expect prospective husbands to be breadwinners. In the IPSS survey, the proportion of single women prioritising (jūshi) earning ability was 39.8 percent and educational background 10.6 percent (IPSS 2015). Indeed, men such as ‘freeters,’ who have irregular part-time work and so lack stable employment with a secure income, are typically not considered to be suitable to marry. For example, as reported in Cook’s research into freeter masculinity, one 22-year-old single woman confessed that ‘I suppose if I met a freeter who had a very strong drive to achieve his purpose, I would date him, but if he did not know what he wanted to do, it would be impossible. […] Having a proper (chanto) job is important for marriage’ (Cook 2013:38). Thus, income has remained a necessary condition for a man’s marriageability over time, even if with some indications of a transition from an emphasis on high to comfortable to secure income, which corresponds to the changes in broader economic conditions over the past three decades.

In short, while women have the opportunity to pursue their more varied life courses, in selecting a marriage partner one aspect that has remained central is single women’s expectation of prospective husbands’ income. It is noteworthy that what have changed are women’s expectations of prospective husbands’ participation with housework, which have significantly increased over time.

2.1.2. Single Men: Expectations towards Prospective Wives

In turn, single men’s expectations towards prospective wives have shifted away from those for a wife fulfilling the role of housewife. Whereas the IPSS 2015 survey cited above found that for single men and women when considering a potential spouse personality (hitogara) constituted the single most important factor, responses by men and women differed with respect to other criteria. For men, the next-most important criteria prioritised is a prospective partner’s

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13 In the survey, a question asked respondents whether they prioritised (jūshi), cared for (kōryo), or were not concerned about (amari kankeinai) prospective marriage partner’s: personality, earning ability, work, looks, educational background, housework and childrearing ability, understanding of own work commitments by partner, and having a common hobby.
ability to do housework and bring up children (46.2 percent) and understanding of the respondent’s own work commitments (41.8 percent). Interestingly, the proportion of men who care about the former quality increased more than any other criteria from 1997 to 2015, with an increase of 11.3 percent, from 34.9 percent in 1997 (IPSS 2015). As women’s life paths have become more varied, men increasingly seek assurance that their prospective marriage partners have skills indicating an interest in a domestic role.

At the same time, single men are generally supportive of a prospective partner’s work pursuits, subject to some limitations. Relatively few single male respondents to the IPSS 2015 survey (10.1 percent) supported the idea of their future wives choosing to become full-time homemakers, with three times that number (33.9 percent) supporting the pursuit of work and family. Indeed, as discussed in another of Ogura’s popular books on marriage, *Aptitude for Marriage* (*Kekkon no sainō*, 2012), the criteria that men allegedly look for in prospective marriage partners now includes not only cuteness (*kawaii*), cleverness (*kashikoi*), daintiness (*karui*), and a domestic orientation (*katei-teki*) but also earning ability (*keizai ryoku*). Ogura is critical of such views, noting the hypocrisy of men’s desire for women to have substantial part-time work while denying them careers of equal status or earning potential. Ogura hardly pays attention to what men expect in terms of a companionate relationship, focusing most of her attention on their relationship as parents or with respect to the functional management of the household. Nonetheless, to take Ogura’s listed criteria as representative of stereotypical men’s attitudes, the implication is that single men desire prospective wives who will take the lead on housework and childcare while working at the same time. This is to some extent consistent with recent changes to the life courses open to women, which often entails placing women under a significant double burden.

Thus, singles’ expectations of their marriage partners comprise elements of stability and change. Such expectations may be contrasted to the hegemonic notions of salaryman masculinity. Though the survey is national in scope and thus covers men and women from diverse social backgrounds who may or may not comply with the marriage as represented by the salaryman model, as hegemonic it is a relevant reference point, especially so in expectation. The core notion of the husband as primary provider of income remains: women view their husband as providing the main or at least a substantial part of household income. The sharp gender division of labour inherent in the salaryman model is partially questioned. From men’s perspective, there is an increased expectation of their wife combining work or hobby-related work together with taking care of the household, which is in line with women’s more varied life paths. Thus, this suggests couple’s engagement with work and hobby-related work will be no less and likely more than in the past. In parallel, though, men’s and women’s expectations
of marriage partners’ support for housework and childrearing have increased. While such expectations might seem a mild challenge to the received notion of marriage embedded in the salaryman model, this does not address how, in practice, this is achieved, namely how married couples face the challenge of meeting their increased expectations.

2.1.3. **Spousal Relationships**

Complementary to understanding men’s and women’s expectations towards each other as marriage partners is to address what is the basis of a spousal relationship. The husband and wife relation not only reflects their expectations of each other and appreciation for each other’s companionship but also the reconciliation with other aspects of married life, such as careers, childrearing, and managing the household, which for a couple may all be sources of joy, interest, stimulation potential and well-being as well as tensions. Further, marriage as an institution also reflects broader social practices and expectations.

Indeed, whereas men born in the 1930s and 1940s were subject (in both their personal lives and in the workplace) to the dictates of the social pressure to marry as a universal rite of passage to be completed at the appropriate age (Matthews 2003:110–114; Hidaka 2010:86), younger men have greater choice with regard to the timing of marriage. Indeed, successive IPSS surveys show corresponding trends in men’s view of marriage. The proportion of men for whom a benefit of marriage is to meet the expectations of parents and others has declined from 18 percent in 1987 to 15.9 percent in 2015, and with a more marked decline in the proportion considering marriage a means to gaining social trust, which was 22 percent in 1987, down to 12.2 percent in 2015 for the redefined categorisation of gain social trust and equal relationship with wives (IPSS 2015). Thus, for men, as compared to prior generations, marriage is less about fulfilling social obligations and more about other aspects of marriage.

In particular, for men one benefit of marriage increasingly prominent in the IPSS survey is having children and family. Whereas in 1987 this was a benefit for 20 percent of men, by 2015 the proportion had increased to 35.8 percent. Placing these expectations in the context of fertility trends, on the one hand, a central feature of marriage in Japan was and still is procreation. Almost all births are within marriage, as the proportion of births out-of-wedlock has remained low and stable over the past decades: between 1970 and 2014 the proportion of births to mothers not in a registered marriage has remained around 2–3 percent (OECD 2016). On the other hand, the timing of births is later in marriage and the number of births has declined, in line with overall fertility trends (discussed above). Whereas in prior generations, a first child would be born at an early stage of marriage, between 1975 and 2009, the proportion of couples giving birth to a first child within the first two years of marriage dropped from 80 to 60 percent.
(MHLW 2010). Thus, Japan has experienced a major generational shift in terms of the temporal sequencing of the decision to marry and the decision to have children. Correspondingly, the IPSS survey indicates that men increasingly seek a benefit of marriage, having children, which is no longer an automatic and immediate aspect of marriage. Further, as a gap in time between becoming a husband and a father has opened up, spousal complementarity no longer necessarily equates to parental complementarity, meaning that each of being a husband and a father may be considered to contribute separately to men’s sense of masculinity and couples’ relations.

Indeed, while men have increased emphasis on family, there has not been a corresponding increase in emphasis on aspects of couples’ relationships. In the IPSS survey, between 1987 and 2015 the benefits of marriage of living together with an intimate partner declined modestly (from 18 to 13.7 percent) and psychological relief (yasuragi) remained fairly stable (from 35 to 32.3 percent). At the same time, the fact that spousal affection is not even listed as a reason in the survey options indicates that romantic love is not a major reason for marriage, which corresponds to other discussions of marriage in Japan that privilege pragmatism over romance in marriage choices (cf. Tokuhiro 2010). This leads to consideration of the basis of the couple’s companionship.

In line with women’s expectations of the importance of husbands’ providing income to the family, and despite cross-generational differences with regard to career motivation, men still spend much time at work. In light of women’s increased participation in the work place, how are women spending time and communicating with their husbands, given their continued focus on the workplace? A separate IPSS survey of married women aged in their 20s to 50s addressed aspects of couples’ interactions and activities. The frequency of shopping together and communication (with regard to topics such as ‘weekend plans,’ ‘daily schedules,’ and ‘worries and concerns’) was higher amongst younger couples aged 20–29 (45 percent and 54 percent respectively) than amongst older couples aged 50–59 (30 percent and 36 percent respectively) (IPSS 2010b). This is in line with changes in women’s desire for communication: Younger women expect their husbands to communicate more openly, consistent with the increased importance placed on companionship in marriage by younger generations of women (Tokuhiro 2010:16‒27). Yet, the IPSS survey also indicated that those least likely to have dinner together with their spouses are in their 30s, a time of substantial career pressure. Also, the reported frequency of travelling together is lowest among those in their 40s, possibly due to children’s school studies and other activities that limit opportunities for travel. As the survey is of married women, it is certainly possible that husbands’ views of what counts for communication could differ substantially. Yet, these overall patterns indicate increased pressure on couples spending time together and communication as age increases, which is in
Addressing couples facing such pressures and related issues in their married life is the focus of a range of popular advice books. One theme in this discourse is the argument that the best form of companionship is the provision of help and support with regard to everyday matters. A proponent of this view is the clinical psychologist Akehashi Daiji, author of a series of books on childrearing that claims to have sold over four million copies, including illustrated popular manuals for couples with children such as *Happy Advice for Childrearing* (*Kosodate hapii adobaisu*, 2009). Akehashi characterises the companionship between partners in terms of bonds (*kizuna*)\(^{14}\) rather than romance. He suggests, for example, that rather than asking his wife out for dinner or a movie for her to take a break from childrearing, activities he indicates as more suitable for single people, a husband should help with housework because such activities are more suitable for married couples (Akehashi 2009:85). Although the book is about childrearing, its advice is based on an ideal of the bond between a husband and wife, rather than a romantic relationship between husband and wife. It is noteworthy that the main suggestion is for husbands to help their wives, which contrasts with absentee fathers, so as to develop the couple’s bond. To bolster his argument, Akehashi points to a survey he conducted of young Japanese wives (Akehashi 2009:27), on which basis he claims to have found that women were more likely to consider their partners more attractive when the husband helped more than average with childrearing (76.4 versus 51.9 percent among those with husbands who helped less), with 41.7 percent (versus 29.6 percent) of wives describing their relationship as that of lovers (*koibito dōshi*). Akehashi goes on to conclude from this that wives’ perception of the spousal relationship is affected by whether they consider their husbands’ practical contribution in everyday matters to be greater than of men who do not help. However, no methodological details are provided about the survey, how participants were selected, and how many took part. It is obvious that he makes use of arguments that appear scientific in order to appeal effectively to the readers. His point of view is that emotional ties between couples follow on naturally from a functional pragmatic relationship. This author’s books are very popular, which is an example of how ideas spread through media, potentially reconstructing socially accepted forms of coupledhood.

The range of views in popular media attests to the variety of what marriage means for couples. While prior generations’ marriages entailed a sharp complementarity in the gendered contribution of both partners, with women as professional housewives and men as financial

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\(^{14}\) *Kizuna* (deep bonds among people) was selected for a buzzword award in 2011. The unprecedented scale of disaster the Tohoku Earthquake in 2011 has led to a re-examination of the importance of *kizuna* (*Jiyū kokuminsha* 2013).
providers (cf. Edwards 1989), more recent generations enter into married life with in part
different expectations, in particular around housework and childrearing. Such expectations,
however, need to be set against other priorities for the couple, such as work. Thus, in the next
section, based on my fieldwork, I address how husbands negotiate with their wives the daily
practices that comprise their spousal relationship, and how this affects their sense of masculinity.

2.2. Ethnographic Cases: Husbands’ Selective Participation in Domestic
Matters
Marriage based on gender complementarity defines a limited role for men in the domestic
sphere, which is primarily deemed as a woman’s domain. Yet, women are being drawn into the
workforce and seek greater participation of men in the household. Thus, it is important to
understand how men in practice as husbands contribute in the domestic sphere including
childcare, and how couples negotiate their respective household chores. A perspective on such
husbands’ practices is provided by 38-year-old Naoki, married to 32-year-old Mami with three
young children aged six months, and four and five years-old. They work in different offices of
the same company with their regular working hours 9:00am to 6:30pm. They recently moved
to be close to Mami’s mother, Kyōko, which means for Naoki a substantial increase in daily
commute to two hours by train, so he usually returns home around 9pm. I first met Kyōko, who
is very active and friendly, at a childcare facility, who then introduced me to her daughter and
son-in-law. I met Kyōko, Mami and Naoki several times during both rounds of fieldwork, such
as at summer events, and interviewed Mami and Naoki individually. I interviewed Naoki at his
house during the weekend, in the tatami room they have reserved for his mother-in-law for
when she is spending time at their house, such as with their children, which tends to only be
during the week. Naoki explains what household tasks he is in charge of:

At least before I leave home every morning I try to do what I think is the minimum of
house chores I could do … I clean the bath every day when I finish taking it, and take
out the trash every time (twice a week) … Usually, my wife does laundry before she
goes to sleep but I hang them if she falls asleep before the laundry machine finishes
the cycle. […] I do household chores at the weekends. For instance, I move heavy stuff
which my wife cannot do or hang futons to dry outside, which I cannot do during
weekdays.

Naoki’s contributions in part are explained by his working hours, as he does not return home
on weekdays until around 9pm. He is able to contribute where it is most efficient for him to do
so, such as by putting out the rubbish (as on his way to work) and cleaning the bath immediately after bathing himself (as he is usually the last person in the household to take an evening bath). Naoki also contributes where his greater physical strength makes this an easier task for him than his wife. Some of these he considers manly and therefore appropriate tasks for a husband, while others simply make more sense from a practical perspective. Most of my other informants make similar contributions. However, even while appearing to make substantial efforts to coordinate with their wives to take on parts of domestic chores, importantly, these men’s contributions do not require any significant adjustment to their non-domestic, in particular work-related, routines.

Further, husbands tend to do domestic chores when their wives are not available. This aspect of husbands providing support due to ‘necessity’ comes through in Kazuya’s account. He was born in Kobe, aged 34, and works for the municipal tax authority in Hōjō city. Most of the year, he works regular hours, typically Monday-to-Friday between 9:00am to 7:00pm, though in the spring around the financial year end he works longer hours. I first met Kazuya at a two-day summer camp I attended for fathers and their children. I interviewed Kazuya on a subsequent day after his work, in a quiet restaurant: he is well-educated, with a calm personality, and clearly articulates his perspectives. His wife, who also grew up in Kobe, works part time five days a week, including Saturdays. So, Kazuya spends his Saturdays in the company of their three-year-old daughter. He explains his parenting as follows:

I look after my child because my wife works on Saturdays. When my daughter wakes up on Saturday mornings, I give her the milk and rice balls my wife prepared before going to work, and then for lunch I prepare some ready-made food such as instant ramen.

(Author’s emphasis)

He looks after his daughter not simply because he has the time to do so (he does not work on Saturdays) but rather because his wife is not available. However, his involvement in terms of food preparation remains minimal, as his wife still prepares breakfast before going to work. Indeed, wives preparing breakfast is a commonplace among my informants, since it is always possible for wives to prepare meals in the early mornings, whereas they might be away for other meals depending on work or other commitments. Usually, amongst my informants, wives prepare bento boxes for themselves and their husbands for their lunch at their offices. At Saturday lunch time Kazuya only prepares relatively easy meals such as instant ramen, as he lacks the skill to cook. More precisely, he has little interest in taking the responsibility to think
carefully about nutrition, whereas none of the women I talked to prepare instant noodles on a regular basis. In fact, there are multiple options for serving more balanced meals aside from cooking them, such as buying healthy food at take-out shops specialising in prepared meals (osōzaiya) which are readily available in Hōjō. Kazuya’s approach reflects his belief that preparing meals is a woman’s task and that his parental responsibility towards his daughter is to be a ‘stand-in’ until his wife returns.

In addition to necessity, my informants tend to divide up tasks according to the dictates of time pressure due to other commitments. A consistent theme among many of those I interviewed is for parents to look after their children not as a couple but separately. When I asked male informants about childcare in their families, their explanations tended to be broken down into an itemised list of how they contributed as compared to their wives, with almost no exceptions. Unless I asked specifically what they did as a couple, almost no one referred to activities carried out together. This implies that my male informants fundamentally consider activities such as shopping, which could be done together, as something to divide between themselves and their wives. This preference for the division of labour also extended to household chores, such as cleaning. Many of my informants highlight time pressure as a key determinant of allocating tasks in this way instead of carrying them out jointly. The time pressure notably comes from both spouses working, which severely limits the time available during the week for domestic matters.

My informants’ contributions to household tasks tend to be concentrated in situations where, from the wives’ perspective, they provide help, as the task is necessary to attend to, such as taking the rubbish out, and additional from the husbands’ perspective as they may undertake this without significant changes to their work or other commitments. I refer to these contributions as ‘additional help.’ Thus, husbands tend to help when their wives are not available, or where it is more efficient for them to carry out the tasks in question, or where these were primarily activities requiring physical strength. They privilege tasks that do not require substantial time or efforts, but can be accomplished inside short, well-defined periods of time. Husbands may add take on such tasks without having to make any or significant changes to other commitments, notably to work: these are from their perspective additional to their other commitments. While their wives recognise these contributions as helpful, as indeed these tend to involve necessary aspects of running the household, these circumscribed contributions leave the main responsibilities to their wives. This additional help, covering a variety of domestic tasks, from cleaning to childcare, effectively blurs gender-based roles. This is a shift as compared to Edwards’ (1989) discussion of marriage based on spousal ‘complementarity of incompetence,’ with women for household tasks and men for work. The notion of ‘additional
help’ implies that help is both given (by husbands) and received (by wives), which raises the question as to why my informants view themselves as helping their wives rather than, say, participating as equal partners in the running of the household.

In this regard, Kazuya explains why his wife takes on the main responsibility for housework:

It’s not that I believe that domestic chores and childcare (*kaji ikuji*) are what a wife *should* do. But in reality, without our realising it (*katte ni*), everything is done that way. My wife doesn’t say anything, since she was raised in a similar family environment. She grew up in a traditional family. Maybe that’s why she keeps doing it that way.

Kazuya distinguishes that what his wife does is not what he thinks she ‘should’ do: he does not place on her the duty of domestic chores. Rather, his wife takes on domestic tasks through replicating what she saw growing up, although this is contingent to her current circumstances, for instance her need to work on Saturday mornings. Thus, their situation on the surface could seem a replication across generations of past practices, given the overall proportion of tasks each takes on. In fact, however, there are two important breaks from what they experienced growing up that make for a much more partial reproduction of practices: even if his wife remains the default spouse for domestic practices, she is not duty bound to perform these, and so these domestic practices may be shared with Kazuya as necessary.

Whereas Kazuya readily points to childhood experiences in shaping the couple’s respective roles, other informants tend not to explain why they place their wives in certain roles. For instance, Hayato, aged 39, is a city hall employee, with fairly regular working hours. I met him at a weekend cooking class for parents and children (*oyako ryōri kyōshitsu*), at which he was one of the three fathers who attended amongst the twelve families. Hayato has two sons, aged five and six, and during our subsequent interview he explained his daily interaction with his children: ‘I send and fetch my kids to karate lessons *because* my wife *has to* (*shinaito ikenai kara*) take care of household chores.’ Hayato does not explain why his wife does not pick up the children from karate lessons while he takes care of household chores; rather he has internalised the logic of their complementary roles. This naturalised division of labour allows both to go about their respective tasks efficiently when they are pressed for time. Taku, for instance, is a father of three, aged three, five and nine years old, who works in an architectural firm, usually returning home around 9pm on weekdays. I first met his wife, Mari, at a local summer festival event for families and we met regularly thereafter. I often saw her and their children at summer morning radio exercise and as my children played often with their children.
I had occasion to observe him with his family and to have several informal conversations, such as when I and my family attended a BBQ together with his family and their friends. Mari also works full-time as a kindergarten teacher. For Taku’s family, recreation involves occasions such as weekend trips to the beach, pool or an out of town entertainment park that they take as a whole family. More typically however, they remain close to home. I interviewed Taku at the weekend at his house, with Taku telling me:

When I’m off work, we eat breakfast, and the usual pattern is that I’ll take the three kids out to [one of the parks] in the neighbourhood. Most of the time I take them on my own, though Mari will join us maybe one time in three. […] When the kids were little, we’d all go together, but now that they’re a little bigger, while I’m out with kids, Mari will do chores for us around the house – cleaning, buying us groceries for dinner, those kinds of things … though we do go out together if we can. In a word, it’s because it’s more efficient this way. For instance, I usually take the kids to the park for an hour or two in the afternoon after lunch. Splitting up to do things separately – it’s certainly more efficient. When we spend the day at a pool or the beach, or go out for lunch and dinner, on these occasions we’ll all go out together.

This division of labour is the result of its perceived efficiency. The couple does not discuss who does what – e.g. who goes to the park, who does cleaning and goes shopping. It is simply taken for granted that Mari will do the housework and that Taku will do something else (in this case playing with the children). Though he accepts his wife’s taking on the housework, this does not mean that Taku does not appreciate her efforts as he plays with the children. The language in which he couches his explanation also specifically reflects that he considers these tasks to be what Mari does on the family’s behalf rather than merely in fulfilment of her duty in looking after the house.

Further, I observed one evening the sharing of tasks between the spouses. I and my children had come over for dinner to make udon noodles from scratch. It was mid-week, so Taku joined us just before 9pm, by when we had already eaten. Upon returning home, while chatting with us over a beer, he first played with the children and, once the youngest boy had become tired, took him to bed. As the house became quieter, he sat down and had dinner, with us joining him for a second round of udon noodles. Once it was time to tidy up, we all helped including Taku. My inference is that, though guests were over for dinner, his involvement with the children and help in tidying up were part of his usual patterns as, for instance, he never had to ask what to do next or where something was or needed to be placed.
In contrast, traditionally, domestic matters in Japanese households were a wifely duty: even minimal involvement by men was unusual (Mathews 2003; Hidaka 2010; Kamada 2010). While my informants typically start from the assumption of domestic tasks and childcare being within the purview of their wives, this is the starting point for any adjustments when other considerations such as work commitments and time pressures need to be factored in. And while husbands’ practical contributions to the domestic sphere may seem modest, it is crucial to point out that even a minor shift away from the perception of domestic matters as an (exclusive) duty of wives represents a major change. Once household tasks are no longer wives’ duty, they become a matter for wives’ responsibility and, importantly, coordination and allocation between spouses.

While in effect sharing to some degree the tasks amongst the spouses, my informants as couples vary substantially as to how they determine their respective practices, which may depend on the issues at hand. One important mediating factor is the presence of couples’ parents. For several of my informants’ families, from the wives’ perspective part of their burden is alleviated by being able to rely on their parents for some support especially if both spouses work. Indeed, some couples move closer to the wife’s parents to achieve this. For instance, Naoki and his wife Mami moved very close to her parents when they knew she was pregnant with their third child: the proximity to maternal grandparents is sufficiently valued for Naoki to be willing to increase his commute substantially, from under 30 minutes to around 2 hours. Indeed, for Mami proximity to her parents was also a condition for marriage as well as affecting the ongoing spousal relationship, as explained by Mami:

For two reasons we moved closer to my parents – childcare and elderly care. […] I have been a “mummy kid” since I was small, so my parents’ help for looking after my kids is very welcome. Also, I always had and still have a wish to look after my parents when they need elderly care. […] (Before we married) I separated from my now husband for three years as he said he had decided to go back to his home town (where his parents live): I didn’t want to live there as it is far from my parents. But he changed his mind, after three years telling me, “After all, I decided not to go back to my parents’ place. I want to spend my life together with you here.” I was doubly delighted as I could be close not only to him but also my parents! […] As I am “mummy kid” I cannot be away from my mother and my mother also cannot be away from me. Before moving very close to my parents’ house, every weekday I met my parents when I came to drop off and pick up my kids at my parents before and after my work. But the time we spent together was very limited, so we could not chat a lot. But now (since we
moved very close to them) we can chat for a long time and spend all day together – I am very glad.

For Mami her spousal relationship is conditioned on her relationship with her parents, from the decision to marry, where the couple lives and the daily family routines, and, in expectation, her involvement with her parents’ elderly care. I also spoke to Mami’s mother the year before Mami moved close by and after the move. I first met her at a children’s water play park, when she was looking after Mami’s children: as we spoke she relayed how happy she was that ‘my daughter is moving close to my house!’ A year later, we met again at a summer festival, which she was attending with Mami’s family: I asked Mami’s mother whether the move had happened and she told me ‘yes, she did and I am very happy!’ Considering the couple’s relationship in the context of their extended family, in such an arrangement it is the wife who coordinates activities, which includes her parents. While in terms of completing necessary domestic tasks this clearly reduces some of the pressure on wives; nonetheless, they still expect their husbands also to provide support.

Married couples’ involvement with parents also includes elderly care. This tends to affect the emotional connection between spouses, as they become more dependent on each other so as to address elderly care. For instance, Tomoko, a 54-year-old who works full-time as a nurse. She lives with her husband, Toshihiko, a 58-year-old salaryman, and her parents. I interviewed Tomoko and Toshihiko at their house during a weekday evening after work. Tomoko explains that taking care of her parents has altered her relationship with her husband:

The amount I quarrel with my husband has decreased since we moved to my parents’ house (to provide care for them). […] Living together with my parents to care for them causes a lot of stress for me, much more than I imagined. It is my husband who loosens the tension. I complain about this and that to him, and he says to me gently, “These things are what you wished to do, right?” […] I am irritated when I cannot care for my parents well, and I don’t like myself when I am irritated. So, I vigorously complain about the situation to my husband, and he flatters me very nicely and calms me down by saying like, “You are doing very well.” Usually, I am convinced and keep going.

Part of Tomoko’s tension comes from her professional capability, as a nurse, and the difficulty of applying these skills in a familial context, where she does not have a professional detachment from the care receiver. Her husband, Toshihiko, explains that in the evening they often chat over drinks and he feels that for Tomoko this is like ‘releasing gas from the body (gasu nuki)
by drinking a beer.’ Thus, couples’ relationships are embedded within a set of extended family relations that, in turn, affect spousal relationships, including the emotional connection between the spouses.

To determine the husband’s contribution, couples may not negotiate, but could take other approaches. This could include husbands deciding what they take on, effectively leaving the rest to their wives, such as Naoki in the early morning, or almost unspoken coordination, as with Taku taking the children to the park. Husbands’ contributions are not determined just by the necessity to functionally complete the tasks required to run the household.

Husbands’ personal preferences also play a part, as evidenced by the case of Ken, aged 44, who works as a veterinarian in the animal husbandry section of the local government office, and has two daughters aged 10 and 13. He was willing to participate in my study, and in discussion comes across as cheerful and with a broad education, in addition to his veterinary specialisation, and with a clear view on questions I asked him. I met him through the weekly calligraphy lessons for parents and children that I regularly attended, and interviewed him after we had met several times. I interviewed him at the weekend at a coffee shop while he was waiting for his older daughter to finish her ballet lesson. Ken’s wife also has a full-time job in the public sector, working in a different office. Both spouses start work at 8:30am, and they usually return home around 7pm, except for a couple of months of the year when they return later due to fiscal year-end around 9pm. In Ken’s case, he explains a part of his contribution:

I like doing cleaning. […] When I was single, my older peers said to me, “I feel I have to sit formally (seiza) when I visit your room as it is very tidy.” […] I do care about it. I care, for instance, when I see mould at home as it is dirty. It is my personality.

Like many of my informants, Ken tends to view cleaning as generally a part of his wife’s domain, yet he also cleans, such as after coming home from work. His motivation is not just to complete an allocated task, however; it reflects something more personal. Ken self-identifies as a tidy person. Cleaning and tidying up give him personal satisfaction, which has been the case for him even before marriage. The couple’s arrangement thus allows scope for him to make a contribution that not only benefits the household, but also provides personal benefit for himself. Nor is cleaning the only contribution Ken makes that reflects his personal desires. For instance:

I cook! I go for shopping to buy ingredients when I am in the mood for cooking … I do cooking perhaps once every two weeks, in particular on weekends.
This is a modest contribution to preparing family meals, given that his wife bears the responsibility for shopping for groceries and preparing meals almost all the time. Yet, Ken clearly enjoys cooking and has the necessary skills; he could do more cooking, but limits himself only to when he is in the mood. While my other informants tended not to emphasise cooking as an interest at home, BBQs seem to trigger men’s interest in cooking. I observed men at the BBQ both at a community event and also at an evening gathering at an informant’s house. They were not just completing the necessary task of cooking, or passively keeping an eye on the food while it cooked. They manned the BBQ with evident energy and pleasure. Similarly with Ken, his contribution in this area points to Ken not only fulfilling a household task but also addressing the needs of his self that are nourished by the joy he experiences when cooking.

The couple’s coordination of household practices provides a means for addressing personal needs of husband and wife. Returning to the case of Kazuya, we can see how he characterises his and his wife’s efforts to organise themselves in order to balance their own time with the care of their young daughter:

I come back to home earlier around 6:30pm two or three times per week so that my wife can go to pachinko. When my wife is out of the house playing pachinko, my daughter and I watch manga, DVD or play with toys. […] After dinner, my daughter plays with an indoor swing or gymnastics but basically we have never played all three together. Even though one of us plays with our daughter doing UFO catcher …, the other one surfs the computer on their own. I think it is very important to have time for oneself.

Kazuya and his wife ensure that they each have appropriate space and time for themselves. He does not complain that his wife goes to pachinko, but rather even makes an effort to give her the space to pursue her hobby by coming back earlier than usual from work when he can do so. He understands that time to be alone is important, both for his wife and himself.

For Kazuya and his wife, childrearing is not a joint activity for a wife and husband to pursue together. When they are all at home they create space and time for the daughter to be watched over by one parent, so the other parent can enjoy personal time. Even though their daughter goes to bed at 11pm or even midnight, leaving plenty of time to play and spend time with her, the family seldom spends time all three together. When his wife plays with his daughter, he uses the computer in a separate room. He not only wants to do his own activities, he also prefers a space where he can be by himself, even at home.

Even activities that might be easily shareable as a couple are not necessarily undertaken
together, not for the sake of expediency but rather by preference. For instance, Naoki explains his view of the allocation of household tasks:

I think that childcare and housework should be sorted by division of roles (yakuwari buntan). I don’t force everything to my wife as I think that she also wishes to have time alone. […] My wife likes to visit shops by herself. I think it is a good idea for a break.

Not only does Naoki recognise the need of his wife for personal time to spend shopping on weekends, he also likes to do his personal shopping on his own (‘I want to go shopping as an individual’) since he feels he has his own sense of style. He does not feel this to be too much of an imposition (‘I want to have my own time … I just need one to two hours, no more …’). In turn, he feels his wife is cooperative, waving him off saying ‘Itteirasshai!’ (a send-off roughly equivalent to saying ‘have a nice time’) expressed happily. As a couple, they recognise and negotiate to make time for their own pursuits.

Across my informants, spouses’ separate activities feature centrally in couples’ relationships. For instance, one of my female informants, Naomi, aged 46, who works full-time including one in two weekends and has two boys aged 14 and 17. I had a long interview with her at the office of her friend who introduced us, during which she explained her desire for time alone:

I want to be alone. I want to say to let me have time alone. My husband’s job schedule is very irregular: he is often not at home in the morning. I have almost never had breakfast with him except when it is his off day from work. […] If I am alone, I can do cleaning, take a rest, read books, and go out for shopping without rushing.

Thus, time alone is in part for taking care of household tasks but also for leisure and relaxation, including time spent at home as well as out of the home: time for herself. For couples to give attention to the self requires seeking appropriate time and space to address husbands’ and wives’ individual needs and desires. Time for shopping, for instance, need not be to fulfil the functional acquisition of objects, but may be viewed as a form of consumption that involves putting oneself into objects that enable expression of their tastes, which are a part of their sense of self (c.f. Miller 1995). Making space for personal pursuits, such as using the computer at home, requires the mutual balancing of personal and collective pursuits and the setting of appropriate boundaries.
In regard to couples’ coordination, Dalit Bloch (2017) studies the relationship of couples in their mid-thirties who undergo a transition in the use of time and space with the arrival of children, for instance, due to young children sleeping with their parents. Notwithstanding the loss of couples’ own space, Bloch argues they create locations and moments of being together, such as through communications. While my informants also experience a change in relationship once with children, I find that it is time spent apart from one another that is important. They are not just acting individualistically to make time for themselves. Nor are they in line with accounts of marriages of the prior generation that emphasised how couples’ life unfolded in parallel tracks (Iwao 1993; Yuzawa 1994). Rather, couples’ mutual recognition of their respective needs leads to coordination between spouses to enable personal time and space. Spouses appreciate each other’s efforts in this regard: in such instances, time spent apart contributes to strengthening, not weakening, couples’ relationships.

The explicit attention devoted to catering to their own interests points to how these couples seek to address their needs of the self, not just fulfil their roles. This is in marked contrast to what might be expected from a marriage based on the mere fulfilment of complementary roles, as with a strict gender-based division of labour (Imamura 1987; Edwards 1989). Even if the division of labour were less strict, with some degree of overlapping or blurred roles, we could expect such a style of marriage to remain focused on fulfilling roles that reflect social expectations. In turn, such a marriage places limited emphasis on self-fulfilment other than through fulfilling one’s role as spouse. In a marked break with such a focus on respective roles in marriage, I find my informants place a substantial focus on addressing the needs of their self through marriage, which requires spousal coordination.

This is supported by Dorinne Kondo’s notion of ‘multiple selves’ and gendered individuals, which does not separate identity and context, and therefore self and society. As she argues: ‘You are not an “I” untouched by context, rather you are defined by the context’ (Kondo 1990:29). Hence, selves are not static objects but rather constantly being crafted through enacting their relational identities. Anthropologist Nancy Rosenberger (1992) argues moreover that ‘the very word for self in Japanese, jibun, implies that self is not an essentiality apart from the social realm. Jibun literally means “self-part” – a part of a larger whole that consists of groups and relationships’ (Rosenberger 1992:4). She does not consider the interactions of sociality and the autonomous self as separable. For spouses, the couples’ relationships represent a key social connection through which to addresses their selves. In turn, achieving this strengthens couples’ relationships and thus contributes to marital well-being.

Such spousal relations provide a perspective on how married men fulfil their sense of masculinity. This provides a mechanism to understand how, in the terms used by Mathews
(2003), married men may address their *ikigai*. The marital relations implied in the hegemonic salaryman model are consistent with *ikigai* of work. This model, however, does not necessarily also support men addressing a more self-oriented *ikigai*, such as the pursuit of personal interests. Given the strict gender separation, such men would have the time to pursue interests and activities reflecting their self. However, the notion of gender separation is conditional on men’s devotion to work: there are no reasons to believe non-work related activities would have spousal approval, so non-work activities would likely lead to their spousal relation suffering. In contrast, my informants’ emphasis on addressing the needs of the self is through spousal coordination: relative to the hegemonic salaryman model, this is a re-shaping of marital relations. While addressing the self requires the couple to coordinate, there may be limited or no need for joint activities, as for my informants their pursuits addressing needs of the self tend to have limited spousal involvement.

Indeed, notwithstanding my male informants’ accounts of how they coordinated with their wives with regard to domestic tasks so as to pursue their own interests, none spoke of going out together as a couple, such as for a night out or a date. Indeed, when asked about going out with his wife, for instance, Naoki’s reply was:

No time. In the first place, I just have too little time [to go out with my wife.] I feel that weekends should be spent together with family … Otherwise, I haven’t given it that much thought … I guess I’d be lying if I said I never felt like going out just the two of us. But that feeling is definitely less than back when we were dating. Because we have kids. I want to be with my kids and family. […] I feel guilty towards the kids. I can’t spend much time with them on weekdays, and if we make time for ourselves as a couple, I’d lose more time with the kids. I don’t want to go out taking *that much* of a risk of spending less time together with the kids … depending on what you prioritise. […] Also, I feel sorry for my parents-in-law (who would keep kids while out) because they waste their time for us and it’s a burden for them.

(Author’s emphasis)

At first Naoki appeals to a lack of time, but then adds that he prioritises time spent with the children or the whole family, children and wife, over time with his wife alone. In marked contrast to past characterisations of ‘absent fathers,’ he has both a feeling of guilt towards the children if he were not with them as well as a desire to spend time with them whenever he can. While my informants may wish to spend time with their children, they do not view being just with the children as family time. Indeed, my informants typically emphasise, in intention and
in practice, spending time as family, by which they mean with spouse and children: for instance, as explained by one of my informants, a wife, who says ‘when we go out (for leisure) the five of us are always together.’ In contrast to such family outings, my informants view going out with only their spouse as a much lower priority, not least as this raises the question of who would look after the children.

Indeed, Naoki does not want to ask his parents-in-law for their help, as he sees this as imposing a burden rather than, say, providing an opportunity for grandchildren and grandparents to spend some time together. Amongst my female informants, some tended to be either reluctant to go out just with their husband, such as Naomi who has two teenage sons: ‘I don’t have much wish to go out only the two of us, with my husband. […] As he prefers to relax at home or to sleep, I let him to do so.’ Other female informants are more positive to going out as a couple but are reluctant to ask their parents to babysit for this purpose, and do not raise the possibility of hiring babysitters. For instance, Megumi, who has three children aged seven, five and three, and works as a part-time cooking instructor. I had several conversations with her at various community events and playgrounds. The day I interviewed her, we were at a community facility with playrooms and children’s library, which often has several mothers, less so fathers, chatting while their children play for a couple of hours or so. During the interview, Megumi relayed that her father is very conservative, stubborn and strict, which comes through in her reluctance to ask for babysitting for the purpose of dating:

I envy those people who go out with their husbands leaving the kids to their parents. I have never even asked my parents. […] It is awkward to ask because the reason to ask is to go out for dating with my husband. I guess that my parents would think that parents should look after their children … I may like to be viewed a good child by my parents, so I am making a best effort [not to ask for babysitting].

The reluctance to involve parents extends to other family members, as relayed by another informant, Ken, who does not want to ask the extended family to help with babysitting:

For instances, when we’re of a mind to go out for something nice to eat, we could hand the kids over to my sister-in-law. […] Even though we beg off when she asks us to look after her kids [we don’t want to take on that responsibility]. Even more so, though, if the reason is going out for dinner only two of us. […] It’s awkward to ask her. Also, no one else I know is asking such things.

(Author’s emphasis)
My informants would be happy to leave their children with an extended family member, but are not willing to ask simply to be able go out for dinner as a couple. A means to understand these feelings of ‘awkwardness’ and ‘guilt’ is through Rosenberger’s argument of the inseparable interaction of sociality with the self in Japan, such that self is mutable and dependent on social relations (Rosenberger 1992:4). Thus, for my informants the relationship with their wives is in part the sociality of the self, which going out with their wives would sustain. But the relational self’s (i.e. determined by the relevant social relations) constitutive relations are not limited solely to those of the couple, but rather ramify outwards to involve those who would be taking care of the children, in this case usually an extended family member (e.g. parents-in-law, sister-in-law). Thus, my informants’ views on going out are deeply affected by their perception of the impact on these social relations. This relation, importantly, is embodied in the reciprocity of giving, receiving and returning (cf. Mauss 2001 [1925]; Rupp 2003; Slater 2016). However, as a receiver of babysitting help, the husband would use up the time of the giver, incurring a debt he lacks a means to repay. Not being able to fill this gap would engender feelings of ‘awkwardness.’ Indeed, the need for reciprocity in exchange, in this case, blocks exchange. My informant is not willing to look after his sister-in-law’s children, thereby limiting the ability for an equivalent exchange. Even so, he could repay by providing some other form of support, such as by shovelling snow or washing her car. To the extent that there may be a means for him to achieve reciprocity, this indicates his fundamental reluctance to ask such a favour. My informants also cite the absence of social expectations not only with regard to babysitters but also, more fundamentally, with regard to going out as couple after having children. The combined absence of means to achieve reciprocity and existing expectations thus compounds the difficulties entailed in going out as a couple.

In probing further Ken’s views, he revealed to me how his relations with his wife affect, indeed limit, his desire for them to go out as a couple:

But I don’t go out even when somebody can look after my kids. This is not because I don’t like my wife … we have nothing much to talk about together, so our conversations go nowhere. My colleagues said the same thing to me. We have nothing to do, nothing to talk if it’s just the two of us. So, I don’t want to bother going out with my wife.

At one level I was surprised, as during my fieldwork I often saw Ken and his wife smiling and talking in a friendly way with their friends and children. They appeared to be a couple with
close relationships. However, since I never saw just the two of them, I was not ready for what Ken told me. Though his comments may sound blunt, it reflects a similar sentiment shared by other informants, as well as (according to him) Ken’s own colleagues. Indeed, Ken recounted how this had been different when they were dating and early in their marriage. When they were single they referred to each other by first name, and he thought she was responsible with money and cute (*kawaii*). Once married, his feeling of cuteness decreased and they had little quarrels, but nonetheless he felt the early years were an extension of single life. Once their first child was born, Ken and his wife started to refer to each other as ‘papa’ and ‘mama,’ even without the children around, and now they go out once per year, for lunch on a Saturday while the children are at a school event. Thus, for Ken, their couple’s relation evolved over the course of their marriage, with transition to fatherhood and motherhood representing a substantial change for the couple.

My male informants and their spouses prefer to go out with their friends rather than with each other. While men during the bubble economy would have gone out under the pretext of work (Allison 1994), my informants tend to go out with their friends, not necessarily linked to their work. This is consistent with the practice, reported elsewhere, of Japanese men and women commonly going out in gendered groups.¹⁵ That is, for my informants going out is more for the satisfaction of personal interests than to sustain couples’ relationship, or for simply enjoying time spent together with a spouse.

The attention of couples to the husband’s and wife’s selves while also privileging time with children as compared to with their spouse is a break from marriage characterised by the functional complementarity of the husband and wife as the basis for their relation. Indeed, the notion of a couple based on gender complementarity has been recognised as being under pressure due to broad social changes, with Yamada Masahiro, a leading Japanese family sociologist actively involved with public policy in Japan, arguing that the Japanese family is in crisis (Yamada 2003:220–229). He defines the central purpose of the husband-and-wife unit during the post-war economic boom to be the raising of children to enjoy lives better than their own, which has become more difficult as the economy has declined. Furthermore, Yamada points to destabilising social trends that position family and spousal relationships themselves

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¹⁵ For women, by comparison, a common leisure outing is known as ‘*joshikai*’ – a term that has received attention in popular media since 2008 (being rated as one of the top ten buzzwords in 2010). According to an online dictionary of Japanese slang, ‘the term *joshikai* refers to groups exclusively of women who meet regularly for meals and conversation. Some surveys have found that more than half of working women participate in such gatherings at least once a month. While the significance and purposes of such groups are many and varied, they are alike in that they offer a space where women can share confidences and engage in ‘straight talk’ (*honne tōku*). Other reasons frequently cited are that participants are able to find sympathy from their peers and relieve stress’ (*Nihongo zokugo jiten*, 2016).
as a source of risk, leading to a trend towards divorce, which he calls ‘fūfu no risutora’ (a ‘restructuring of spousal relationships,’ playing on the euphemism for workplace layoffs) (Yamada 2003:16). From a man’s perspective, this could be a crisis that relates more to their role as husbands and/or fathers. The divorce rate, though, is higher for young couples within five years of marriage than for those married longer, and more and more the time gap between marriage and first birth has been widening (MHLW 2010 and 2016a). During the early years, the role of husband is likely to take on more prominence than the role of father, which suggests that the crisis related to increase in divorce is more about men as husbands. Thus, married couples with children, such as my informants, are more likely to make adjustments within their existing family relations.

While my informants usually consider their wives to be better suited to household tasks and other activities pertaining to the domestic sphere, they prefer not to characterise such tasks as a women’s duty. The naturalised assumption of gendered suitability remains, but a shift appears to have taken place from a more prescriptive discourse of duty to one of responsibility. The boundary between spousal roles can accordingly be seen as having become less distinct. Moreover, the exigencies of everyday life, whether by the logic of necessity or of efficiency, have also been conducive to sharing domestic activities. By providing ‘additional help’ for clearly defined tasks and for relatively brief periods of time, husbands help to fulfil what are still deemed to be a wife’s responsibilities, acknowledging that these cannot always be completely accomplished by one person.

Further, my informants devote considerable attention to creating space and time for personally meaningful pursuits: they address through marriage not just their roles as husband and wife but also their selves. This may be achieved by contributing to a preferred household task, as when undertaking cooking or cleaning to suit individual tastes. Otherwise, it may involve personal time spent alone, either at home or elsewhere. Such pursuits allow my informants to address aspects of subjective well-being by broadening the scope of marriage beyond the mere functional fulfilment of their roles as husband and wife.

At the same time, spending time together as a couple is not a priority, at least in the context of pursuing personally meaningful activities. With respect to household management, an efficiency perspective tends to dictate a division of labour. Leisure pursuits, however, are not considered appropriate justification for soliciting help from others in the extended family.

The number of divorces in 2015 was 71,717 for couples married up to 5 years, dropping to 47,077 for couples married 5–10 years, 31,106 for couples married 10–15 years, and 23,937 for couples married 15–20 years (MHLW 2016).
While childcare tends to be the focus of a division of labour rather than a joint task, for families with children, time spent by couples together tends to be associated with time spent with children. Men’s relations, as husbands, with their wives are therefore typically a means to coordinate their respective individual pursuits with relatively limited focus on joint activities or intimacy.

2.3. Conclusion

Husbands’ and wives’ views of their respective contributions to married partnerships, although still highly gendered, have undergone important changes with reference to the notion of marriage based on sharp gender-based roles with spousal complementarity of women for household tasks and men for work (cf. Edwards 1989; Dasgupta 2005). Women’s work, especially in full-time employment, both reduces husbands’ relative contribution as the principal economic provider to their households as well as limits wives’ availability for domestic chores. The effect of such changes in women’s life course is central to Itō’s (1993) argument that women are challenging men’s masculinity. His premise is that masculinity is contingent on social conditions, and he sees social transformations that have occurred since the 1990s in particular to have challenged hegemonic models of masculinity in Japan. His concept of masculinity is based on three main elements, namely men’s desires for superiority, power, and possession (ゆうつしょく、けんりょくしょく and しょゆうしょく), all of which are threatened by changes in society (Itō 1993:166‒171). Nevertheless, my findings attest that Itō’s universalistic argument applies less to men in general than to married men whose wives work, mainly in full-time employment, as it is these men who are most exposed to the pressures Itō identifies. Further, I complement the survey-based literature on couples’ relationships that, motivated by limited research on marital happiness, finds that women seek husbands that are more egalitarian and participate in household tasks and men appreciate wives with stable careers (Kaufman and Taniguchi 2009). Such men tend also to be middle-aged or younger, suggesting the generational, rather than societal, basis of emerging models of masculinity.

Husbands who could be said to be most affected by such changes in wives’ work life are most likely to view domestic matters as a responsibility fulfilled by their wives, which is in marked contrast to traditional notions of housework as a woman’s duty. In most cases, husbands are selectively recruited to assist with the discharge of domestic responsibility by providing what I refer to as ‘additional help’ on a range of domestic tasks, a request which husbands’ moreover find hard to refuse. Such assistance tends to be limited and specific, however, as husbands do have some degree of discretion on which tasks to undertake and how to fulfil such tasks. Importantly, though, husbands do not take on managerial responsibility for the household,
which remains with wives. This opens up space for coordination within the couple, as my informants provide additional help that they view as appropriate and feasible. This is interesting to contrast with the discussion of the incompatibility of men’s and women’s expectations of marriage, in which men expect women to bear a ‘double-burden’ whereas in practice I find men providing support on domestic tasks: the notion of additional help is a means to reconcile men’s and women’s expectations of marriage. Hence, marital relations are supported through the provision of ‘additional help.’ Thus, I want to particularly emphasise how this notion of ‘additional help’ facilitates the transformation of men’s relations with their wives while challenging established notions of masculinity.

Nevertheless, the shifting ground of spousal relations places men’s sense of masculinity under pressure. One way to understand this situation is to consider Connell’s three defining elements of masculinities as being relations of production, of power, and of emotional linkage (Connell 2005:74). While seeking to preserve husbands’ role as principal breadwinner, working women nevertheless also contribute to household income. Thus, husbands’ relative financial contribution is reduced. Further, as neither partner has sufficient time to complete household tasks, husbands are drawn into providing additional help: their domestic contribution, however, is largely under the direction of their wives. The involvement of husbands in household chores might suggest, as compared to spouses with a strict complementarity of spousal contributions, the potential for a closer connection between the spouses that, in turn, may support intimacy of the couple. I find, instead, that emotional connections between spouses emphasise addressing not the couple’s intimacy but rather the personal needs in the domain of the self for each partner individually.

Thus, my findings shed light on married couples’ well-being, finding that that the meaning of marital well-being and happiness depends on the process by which this is achieved. While togetherness is recognised as contributing to couplehood (Bloch 2017), I find that space and time for the self is also important for couples’ well-being: couples that address the needs of spouses’ selves in turn strengthen their couples’ relations. This is not just an expansion on what determines marital well-being, but also questions couples as a part of society. As Ozaki Ritsuko (2001:354) argues, in Japan ‘the term “privacy” implied “familial privacy” because the family, not the individual, was the basic unit of society.’ To the extent that couples are a means to satisfy individual needs and desires, this contributes to a shift away from family as the basic unit of society.

Thus, it is through the spousal relationship that time and space open up to address the portion of masculinity that is tied to self. On the one hand, the focus on the self substantiates Mathews’ (2003) finding that men tend to seek *ikigai* (meaning in life) more in the personal
domain than in family ties. On the other hand, I find that for my informants, as husbands, the conditions for achieving such self-realisation are enabled through *coordination*, not necessarily negotiation, with their wives, who have similar aims. In other words, it is spousal relations that allow couples to pursue aspects of their respective selfhoods. In coordinating as a couple, ‘additional help’ emerges to support spousal relations: marital well-being depends on establishing such novel practices. Thus, while in the past discussions of the purpose of marriage was focused on having children (Yamada 2003; Tokuhiro 2010), I find marriage also encompasses how marital relations allow the needs of the self to be addressed and couples’ ability to establish supportive relations through ‘additional help,’ though not necessarily placing an emphasis on intimacy. Thus, husbands substantively, even if not radically, challenge hegemonic notions of masculinity through opening up scope for an important transition in practices.
Chapter 3. An Evolution of Fatherhood – Nurturing Fathers?

With men’s everyday practices as husbands evolving, notably with their involvement in the domestic sphere through additional help, this raises the question of men’s practices as fathers. There is value in considering men as fathers separately to men as husbands, in part as couples with children have them later into their married life (MHLW 2010). Moreover, the prior generation of fathers have been problematized as ‘absentee fathers’ (chichioya fuzai) – a reference to working fathers’ limited amounts of time spent with their children (Vogel 1963; Doi 1971; Ishii-Kuntz 1992) – which leaves open what constitutes men’s relations as fathers today.

Indeed, government policy initiatives since the mid-1990s have sought to craft and manipulate social images and expectations of ideal fatherhood, a topic that has also been widely discussed in popular culture over the same period (Nakatani 2006:95–96), such as the government’s promotion of the idea of ikumen (a neologism meaning ‘nurturing men’), also taken up in popular media. Less clear are the implications of a change in fatherhood for men and masculinity more generally. A broader social focus on fatherhood might be evidence of the transition of the core of men’s experience away from work towards family, which would be a challenge to the hegemonic masculinity that has characterised much of Japan’s post-war history.

The change in the discursive position of fathers in Japanese society invites comparison to men’s practices as fathers in the family. As fathers, men may be relied to take on a greater role in child-rearing, which in turn could potentially affect their spousal relationships. As compared to the rich literature on women as mothers (e.g. Imamura 1987; Allison 1996; Creighton 2007; Goldstein-Gidoni 2012), beyond the problem of ‘absenteeism’ noted above, social anthropologists have only recently begun to pay attention to issues relating to fathers’ role and practices in the household in the Japanese context (Ishii-Kuntz 2003; Nakatani 2006).

Thus, my aim in this chapter is to understand the ways that masculinity intersects with men’s practices in their separate capacity as fathers. I address the following questions. How are public policies aiming to shape expectations of men as fathers? In comparison, what are men’s everyday practices as fathers, and how are these coordinated with their wives? What do men seek in their relation as father with their children? What are men’s notions of masculinity as fathers? In the following sections, I analyse the public policy thrust promoting the ikumen concept, which I then set against men’s actual practices as fathers, based on ethnographic evidence from my fieldwork.
3.1. Men as Fathers: Emergence of New Forms of Fatherhood?

3.1.1. Angel Plans and Ikumen Project: Government Policies to Raise the Birth Rate

As a consequence of the twin issues of Japan’s aging society and low birth rate (which notoriously provoked the social crisis of the ‘1.57 Shock’ when it declined to 1.57 in 1989), the role of the father has been the focus of significant government policy initiatives aimed at increasing fertility, such as the Angel Plans and Ikumen Project.

By the 1970s the heterosexual family had become hegemonic as a model for the gendered division of labour. Full-time housewives were characterised as ‘professionals’ (sengyō shufū). Fathers’ involvement in childrearing was focused on the provision of economic resources to the extent that this necessarily limited time spent on childrearing. However, one view was that these ‘absentee fathers’ were contributing to declining birth rates by placing too much of the childcare burden on women, who were increasingly unwilling to accept it (Iwakami 2010:176).

Further, since the 1980s, motivated by the low birth rate and later the post-bubble economic restructuring, successive governments have emphasised gender equality in their political statements and policy positions, in particular with regard to work opportunities. The second Nakasone cabinet began with the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Laws, though with limited effect (Rebick 2006:83). The 2001 Koizumi administration, motivated by an agenda of ‘structural reform,’ built on these earlier efforts by shifting government rhetoric away from an emphasis on a conventional gendered division of labour characterised by economic dependence to a more neoliberal, individualistic emphasis on economic independence through double-income and mutual emotional dependence (cf. Takeda 2011). The ongoing opening of economic opportunities for women, however, has so far failed to address the question of how working women should address the double burden imposed by participation in the workforce without any lessening of their participation in the domestic sphere.

Government plans designed to support women’s ability to balance work and family aimed to shift the burden of childrearing in part on to the state, the market, and fathers. In the early 1990s, state fertility policies took the form of the first Angel Plan, implemented in December 1994 with a ten-year time frame, and co-sponsored by the Ministries of Health and Welfare, Education, Labour, and Construction. The breadth of involvement on the part of these ministries reflected the government’s desire to frame childrearing as a societal, not just a family, issue, one that demanded involvement by national and local governments as well as industry (Cabinet Office 1995).

This policy appeared to be very progressive, as Japan’s democratic government had traditionally considered childrearing to be a private domain, outside government concern. The government’s overall approach to welfare was substantially shaped in the 1970s when the
dominant LDP government dropped incipient welfare plans in response to the economic challenges posed by the 1973 oil shock. Government rhetoric was introduced to rationalise a continued dependency on families for welfare with limited support from the state (Goodman 1998:145‒152), prompting the characterisation of Japan as a welfare ‘society’ rather than a welfare ‘state’ (Watanuki 1986:263‒267). The pressures of a falling birth rate, however, initiated a new policy focus as a reason for tackling childcare.

Focusing on very young children, the Angel Plan challenged and adjusted widely held notions relating to childcare. Specifically, a 1998 White Paper issued by the then Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW 1998a) clearly denied the validity of the ‘sansaiji shinwa’ (the ‘myth of the three-year-old’), which held that for children to grow properly mothers should look after their children until three years old at home without relying on childcare facilities (Nonoyama 2009:206; Sasaki 2009:146‒147). The myth had been justified in terms of bosei, a concept of ‘maternal nature,’ i.e. mothers’ alleged natural biological ability to look after their own children (Yamada 1996:105‒115). The claim of the maternal bond’s importance was originally expressed in a 1951 World Health Organisation report by British psychiatrist John Bowlby. While this claim was eventually discredited by criticism that argued that it was quality of infant care, rather than who provided it, that mattered most (Tokuhiro 2010:80), the idea spread in Japan in the 1960s, not least because it fitted well the notion of a gendered division of parental labour. The myth’s effect was to psychologically constrain mothers to devote themselves to childrearing (Kashiwagi 2003:199; Yamada 1996:112).

Against this, the 1998 MHW White Paper argued bosei, and thus the notion that mothers should concentrate on childrearing (the ‘myth of the three-year-old’), was a social construct with no objective rationale. The White Paper proposed that mothers not be tied to childrearing, as the burden they faced was too heavy, and contributed to low fertility (MHW 1998a and 1998b). This challenge by the state towards a strongly believed cultural narrative was a necessary premise for subsequent policy changes. Nevertheless, the extent of actual change still depended on what childcare roles fathers and others would be able to take.

Under the Angel Plan, the father’s role was the focus of a 500 million-yen awareness campaign launched in 1999 (Roberts 2002). This state-funded campaign ran pro-fertility advertisements featuring the popular dancer, and husband of idol singer Amuro Namie, ‘Sam’ holding his son, advocating that ‘men could not be called father if they did not take part in childrearing (ikuji o shinai otoko o chichi to wa yobanai)’ (MHW 2000). Sam and his wife were close to their peak of their careers at the time of the campaign, and their popularity helped the

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17 In this dissertation, monetary values are in Japanese Yen. For reference, the exchange rate to British Pounds was 174 Yen to the Pound on 16 July 2014 around the time of my fieldwork.
dissemination of new ideas on fatherhood (despite this, the duration of the campaign proved to be relatively short, as Sam and his wife divorced three years later). The main thrust of the campaign is captured in the text of a campaign poster:

A man who doesn’t take part in childcare cannot be called a father.
Let’s devote more time being fathers.

Seventeen minutes a day. That’s the average amount of time Japanese fathers spend on childcare. Even though it takes two to make a child, it seems as though mothers are raising their children alone. If we consider pregnancy and childbirth as important jobs that only women can perform, isn’t parenting an important job that men are also capable of? We want fathers to gain a better appreciation of the joys and tribulations of raising children. We want them to give more consideration to these children, who will become the leaders of the twenty-first century. Please take the time to become admirable fathers by looking carefully into your children’s hearts.

Towards a society that can have ‘dreams’ for the home and raising children.

(MHW 2000)

The campaign sought to capitalise on pop music celebrity to shift social expectations of fathers’ involvement in childrearing. Yet except for a reference to reducing mothers’ workload, no specific suggestions were offered, such as what activities to do with children. The emphasis is on fathers’ awareness and mindfulness of the joys and difficulties of childhood. As a call to action, its effect was therefore limited. The closest thing to a practical suggestion was for fathers to become emotionally closer to their children, which seemed moreover to have been the sole motivation given for men to change.

More recently, since June 2010, the government has advocated the concept of ‘ikumen’ as a way of encouraging men to enjoy fatherhood and take more responsibility for the raising of children. Ikumen, roughly translated as ‘nurturing father,’ is a neologism that combines the term iku (a reading of the kanji used in terms such as ikuji – ‘childrearing’ – and men which can mean both the English term ‘men’ and the Japanese word for ‘mask’). The term plays on associations with the term ‘ikemen,’ a popular slang term from the 1990s for ‘good-looking, cool man.’ The overall aim is to support the development of a large social movement that will reinforce the image of nurturing fathers (Ikumen Project 2013).
The MHLW’s *Ikumen Project* sponsors many events to support fathers by educating men on how to become more involved in childrearing. For instance, in March of 2012, the government commissioned a song entitled ‘The Family Circle’ (*Kazoku no wa*), popularly referred to as the *Ikumen* Song. The following verse is sung from the perspective of the husband:

And I know that mama’s job is even tougher,
So I’ll do what I can to help.
Mama, please continue to take care of us,
And when our children fly the nest and it’s just mama and me again,
Let’s talk happily about the future, just like we did when we were young.
Our family harmony – it’s important,
Our family harmony – it’s important,
Mama, take care of us forever.\(^{18}\)

(*Ikumen* Project 2013)

The lyrics are remarkable in that they reveal that while the government considers one of the main family issues to be the heavy physical and psychological burdens placed on women in the raising of children, it does not suggest any substantive change to daily practices to reduce this burden. The husband recognises the limitations of his involvement, presumably due to work commitments. The importance of family is meant to alleviate the women’s burden of childrearing. Sentiment aside, however, it is hard to imagine mothers acknowledged as hard working as not being aware of this, which makes for a rather patronising message to women. Further, the text sounds less like a promise of support by the husband, and more like a plea for the wife to not give up on her relationship with her husband (including in the longer-term future when the children have left home): thus, there is in effect no call for a substantive change in the basis of relatedness of husband and wife. Further, the husband refers to his wife as ‘mama,’ which in itself can be a source of contention in the couple, in particular from the woman’s perspective (Alexy 2011). Indeed, the conflation of the roles of mother and wife would seem to ignore the choice women have of whether to be a mother at all: in this regard, the government approach does not reflect fertility being the main issue triggering the campaign.

A further initiative of the government to facilitate father’s involvement has been to enable

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\(^{18}\) The Japanese lyrics are: そしてほんとは、ママのほうがもっともっと、たいへんだと知ってる。できることからがんばるよ。ママどうぞよろしくね。それに巣立っていけばママとまた二人きりに戻るから。そのとき若い二人みたいに楽しく未来を語ろうね。わわわわわわわわ大切だな。家族のわわわわわわ大切だな。ママずっとよろしくね。
parental leave for both parents (*papa and mama ikukyū purasu*) through introduction in 2009 of new regulations (MHLW 2009). To date, very few fathers have taken parental leave (4.05 percent of those eligible) and those who do usually only for very short periods (MHLW 2015a). The current take-up of the policy does not indicate a material impact on women’s childcare. Further, as men technically have the option, the decision to not make use of the option reveals that their priorities are elsewhere, notably work.

National level policies since the late 1990s have taken aim at men’s awareness of the burden women take on with childcare. A major constraint on men’s involvement with childcare, however, are the hours devoted to work, since men’s working patterns remain essentially unchanged. Thus, in practice the reforms have limited effect on men, with women left with the double burden of performing household labour while simultaneously helping to supplement family income or even working full-time. Consequently, at the national level, even if there has been some impact on awareness of men’s involvement in childcare, the policies do not explicitly address the question of the extent to which men should share in domestic work to reduce women’s burden in practice. Effectively, this indicates limited if any real policy change.

3.1.2. **Local Government Initiatives to Support the Ikumen Project**

Local government initiatives have to some extent aimed to support fathers become more involved in childrearing, addressing the gap in the national policies between generating awareness of the issue and triggering behavioural change in men. Local governments, in collaboration with the central government, translate the overall *Ikumen* Project into specific programmes and activities, publishing guidebooks and sponsoring childrearing seminars targeting fathers.

In Saitama Prefecture, north of Tokyo, the local government has for example published a guidebook edited by local fathers, including municipal employees, entitled *Ikumen no moto* (‘The Essence of Nurturing Fathers’) (Saitama Kenchō Fukushi-ka 2013). The express purpose of the book is to teach men to become ‘the family’s beloved Papa’ (*kazoku ni aisareru papa*), with sections of the book devoted to changing nappies, playing, feeding, brushing teeth, bathing, and handling emergencies, among other subjects.

The guidebook is written in a comic book style, with illustrations heavily peppered with onomatopoeic terms that suggest positive emotions, such as *ninmari* (‘grinning’), *kirān* (‘happily inspired’). Some illustrations draw humorously on professional tropes in the portrayal of men doing domestic work, as when a bow-tied bartender shakes a milk bottle as though it were a cocktail shaker. Overall the guidebook suggests that fathers reduce mothers’ workload so that wives will take a more positive view of their husbands, which is consistent with the child
rearing advice book discussed in Chapter 2. The guidebook communicates to men their ability to fulfil these tasks given their other skills, explicitly arguing that looking after one’s own children has many aspects in common with ‘management’ (‘ikuji wa manējimento da’) and involves the pursuit of efficiency, the use of organisational skills, and ‘anticipation of uncertainty’ (‘manējimento wa yosoku dearu’).

On the one hand, such publications exemplify an interesting and innovative approach, directly engaging men in the practical aspects of supporting childrearing by making links to career-related skills, thereby supporting men’s confidence in their ability to help with childcare. In addition, this legitimation of men’s contribution through their professional skills echoes the professionalisation of mothers’ role in childcare. On the other hand, the approach is a direct appeal to men’s sense of masculinity with respect to men’s perceived devotion to work. There is no consequent significant shift in gender roles; childcare is not portrayed as, say, necessitating fathers’ reduced emphasis on their careers.

Another important point is the guidebook’s focus on childcare for children up to age three, the age-range also targeted by the White Paper challenge to the sansaiji shinwa and the initial Sam campaign. Public policies focus much less on fatherhood for older children. Conceivably, one reason for this focus is new fathers’ lack of relevant skills for babies relative to older children. Further, once fathers are engaged in childcare they may well continue, which suggests the desirability of having fathers start childrearing early in childhood. Also, more support with a first child early on may encourage having a second child or bring forward the time of birth. Importantly, though, the ikumen books do not mention solutions involving non-family members such as hiring baby sitters or the use of child-care facilities. A key reason for this is the lack of childcare facilities, as public kindergarten places are typically only intended for families in which both parents work and even then spaces are limited. Thus, fathers’ help becomes a substitute for government provision of childcare, in line with long-running government policy of leaving responsibility for family welfare to family and community (Watanuki 1986; Izuhara 2003; Van Oorschot 2007).

Finally, a striking point is the lack of advice on joint childrearing between husbands and wives. Childrearing remains as a domain with a clear division of labour. Fathers are shown how to be involved in feeding or play time, whereas no mention is made of tidying up the kitchen and dining table after meals with children. In effect, fathers may focus on tasks in which they are one-to-one with the child. Other activities necessary for childcare but not requiring direct contact are de-emphasised. The implicit focus is on day-time support, and no mention is made of attending to a crying baby in the middle of the night, which would be consistent with men’s work (and the restorative sleep it requires) being a priority and assuming that mothers are the
main caregivers at home.

The government’s keen desire to address the low birth rate has resulted in many policies, ideas and suggestions. These local government initiatives, building on central government campaigns, suggest to fathers how to help in selected ways with childcare, especially young children. Whether this materially reduces women’s burden is not clear. Further, how men reconcile childcare with continued career pressures in actual practice remains an open question.

3.2. Ethnographic Cases: Men’s Exploration of Fatherhood

3.2.1. Nurturing Fathers?

With the questioning of the ‘absentee’ model of fatherhood and the emphasis being directed at newer, more participatory models, such as *ikumen*, there is no lack of advice for fathers, from local governments or popular media. But how are fathers actually involving themselves in childcare in practice? Additionally, how are childcare tasks negotiated in partnership with their wives? Understanding these practices will help to shed light on men’s notions of fatherhood, and clarify the extent to which this is changing.

Fathers in relationships where both spouses work are subject to time pressures when looking to carry out domestic tasks and childcare duties, necessarily colouring interactions with their children. Taku, aged 37, is a father in just such a situation. He explains that he usually takes his two young children to the school bus stop on his way to his work, conversing with them during the course of the five minutes’ walk about topics such as the weather and what they will do at school. When Taku returns from work, usually around 9pm, his children are asleep. Hence, his involvement with his children on weekdays is very limited. At the weekend, in contrast, the entire family eats breakfast together, after which how Taku spends time with the children depends in part on what else needs doing. As discussed earlier, if there are household chores to do, these will likely be handled by his wife while Taku takes the children to the park. Alternatively, they may take a family excursion. Thus, work commitments do impinge on fathers’ time availability with their children but amongst my informants weekend work or work-related activities, such as playing golf with clients, is relatively rare, which is a marked difference to the prior generation of salarymen.

Further, I observed fathers participating in school and other local events with children (e.g. cooking lessons, catching fish, or barbecuing at a neighbourhood event). Indeed, one aspect that impressed me during my fieldwork, mentioned to me by a number of informants, was that young fathers in their thirties and early forties engaged with their children in a way that was markedly different from how I remembered my own father, as well as those of my
friends, engaging with children in my own childhood. I witnessed fathers attending school theatre plays (happyōkai), calligraphy lessons held at the local community hall, supervising the school swimming pool (suiei tōban), participating in cooking lessons during the long holidays, playing in parks, and escorting children to and from after-school lessons (naraigoto). These men appeared to be delighted at the prospect of being with their children. At one school theatre play I attended, I met a father who was wearing a suit: when I spoke to him, he explained that he had taken half-a-day off work so as to attend. Indeed, he and his wife, as both working, alternate on who attends school events and he added that he did not have any trouble taking time off work for such purposes. Furthermore, during the summer holidays I noted that around half the parents accompanying children for daytime swimming lessons were fathers. Notwithstanding working hours, I was told that taking a little time off, say a couple of hours, for such purposes is quite possible though dependent on their boss being supportive. Also, some fathers, like Ken, come back earlier from their work to take care of their children. Recognising that working conditions depend on industries and companies, this is an interesting contrast to the argument that working hours are considered an absolute factor entirely out of men’s control and therefore determining of fathers’ engagement in childcare (Nagai 2004; Matsuda 2005; Ogasawara 2009). By comparison, some of my informants try to adjust their working hours to take care of children, attend school events, and drop-off and pick-up from after school lessons. Further, fathers are not surprised to see each other at such moments – which I presume would more than likely have been the case for their own fathers. Indeed, to some degree, these are also occasions for the public display of fatherhood.

At home, fathers engaged with their children in less publicly visible ways. For instance, my informants tend to take an initiative in tutoring children, such as one father I spoke to said he helped his 13-year-old daughter study for her school examination every night until 11:30pm for ten days straight. This is consistent with Taga’s argument in what he refers to as ‘pearento kurashi (parentocracy),’ reflecting the current boom of fathers’ involvement in tutoring for their children (Taga 2011:142). According to Taga, in this new discourse on fathers two contrasting ideologies co-exist. One is a conservative ideology based on emphasising the traditional gender division, with fathers associated with authority and mothers with household chores, which emphasises fathers’ superiority over mothers and separates homework help from domestic chores. The other ideology is based on gender egalitarianism, which has fathers participating in tutoring to share child-raising practices. My informants tend to involve themselves with tutoring without providing a gender-based rationale for why they help with homework. They do not separate homework from other everyday necessary chores (e.g. brushing teeth and bedtime). While they may subscribe to aspects of the conservative ideology in terms of discipline, my
informants with regard to tutoring are mostly in line with Taga’s egalitarian argument. For instance, Hayato, aged 39, explains how he is involved in the activities of his two sons, aged five and six:

I help with homework, bathe together with the kids, and I’ve brushed their teeth and put them to sleep since they were born … My wife asks me to do these things, so basically I do them. […] But my wife does these once a week when I go out in the evening with my colleagues or friends. Tomorrow we are going to hunt for beetles and take part in a *ninja* contest as a family. My wife has organised all these events.

Hayato’s interaction with his children encompasses a substantial part of their end of day routine (homework, bath, and bedtime), and has done so since the children were young. He is not involved, at least not on a regular basis, with preparing meals or doing the children’s laundry. Rather, his activities seem to be focused on those that afford him the opportunity for close, intimate contact. He does not do so on his own initiative, but was rather asked by his wife, who also works full-time. His wife also organises children’s activities outside the house, which Hayato or his wife sometimes attend. A similar situation was conveyed to me by Taiki, whom I met at the same cooking class for parents and children at which I also met Hayato: he is a 40-year-old company employee with three children, aged 16, 10 and eight months. I interviewed Taiki right after the class and asked why he had joined the event: he explained that ‘My wife asked me to choose between attending this event with my older daughter or looking after the baby at home.’ Rather than having sought out the event to attend with his daughter or chosen it over some other event, he had simply responded to a choice, framed by his wife, as to what aspect of childcare he preferred to be involved in. Among my informants, it is mothers, not fathers, who remain the main organisers of children’s weekend activities, even if fathers end up taking part as well. The mothers end up being the ones who know what is going on in their communities, notably through their various information exchanges with other mothers. These are homosocial networks to share information, such as on each other’s children’s evolving plans, amongst other things, which best position mothers to make decisions about their children’s schedules and thus direct their husband’s additional help. Indeed, in organising play dates and activities for my children I always found myself coordinating with other mothers, even if it turned out fathers accompanied the children and irrespective of whether it was a weekday, weekend or during school holidays. These networks allow women to remain socially integrated: in turn, this social integration offers these women a means to publicly affirm their role as a mother.
Given that fathers’ involvement in childcare in some aspects reflects their own choices and in others those of their spouses, it is worth asking whether any pattern is evident in terms of what tasks men usually do or do not do. Ken, whose experience was representative of the majority of my informants, explained to me that: ‘my wife wakes up at 5:30am to cook breakfast and dinner before heading to work [at her full-time job] so that the children can warm it up and have dinner by themselves.’ Few among my male informants regularly prepared everyday meals, particularly breakfast, or tidied up after meals. Also, the notional associations of meal preparation tend to extend to grocery shopping as well as cooking, and while working fathers have severely limited opportunities to shop, men might be available to cook though they do not seem to, say, wake up early to prepare breakfast. Even though some of my informants enjoy cooking occasionally, relative skill sets might conceivably explain their lack of participation in meal preparation combined with a lack of motivation to learn. Thus, responsibility for cooking falls onto mothers, with occasional involvement by fathers.

Another task left most often to mothers is tending to children when they cry during the night. Kazuya explains who does night duty in his family:

During the nights, when my child cries, because of a runny nose for example, it’s my wife who removes her mucus. I just sleep through as usual while she looks after our daughter. I keep a hands-off ‘no-touch’ policy (nō tacchi) (even when she cries at night) – I don’t like my sleep to be disturbed. That said, when my wife says that she is not going to do anything anymore because she is tired, I will get the baby some milk. But basically (kihon wa) my wife looks after our daughter.

(Author’s emphasis)

For Kazuya, sleeping through such night-time episodes is a matter of course, preferring as he does to have unbroken sleep. He does not do night duty unless his wife, who works part time five days a week, is completely exhausted. By saying ‘basically’ (kihon wa) Kazuya alludes to a clear, default gender division of labour governing who should do what, with the mother focused on childcare. Even so, since he will take over if asked, this could be said to be his preference rather than a categorical exclusion of men from such tasks.

In the case of Naoki, however, there is a more even split of night-time baby care. Naoki’s wife’s view is that ‘I am also working!’ as she also works full time, and so from her perspective he must help:
First I hold my baby when he is crying in the middle of night. But I also wake up my husband saying, “hey, hey, it’s your turn as I also have to go to work!” ... Also, he wakes up and holds the baby when I am deeply sleeping or when I don’t want to take care of the baby ... If I did not work, I think that I would make my best efforts to put my baby back to sleep from night crying.

Thus, in response to his wife’s request, Naoki also looks after the baby at night: as he explained to me, he compensates for the lost sleep by napping on his very long, almost two-hour commute to work. Other fathers also clearly accede to their wives’ requests to take care of specific parenting tasks. Moreover, from discussions with my informants, such requests seemingly cannot realistically be refused. Women remain responsible for organising childcare activities and events, as well as for effectively scheduling their spouses’ childcare involvement. This illustrates that men are increasingly involved in tasks that would have been done by women in the past. Thus, the gendered boundaries of propriety in the domestic sphere shift. A key reason for this change is women’s involvement in the workforce, which makes the balance of household time available for domestic tasks much scarcer, thereby increasing its value. Women’s ongoing centrality to the domestic sphere means that the value of their contribution to the household has risen relative to that of men, augmenting their economic contribution. To offer a Marxist analysis, my female informants’ increased control over the means of production has increased their voice in the family, allowing them to re-allocate childcare tasks to their husbands so as to alleviate their double burden of work and childcare. In turn, given the overall pressure to accomplish domestic tasks, men’s contributions to the domestic sphere, while modest, are nevertheless increasingly valued by women.

For childcare, the default expectation remains for mothers to do childcare with fathers providing ‘additional help’ as necessary. Even so, this permeability of involvement indicates that tasks are less gendered than in the past; no task would seem to be completely out of bounds for my male informants. For instance, at restaurants I observed that parents jointly mind the children, such as playing while waiting for a table or taking to the toilet. Indeed, at one restaurant I noted a one-child family seated so that the father fed the child ramen noodles, which would have been very unusual for the prior generation. Also, one afternoon while my children played near a stream I met a father who was there with his son. He was not just minding his son, but rather actively playing with him, in this case catching small crabs and tiny fish. As the kids played, we spoke and it became clear to me that this was not an unusual activity for him and his son. In this regard, men’s motivations are well-expressed by another informant, Hayato:
When I was small, I was looked after by my mother and grandmother, who lived with us. [...] In the past fathers were not involved in child-care ... my father did not play with me or spend time with me, which became a “traumatic experience” for me. As a result, I want to be involved with my children as much as possible for them ... Simply I want to be with them.

Hayato plays with his children as much as possible, simply to spend time with them. What he actually does with them is less important than the fact that he is present, since his own father’s absence proved to be a childhood trauma that continues to affect him in later life. It was this pain felt as a child, or more precisely his recognition of such pain, that led Hayato to take a different approach with his own children in the attempt to break the generational cycle of neglect.

Such is not always the case, however, as illustrated by Kazuya: ‘My father did not take much part in childcare when I was young. I guess [my own lack of involvement in childcare] is due to his influence.’ Kazuya’s approach to fatherhood is influenced in part by expectation shaped by his own father’s role, and generational reproduction does occur. Even so, Kazuya does not repeat his parent’s approach wholesale, and he does express regret about not being able to do many things by himself. He ascribes his lack of independence to his mother doting on him, such that he never had the opportunity to learn how to do things. While he has little intention to perform domestic tasks, content with a fairly traditional view on the gendered allocation of domestic tasks, he also lacks any skills that might allow him the confidence to take on such a role. This experience leads him to take a different approach in parenting his own daughter by purposefully limiting his involvement to help her learn how to be independent:

Well, I’d say that our child is fairly reliable, so she’ll turn out all right even if we let her be. My feeling is that it’s not good for parents to do too much [for their children], since I had everything done for me by my mother. Doing too much for the child is a bad idea – she might grow up [like me,] incapable of doing anything on her own. I want to avoid that as much as I can. We try to make time for the child to learn to do things on her own as much as possible. Fundamentally our style of childcare is a kind supervision from afar ... My wife lives of the same philosophy.

In terms of parenting, Kazuya and his wife prefer to give their daughter time so that she will learn to look after herself, thereby avoiding the social reproduction of dependence that Kazuya feels left him unable to do anything by himself. His wish is for his daughter to be independent.
This runs counter to the well-known theory of ‘dependency (amae)’ advanced by the psychologist Doi Takeo (1971), which holds that interpersonal relationships in Japan are based on the function of dependence (amae). In Doi’s characterisation, the essence of amae is prominently expressed in the intimate relationships of mothers and children. Children’s developmental needs are fulfilled by receiving nurturance from devoted mothers. Importantly, relying on others (amaeru) is considered appropriate behaviour in Japanese society. Raised to be totally dependent on his mother, Kazuya does not value the long-term effects of this relationship, as he feels that it has left him incompetent in his everyday life; he now feels trapped by his dependence on his wife. Doi’s psychological and functional theory could thus be said to underestimate a longer-term perspective.

Thus, my informants vary substantially in the intergenerational influence on their approach to fatherhood: fatherhood is not a site for the intergenerational replication of practices, rather fatherhood is a site in which men are reconstructing their practices and thus what it means for them to be a father. Providing additional help is a means for fathers to undertake practices that involve their children, while still meeting other commitments, in particular work. In this regard, men as fathers, as with men as husbands, challenge notions of salaryman masculinity in the family based on a sharp gender division and, in effect, men’s detachment from daily family life. Rather, my informants have a degree of openness to participating in childcare.

3.2.2. Intimacy in Fatherhood
The additional help my informants provide in relation to childcare, though usually set up in a circumscribed way, can nonetheless lead to deepen intimate bonds between fathers and children. For instance, Hayato, leaving household chores to his wife, began practicing karate with his children as natural extension of his taking them to and from karate lessons. Similarly, Ken takes his daughters to classic ballet and attends calligraphy lessons with them once a week in the evening. He became responsible for taking his daughter to ballet when it became more convenient for him to do so than his wife, as he explained, ‘Because my wife was transferred to a location a long way from our house, I now pick up my daughter from dance lessons by taking advantage of my office’s “summer time” system.’\textsuperscript{19} It is because of a change in his wife’s work and compatibility with his own work that he started to pick up his daughter. Thus, he provides ‘additional help’ by picking up the slack when his wife became no longer able to carry out what had been her responsibility. Ken’s involvement with calligraphy, however, goes

\textsuperscript{19} ‘Summer time’ is a system allows public sector employees in Hyōgo Prefecture to start work and return home thirty minutes earlier than at other times of the year.

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beyond the provision of ‘additional help’:

I really like engaging with my children. I certainly like raising them and observing the process of their growth. I really want to be involved with children (dōshitemo kakawaritai). I often think this myself. But, in reverse to the usual pattern, I may not be able to let my children go once they grow up (kobanare). I hope I don’t stick to (beta beta) my children overly, but I’d like to be together with them in a variety of situations.

More than simply a car service for his children, Ken considers his participation in these lessons as an attempt to engage with the children emotionally and to experience first-hand the ongoing process of their development. Indeed, I observed Ken’s engagement with his children first-hand during calligraphy class: he was definitely not just babysitting them while they did their activity but rather was fully involved. For instance, he held their hands to guide their brush-work and took part in the tidying-up, as compared to say waiting for them to be done. He goes so far as to worry that the deepening of his bond may mean he will struggle with increased emotional dependence on his children as they grow, upending what he sees as the usual case of children remaining overly dependent on parents.

For my informants, practical involvement with their children may lead to deeper intimacy. But increased intimacy is not the only aspect of fatherhood sought by some of my informants, as explained by Ken:

I see in magazines and books that mothers should deal with issues that arise with regard to children’s education, since they are full-time housewives (sengyō shufū). To my mind, however, I think that education-related issues are the role of father, though this could be because I like being involved with my children.

Ken does not see the role of father as limited to providing mothers (even ‘full-time housewives’) with additional help; he has a broader view encompassed by the word ‘education,’ by which he means not only academic issues, but the overall teaching and guidance of children as they grow, which he considers to be the purview of both parents but with distinct contributions:

In everyday life, definitely women have a role to play. I am not placing women below men (danson johi), but women should definitely teach [children] about what it is that they do. […] That said, this could be seen as like men and women in the old days. But
men have areas which we are not good at … simply because my wife as mother does cooking more often than me, from the start she has taught our children how to cook, how to hold a knife, how to use a cutting board. So I feel that those aspects are the role of mother. My wife nowadays teaches laundry and sewing.

Ken views the roles of father and mother as being to transfer their respective skills. That said, while he cites cooking as an example of his wife’s skills, he actually cooks too. Ken in fact has some skills, so he could teach his children to cook if he wished to do so. This suggests that he considers cooking as a mother’s role, irrespective of skill. That said, he attempts to distinguish the intergenerational transmission of this gendered division of household labour, supported by the teaching of skills by the parent most suited to do so, from what he considers an outdated view of male superiority. In contrast, what the father has to teach is less clearly grounded in practices or skills:

Although men are fundamentally busy due to work … it is the father who scolds children most strongly (gattsutto) when they do something bad. Of course, the mother has to scold them as well, but well … after all (yappari), it should be the father. I think it’s up to the father to call a child to his room to lay down the law.

Ken associates a disciplinary role over children ultimately with fathers, implicitly as compared to mothers: with reference to Itō’s argument of the decline in men’s sense of superiority over women (Itō 1996), this indicates a residual area of sense of superiority is fathers disciplining children. In addition to discipline, Ken also sees education as leading to distinct parental roles. In contrast to knowledge and skill as the basis for mothers’ educational practices, Ken views fathers as providing broader guidance to their children about their life course:

In the end, the role of father is to deal with aspects of education in a broader sense, including discussion of the future … what type of job they would like to do, which university they want to go to – after all, these aspects of education are the role of fathers and everyday aspects are for mothers. […] Fathers have to navigate children’s curiosity [about their futures] … by suggesting that they read certain books or taking them to certain places.

Ken envisions himself as a father proactively shaping his children’s development, especially by establishing links with stimuli such as books and places outside of the family, and guiding
choices related to education and careers. This is consistent with gender-based notions of men being associated with the public sphere and women with the private sphere (cf. Rosaldo 1974); however, Ken’s case is distinct from the characterisation of ‘absent fathers,’ who were not at home but who could nonetheless be an authority figure through the mother’s mediation (Wagatsuma 1977), as he is not absent, as he spends time with his children, and is engaged in communicating with his children on their life choices. My informants’ desire to be involved with their children goes beyond the simple provision of ‘additional help’ to their wives. They seek to fulfill for fathers what they see as a potentially broader role that includes providing guidance on how children develop. With regard to this aspect of fatherhood, Kazuya discusses children’s appreciation for their fathers:

I think that the father’s role is to give his children the backing they need, including financially, the unsung hero who supports them behind the scenes (en no shita no chikaramochi, literally ‘the strongman under the veranda’) while it is the mother who does most of the work. […] I don’t think [kids] understand the merits of fathers until they start working. So I solemnly (shuku shuku) raise my daughter even if she does not appreciate me.

Kazuya, while not wanting to be involved in daily childcare, certainly does not want to be an absentee father. Rather, he wishes to support for the family behind the scenes, an attitude somewhat consistent with notion of men as the daikokubashira of the family (cf. Hidaka 2011), but in terms of the father’s role rather than that of a husband. In raising the issue of the child’s appreciation, he recognises that reciprocity from his relationship with his daughter, which would be repaid through her appreciation, may have to wait until her perspective changes in the distant future. He does not associate himself with daily childcare practices such as playing, which could nurture and sustain an appreciative relationship in the near term, fostering the development a deeper, longer term relationship. His preferred approach is to rely on his own sense of rectitude. This self-validation enables him to distance himself (as in his use of the term ‘solemnly’) from the potential emotional implications of his daughter’s lack of appreciation. Even so, he is one of many of my informants for whom as fathers the prospect of developing closer emotional relationships with their children is important.

This concern for fathers’ connections with their children provided the motivation for the local non-profit organisation T-Plus Family Support to organise its first camp for fathers and children (‘otō-san no hajimete no kyanpu’). The non-profit is run by Sayuri, a woman in her early 50’s, to support mothers and fathers. Her view is that whereas fathers in the past naturally
had opportunities to communicate with their children by virtue of their involvement in hereditary industries such as agriculture and forestry, fathers who work for companies no longer have such opportunities to ‘interact (fureau)’ with their children. Fathers therefore have to work to create deliberate opportunities for communication. Spending less time together with their children, fathers never learn how to interact with them comfortably, despite wanting to be involved in childrearing.

Sayuri therefore intends for the camp activities to provide fathers with an extended opportunity to interact with their children. As a part of my fieldwork study, I participated in a two-day camp along with around ten families and ten staff members. Some people stayed overnight in tents, while others attended on a day basis. Activities completed over the course of the camp included a dancing game, tree-climbing, making chopsticks from bamboo, and preparing lunch over a fire (hangō suisan). I observed that while some fathers were comfortable with such a setting, other fathers appeared somewhat at a loss as to how to enjoy extended time playing and interacting with their children. But over time, the organisation of activities, some in small groups and others all together, facilitated engagement between children and fathers, which they manifestly enjoyed.

On the topic of the challenge presented by father-child relations, Kazuya, who also participated in the camp, thanked the organiser for having afforded him a special opportunity to spend quality time with his daughter away from his wife: ‘Thanks to the camp I have the chance to have my daughter all to myself (hitorijime)’ and ‘I would like to come back next year!’ At the beginning of the camp he looked not quite sure how to play with his daughter but was visibly enjoying the moments with his daughter. Indeed, for Kazuya, it was this exclusivity, rather than any desire to learn how to interact with children (as the organiser intended), that provided the main purpose for his involvement. He elaborated on this idea when I interviewed him a subsequent day:

I felt there were some good aspects from participating in the camp. One was that we spent time together away from my wife … [I took part because] I hoped my daughter would grow closer to me as well [not only to my wife]. And really, the result was that by spending time together out of the house, just the two of us, my daughter has learned how to spend time with me on her own – it’s a great improvement (hitokawa muketa). So, my wife and I are now leaving our daughter [with her grandparents] for two weeks. She gained the independence to do that from the camp. […] It is the camp that leads the opportunity [of being free from my wife].
Kazuya’s desire that his daughter grow closer to him led him to participate in the camp. In daily life, his daughter is fine to be with him, such as when he looks after when his wife is not available. He knows, however, that his daughter does not feel emotionally close to him. He sees the benefit of the camp for his daughter as greater independence from his wife, which he prioritises in bringing up his daughter. This in turn has enabled her to be able to stay at her grandparents’ house. On the one hand, then, Kazuya wants to help his daughter break out of her shell so that she can participate more widely in activities, as well as be comfortable with her extended family. On the other hand, he hopes to ease his daughter’s singular deep dependence on her mother by shifting some of her emotional attachment onto himself. The time his daughter was with her grandparents for Kazuya was not about this being an opportunity for the couple to be together, rather he felt ‘a bit lonely without my daughter and worried about how she is doing with the parents-in-law.’ As compared to previous generations of fathers who sometimes sought to replace the lack of emotional space available at home through even greater commitments to the workplace (cf. Lebra 1985), Kazuya is proactively seeking to establish an emotional relationship with his child, even if this proves to be a difficult challenge.

Expanding on his motivations, he continued:

The best thing [about participating in the camp] was growing closer to my daughter. I can often be closer to her but my wife is there. So I am not completely free to be close to my daughter. After all, my wife puts up a barrier (*baria*). I escaped from the situation by one step (by participating in the camp). The camp was a rare experience because my daughter had to come to me, not my wife, when anything happened. [...] Usually, I feel a bit disappointed when my daughter turns to my wife, not me (for help). But at the camp only I was there. My daughter also decided that it was fine (to be without her mother).

For Kazuya, it would be ideal for him that his daughter also comes to him to ask for some help. However, perceiving that his wife puts up ‘barriers,’ he contents himself with a compromise. His wife is happy to share some of the child-minding, depending on her work and personal commitments. Kazuya perceives, however, that she prefers a gradation of intimacy, placing herself as their child’s closest confidante. It is emotional relations with children rather than practical contributions to childcare that constitute a gendered fault line between mothers and fathers, notwithstanding the time spent by each parent on childcare. As fathers seek to engage emotionally with their children, they face not only the challenge of limited time and thus few everyday opportunities for connection, but also the recognition of their children’s intimacy with
their mothers. Taking a variety of approaches and while recognising the inherent difficulties, my informants have sought to connect emotionally with their children by attempting to share in their children’s intimacy with their wives, participating with children in joint activities, and engaging with them with regard to particular life choices. While fathers are being selectively drawn into supporting childcare by providing ‘additional help,’ they also attempt to craft novel father-child relations to complement the existing relationships between spouses as well as between mothers and children.

3.3. Conclusion

Considering men’s experiences in the family as fathers reveals pressures for men to change. While government policy rhetoric and popular media images may promote imagery such as of *ikumen* as the reflection of broader, deeper societal change, in effect government initiatives have thus far worked to preserve the underlying core of the hegemonic and heterosexual breadwinner family model with relatively minor adjustments. Nevertheless, women’s increased workforce participation and shifts in marriage and fertility patterns, are occasioning transformative pressures on men in the context of the family.

Although my informants provide ‘additional help’ in childcare, and their wives moreover value this contribution, this remains far from an equal sharing of parenthood as celebrated in the *ikumen* imagery of nurturing fathers. Nor does it accord with the portrayal of men profiled in Ishii-Kuntz’s study of full-time working fathers, which argued for the emergence of nurturing father masculinity (Ishii-Kuntz 2003). It would seem that the fathers who participated in Ishii-Kuntz’s research not only desire to take on a broader childrearing role, but, crucially, are also professionally situated so as to be able to negotiate the necessary substantial flexibility in working conditions. While this positions them as examples of emergent masculinity, it is one that remains available only to selected workers that are able to negotiate the necessary working conditions. In contrast, my informants experience time pressure from work commitments that limits the potential scope of their parental involvement.

The extent of my informants’ involvement in childcare while valued by their wives remains limited in total time commitment. Bearing in mind Goodman’s (2002) emphasis on the distinction between ‘what people say they do, say they should do and actually do,’ I find that my informants’ accounts of what men do is consistent with my observations of their involvement. Further, my findings are consistent with long-running government surveys that document a modest increase in full-time middle-aged men’s time spent on childcare: for men aged 30–39, an increase of five minutes per day over the course of a decade, from around 10–11 minutes per day in 2001 to 15–16 minutes per day in 2011 (MIC 2011a). My contribution is
to explain how additional help is a means for men to provide time-limited yet valued support on child-care: this support while time-limited is critical to reduce the pressure of childcare.

Further, a stream of research primarily by family sociologists in Japan, based on quantitative data on fathers’ childcare involvement, argues that fathers struggle with the ‘double burden’ of work and childcare (Fuyuki 2003; Yazawa et al. 2003; Matsuda 2006; Niwano 2007; Taga 2011). They frame their main research question on fathers’ conflicts and stress in engaging with childcare. For instance, Taga (2011) categorises into two types the conflicted feelings of fathers who engage in childcare: conflicts arising from fathers not being able to do as much childcare as they would like due to work; and conflicts from not being able to work enough due to childcare. By comparison, my informants do not surface stress related to conflicts between work and childcare: they do not perceive the burden. My informants make efforts, additional help, they feel are compatible with work and, importantly, they enjoy engaging with their children. My contribution sheds light on what fathers spend this time doing and why they provide additional help, which is a desire to support their wives in childcare but not only.

The provision of ‘additional help’ tends not to be sufficient to fulfil my informants’ ideals of fatherhood. My informants are clear about wanting to develop a relation as father with their children different to that of mothers, such as being involved in education and long-term development. Moreover, fathers seek closer emotional connection with their children. Such desires have less to do with the scope and time-intensity of fathers’ involvement with childrearing, than with the emotional basis of their relationship. Further, while women as mothers may have had to involve fathers more in parental responsibilities, mothers may see fathers’ deeper emotional connections with their children as a territorial encroachment to be resisted and contested. Thus, as compared to fathers’ relations with their children based on authority or as an ‘absent’ father, a basis in intimacy represents a marked departure in the basis of fathers’ relatedness with their children.

Seeking intimacy with children requires fathers to spend time, at least some time, with their children. To this end, additional help that is, say, sufficiently frequent and regular, such as accompanying to after-school lessons, provides those moments from which intimacy may arise. Such additional help needs to be compatible with men’s other commitments, notably work, and in relation to the needs of men’s wives. Yet, such practices in child rearing are a potential enabler to achieving intimacy: Thus, intimacy is enabled by a change in practices, the inclusion of additional help in fathers’ practices. In turn, increased father-child intimacy results in the transformation of other moments when fathers have contact with their children. Thus, there is an interaction which makes fathers’ increased involvement through additional help and seeking increased intimacy potentially reinforcing.
Men’s exploration of fatherhood is a basis for an emergent masculinity of men in the family. Seeking intimacy is for my informants a shift in mindset, even if actual time spent is limited by work pressures. Whereas the fathers I interviewed faced work pressures consistent with a salarymen career, and indeed many are salarymen in the narrower sense of the term, they do not aspire to a notion of fatherhood consistent with the hegemonic salaryman model. Their notion of fatherhood is not as financial provider who is potentially an authority figure but in practice largely absent from domestic life and, at least implicitly, with limited intimacy in familial relations. Though they somewhat fit the salaryman model, they are not complicit with the hegemonic masculinity; rather, theirs is a relatively quiet, unobtrusive contestation. They are not advocates for change at a larger, social scale, and they seek to fulfil necessary work obligations while addressing their desire for intimacy with their children.

Thus, men as fathers engaged in additional help and seeking intimacy have points in common and divergence with men as husbands based on the discussion in Chapter 2. The provision of additional help is a common aspect of how men as fathers and men as husbands reconcile the pressures on working couples. In contrast, what men seek in their relations as fathers and husbands is distinct, thus making for a different basis for relatedness as husbands and fathers: whereas men as husbands tend not to privilege intimacy with their wives, men as fathers seek intimacy with their children. Consequently, men’s sense of masculinity in the family is shaped differentially by men as husbands and as fathers.
Chapter 4. Grandparenting as a Means for Achieving Well-being among Recently Retired Men?

A main reason for men as husbands and fathers to be drawn into providing additional help is their wives’ employment, as the demands of childcare often leave women struggling (Rebick 2006; Roberts 2011). Support from extended family members is a means to address these challenges and, in this context, an emerging trend among grandfathers towards taking a greater interest in grandparenting has drawn recent media and public policy attention. Traditionally, in multi-generational households, childcare responsibilities generally fell to the mother and (usually patrilineal) grandmother (Long 2014). In the post-war period, grandparental involvement with child-rearing decreased as changing residence patterns and economic growth gave the elderly a degree of independence from their children and diminished expectations of children’s support of parents based on filial piety (Yu 2009:104‒105). Recent attempts by grandfathers to involve themselves in childcare may thus be seen to represent an expression of their family relations that is not simply a resurgence of older patterns of intergenerational support.

Ironically, dankai generation grandfathers, whose career commitments once limited day-to-day involvement with raising their own children, are now finding themselves in retirement with the potential to assist with raising their grandchildren. The dankai generation are men of the post-war baby boom generation, born in the late 1940s, who began retiring from the workforce en masse in 2007. These middle-class salarymen retirees typically enjoy relatively good physical health and access to significant economic resources in the form of savings and retirement pensions. On the one hand, these retirees, in conjunction with high average life expectancy, face the prospect of an unprecedentedly long period of healthy and comfortable retirement. On the other hand, at least it seems likely that as the men of the dankai generation enter their own retirement they will try to find ways of avoiding or contesting the negative characterisations made of retired men in the past, such as ‘sodai gomi’ of just taking up space at home as discussed in Chapter 1. A central challenge for such retired men is that upon retirement they lose what had largely defined them as men, their work. While their career leaves them financially secure in retirement, the dedication to work severely limited the nurturing of family relations. Thus, in retirement men need to seek congruence in their practices in the family and the attendant family relations so as to provide a sense of masculinity in the

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20 In this chapter I consider men born around the time of the dankai sedai generation, usually defined to include people born between 1947 and 1949. However, the phenomena I address are by no means limited to men born in the post-war baby boom years.
family. Given the loss of masculinity based on work, re-crafting successfully their masculinity in retirement is central to their happiness and, in a broader sense well-being.

Following the lead of anthropologist Gordon Mathews, any understanding of happiness needs to be grounded in ‘how happiness is conceived of, expressed, and experienced’ (Mathews 2009:1) by people in specific situations. The socially and culturally constructed determinants of happiness allow for a plurality of means as to how it might be pursued. For grandfathers, the fact that grandchild-care involves them with their extended families suggests that examining the relations that these men have with their family members may yield valuable insights into their personal conceptions of happiness.

Hence, in this chapter I discuss efforts by recently retired and retiring men to make meaningful contributions to their extended families through grandparenting. I address the following questions: What is expected of grandfathers based on government policies, NPOs, and marketing messages that portray grandfathers? In practice, how are recently retired grandfathers involving themselves in caring for their grandchildren? How do grandfathers frame their motivations, and what do they receive as a result of such involvement? In the following sections, to understand the varied conceptualisations of a grandfather’s role in the family, I first analyse an NPO’s advice book on grandfathers’ involvement in grandchild raising, I next assess a recently established gift tax policy that facilitates grandfathers’ funding of grandchildren’s education and how this is marketed to grandfathers. I then contrast these perceptions of grandfathers’ roles with grandfathers’ actual practices as revealed through my fieldwork, and grandfathers’ motivations for their involvement with grandparenting.

4.1. Grandparenting as a Social Phenomenon – What Does the NPO Advise Grandfathers to Do?

The relative wealth and considerable numbers of recent retirees belonging to the dankai generation constitutes an attractive target market for magazines and other popular media21. One

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particular area of focus within this broader media discourse has been older men’s involvement as grandfathers in grandparental activities (*magosodate*, literally ‘grandparenting’), as reflected in the widespread popularity of emerging terms coined for grandfathers who take an active part in child-rearing. Such terms have been created by non-profit organisations (NPOs) that have been active in promoting men’s participation in child-rearing through publications, workshops, and events held in collaboration with local governmental authorities.\(^{22}\) The increased media attention indicates the contemporary relevance to popular audiences’ attempts to establish a discursive context for grandfathers’ involvement in childcare, as well as the appetite for practical advice and guidance from the media. Within this evolving social phenomenon, as indicated by their role in creating new language in which to frame it, NPOs have emerged as a key player. Specifically, what makes for a good grandfather from the perspective of the NPOs active in this field? What child-rearing tasks are grandfathers expected to take on, and how do they learn the necessary skills? What reasons are given for why grandfathers should be involved, and how congruent are these with personal motivations? How is the role of grandfathers in childcare contextualised vis-à-vis those of other family members? In this section, I address these questions by examining *Sofū sofurie ni naru* [From Grandfather to ‘Sofurie,’ the Consummate Grandparenting Professional] published by NPO Égalité Ōtemae in 2011, a relatively popular guidebook on grandparenting strategies for grandfathers in the *dankai* generation wanting to be more involved in raising their grandchildren.

The guidebook outlines specific roles for men as active grandfathers, defining the group’s trademark neologism *sofurie* as follows:

> The *sofurie* … is more than a mere handyman (*otasuke man*) who helps look after his grandchildren, but a grandfather who participates actively in their upbringing. By mastering the necessary knowledge and skills, anyone with who feels affection towards his grandchildren can become a *sofurie* (Égalité Ōtemae 2011: back cover).

_(Author’s emphasis)_

\(^{22}\) The term ‘*sofurie,*’ for example, was coined in 2011 by the NPO Égalité Ōtemae, established in 2004, combining a term for grandfather (*sofu*) with the Japanese term for professional wine sommeliers (*somurie*). Another term, ‘*ikujii,’ which combines ‘child-rearing’ (*ikuji*) with ‘grandfather’ (*jiiji*), was conceived by the NPO Fathering Japan. The term *ikujii* first appeared in 2010 in major Japanese newspapers (*Asahi Shinbun* and *Yomiuri Shinbun: Kikuzo II* and *Yomidasu Rekishikan*), with the number of articles including the term *ikujii* increasing from 3 in 2010 to an average of 20 per year from 2012 through to 2014 (*Kikuzo II* and *Yomidasu Rekishikan*). A year before the appearance of *ikujii*, the term *ikumen* (actively parenting fathers) had achieved sufficient popularity to be recognised in the media as one of the ‘trending terms’ (*ryūkōgo taishō*) for 2012 (*Jiyū kokuminsha* 2016).
Grandfathers are advised to participate ‘actively’ (sekkyokuteki ni) in their grandchildren’s upbringing, a stance that is juxtaposed with the implicitly passive role of a someone who provides only occasional support. The guidebook urges grandfathers to assume greater responsibility by immersing themselves in practical day-to-day activities with their grandchildren. The emphasis is on a long-term perspective towards childcare, as befits an active family member, rather than the short-term perspective of someone who provides only temporary help or an extra pair of hands.

One way to understand the meaning of ‘active’ is by considering the specific skills and activities that the book expects grandfathers to master, which includes basic childcare skills such as of putting a baby down for naps, changing nappies, preparing milk, bathing children, playing at the park, and dealing with emergencies. Grandfathers are also urged to be proactive in assuming responsibility for other aspects of child-rearing such as packing a bag to go out, making friends at the park, preparing food when weaning infants to solid food, discussing menus with carers at child facilities (i.e. being aware of food allergies), taking grandchildren for vaccinations, giving appropriate medicines when grandchildren are sick, and monitoring sweets when preparing snacks. For instance, a section in the guidebook details instructions on controlling sugar intake to avoid risk of tooth decay. Grandfathers are advised to think of the children’s afternoon snack as a fourth meal instead of simply a treat, with specific suggestions offered on foods to provide, such as give rice balls, steamed or dried sweet potatoes, steamed sweet corn or rice crackers (osenbei) with water, or barley tea (ibid.:92–93). The guidebook asks grandfathers to take a longer-term perspective of the child’s development, rather than privileging near-term convenience, such as by giving sugary snacks. An ‘active’ stance toward grandparenting is thus one that provides ongoing support in all facets of children’s (daytime) routine in order that grandfathers can nurture their grandchildren. These practices may require a substantial reconstruction of masculine identity; however, the extent to which this is a challenge is not at all acknowledged in the book.

A tacitly assumed limit to the scope of the role that may be expected from grandfathers may be seen in the fact that the guidebook does not discuss skills required to look after children overnight (e.g. coping with children who wake crying in the night). This implies that grandfathers are not expected to be living in the household, but rather helping out during the day as visitors or minders. Neither is there any mention of household chores such as laundry or meal preparation for the family as a whole. This can be interpreted to reflect the assumption that children’s laundry would not usually be done separately from that of the entire family, whereas the grandfather’s role is to help with grandchildren. Similarly, food preparation is only discussed in the context of children’s meals. The overall message given by the book is that
grandfathers should have the necessary skills to be able to assume full responsibility for looking after their grandchildren from early morning to evening, including during times of illness.

This represents a remarkable transformation of the role expected of grandfathers in childcare relative to the virtual absence of grandfatherly involvement in the past. Grandfathers’ past practices might have just been occasional playing while keeping-an-eye on the children to ‘protect’ them (cf. Vogel 1963; Hendry 1995; Bernstein 2005). In contrast, under the Égalité Ōtemae proposal, grandfathers’ breadth of requisite skills and attitudes for practicing these skills would allow them to relieve their grandchildren’s parents (especially mothers) of daytime responsibilities, thereby enabling them to meet other commitments such as full-time jobs. Such a change in the division of familial labour is consistent with the goals of the Koizumi government’s Work and Child-rearing Balance Policy (shigoto to kosodate ryōristu shiensaku), which is a key element of achieving the overall policy of the ‘Campaign to Eliminate Waiting Lists for Childcare Facilities’ (taikijidō zero sakusen) launched in 2001 (Cabinet Office 2001). The government’s motivation for launching the policy is that:

Balancing work and child-rearing is essential for working parents to be able to live as persons. Satisfying this condition will enable the achievement of the humane and sustainable development of society as a whole. […] For adult human beings to be able to strike a balance in their lives between the naturally held objectives of work and child-rearing, it will be necessary for society to devote its combined efforts to assist them by rebuilding the social system itself in a form that is compatible with supporting such balance (Cabinet Office 2001).

Emphasising the need for an attendant transformation of social practices (rather than augmentation of the status quo), the policy sought to naturalise work and childcare for both women and men. Indeed, from the perspective of a working mother seeking to hand over responsibility for childcare, any realistic substitute who could provide effective daytime support on a regular and ongoing basis would require a certain skill set. As mothers would in all likelihood remain accountable even if childcare provision were to be performed by other family members, how such persons approach the tasks involved would be a critical matter. Thus, grandfathers helping with childcare fit into a broader social policy narrative. This government narrative is consistent with Fu’s (2013) argument that, in Japan, work for others is what makes ‘a person of society.’ Thus, taking on daytime childcare would make grandfathers feel a part of society but requires them to fulfil such a task appropriately.
The Égalité Ôtemae guidebook aims to teach the active, responsible mind-set and skills necessary for grandfathers to fulfil this substantially new role. Text-based with occasional illustrations, the guidebook provides in-depth explanations and maintains a persuasive tone throughout to reinforce the value of learning the target skills. The book is not an instruction manual for those already convinced to take on such a role, but neither does it simply provide motivation and inspiration. For instance, the schematic illustrations, which tend to show grandfathers enjoying particular activities with their grandchildren – e.g. holding babies, playing together with a child – appear to be intended to help grandfathers visualise themselves into such a role. The lack of photographs is stylistically distinct from advice books for mothers, which commonly use photographs to illustrate particular situations giving a very practical feel to the advice. At the same time, the relatively serious approach and tone of the guidebook also differs from the relatively humorous, irreverent approach used in popular manga guidebooks for fathers. Consistent with the novelty and seriousness of the role grandfathers are being called on to play, the guidebook aims not only to instruct but also to legitimise the figure of the active grandfather.

A similar dual purpose of instruction and legitimisation may be seen in the training programmes based on the text that are run by Égalité Ôtemae to instruct grandfathers on how to perform active, responsible child-rearing. During the course, grandfathers learn about child-rearing and master the key skills identified as necessary for becoming a ‘sofurie.’ The one-day, six-hour course covers such tasks as child-rearing past and present, child growth and development, nutrition and meal preparation (including the hands-on preparation of a children’s lunch that participants eat during the workshop), aspects of infant care (e.g. how to hold a baby, putting infants to sleep, oral hygiene, baby massage, and nappy changing), bathing and cleaning of nose, ear, eyes and nails, rudimentary first aid (e.g. how to deal with heat rash, sunburn, insect bites, immunisations, and judging when to take babies to hospital, including accident


24 These programmes are occasionally held in partnership with local authorities. A newspaper report in 2013, for instance, noted that more than 350 participants aged in their 60s and 70s completed the course in 2013 in more than twenty cities across Japan, including regional centres like Kumamoto and Okinawa (Yomiuri Shinbun 2 November 2013: Yomidasu Rekishikan).
prevention and emergency treatment), and how to play (Égalité Ōtemae 2013). In the context of their exploration of what is effectively a new domestic role, the formality of participation in a government-supported NPO training course provides grandfathers with a recognised means to justify and explain their attendance to others.

Furthermore, completion of the course is formally recognised with the award by Égalité Ōtemae of certificates attesting participants’ qualification as ‘Accredited Grandfathers’ (sofurie shikaku). In general certification and qualification are highly valued in Japan (shikaku shakai) (cf. Dore and Sako 1989:134‒160), as for instance in the legitimisation of a new career. In this regard, the sofurie shikaku certification borrows from the trendy image of the sommelier, on which the term sofurie plays. Qualified sommeliers who are employed as such are widely recognised to have a highly-professionalised job, and have been very popular since the late 1990s (cf. Jones 2015). By association with a trendy skill, the NPO certification implies that grandfathers are keeping up with the changing times, which is a potential source of motivation and support to reconstruct their sense of masculinity.

Certification also gives grandfathers greater sense of legitimacy, building their self-confidence. As part of the gendered division of labour between public and domestic roles, whereas women’s domestic role as wives and mothers is professionalised as discussed in Chapter 1, men’s domestic role is typically minimised to the extent that they were barely involved in childcare, if at all. Grandfathers’ involvement in childcare represents a challenge to this conventional dichotomy. Certification thus is a support to these retired men committing to the new task of grandparenting by giving them confidence through skill acquisition.

Another role of certificates is for the validation of skills by others. This may not seem relevant, as grandfathers seek training to look after their grandchildren not to enter the job market as childcare providers, so they need not signal their skills to unknown others. It is mothers, usually responsible for childcare, who decide whether to involve grandfathers. From a mother’s perspective, given mothers’ lack of alternatives, certification can provide credibility: Grandfathers thus become one realistic option for help, in addition to grandmothers and instead of, most likely, extra-familial professional assistance. Grandfathers’ mock professionalization through certification contributes an aura of social legitimacy to their (historically unusual) substitution for other professional resources as a source of childcare. From grandfathers’ own

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25 For instance, one 68-year-old participant who completed the course two months before the birth of his first grandchild reportedly expressed his delight at the program, stating that ‘although my knowledge of childcare was effectively zero, I can now look after [my grandchild] with confidence. I’ll be able to watch my grandchild grow up close at hand, and I’ll also become closer to my eldest son and his wife’ (Yomiuri Shimbun 2 November 2013: Yomidasu Rekishikan).
perspectives, their ‘professionalization’ inspires self-confidence in practicing their new skills and a sense of legitimacy with regard to involvement in contributing to domestic work.

Grandfathers targeted by the guide book are men who were not involved to any great extent in bringing up their own children. By extension, its notional participants are those who, perceiving their lack of the requisite knowledge and skills, are more likely to balk at assisting with the care of their grandchildren, however great their desire to participate. To address these potential concerns, the guide book’s Introduction argues that:

Due to economic development and competition in the international arena your [post-war baby boomers’] participation at home and in the family was heavily impeded in opposition to your values [i.e. desire to contribute to domestic work]. That you were not able to participate in bringing up your own children in the past does not mean that you lacked the will to do so. Now the opportunity has come. We wish to broaden the world of “child-rearing” not only for your own grandchildren but also for children in your neighbourhood (Égalité Ōtemae 2011, ‘Introduction’)

The guidebook thus attempts to construct a morally acceptable narrative for grandfathers: released from their work commitments now that they have retired, they may now turn to fulfil a long-held desire that they had sacrificed to pursue their careers. As history of what actually happened, of course, this is questionable. Men typically considered domestic work to be their wives’ responsibility, whereas for their own part they were physically and emotionally occupied with their careers, having neither the time nor desire to be involved in the domestic sphere (Hidaka 2010:156). Accordingly, many would have internalised the post-war hegemonic salaryman model to a degree that excluded any such intention. One might therefore question the revisionist claim that these men had any intention to help with childcare during their working lives. Nevertheless, this re-imagined narrative of the past serves a dual role. On the one hand, it legitimises their future involvement as being consistent with ostensibly long-held desires. At the same time, the narrative claim that their previous non-involvement was beyond their control allows grandfathers to sidestep any sense of regret, which might cause friction that would compromise the continuity between their past and future selves.

Another appeal to grandfathers’ provision of practical help is grounded in their families’ present realities, and reflects broader social changes in roles. In the guidebook, Égalité Ōtemae claims that grandfathers’ involvement in childcare facilitates the smooth operation of family and society by strengthening intergenerational links (Égalité Ōtemae 2011:10), citing the results of a survey conducted by the NPO finding that approximately 80 percent of men above the age
of 60 wish to be involved in grandchild-rearing, despite their anxiety about their lack of experience. However, as no methodological explanation or sample reporting is given, we must naturally take such self-justifying results with a grain of salt. Similarly, suspect is the separate finding that 80 percent of women of child-bearer age reportedly want their fathers to support them in raising their children, as grandfathers represent a reliable and responsible source of childcare support (ibid.). Despite its clearly revisionist view of the desire on the part of retired men to support childcare and its dubious pseudo-statistical data, the guidebook motivates grandfathers to take on grandparenting responsibility by appealing variously to their latent desires to be involved with child-raising, to benefit their extended family, and to accommodate their daughters’ specific requests for support. In different ways, each of these potential roles highlights grandfathers’ importance within the family, consistent with the views of successive governments. The Koizumi administration explicitly linked work-life balance to intergenerational living:

The spread of lives that have been able to strike a balance between work and childcare will guarantee diverse, multi-faceted, and humane lives throughout society as a whole. In local communities where three or four generations of residents coexist, it is our sincere wish and firm belief that grandchild-rearing and child-rearing can be realised at a societal level, and that those children who grow up in such an environment will be supported by rich interpersonal relationships and the supportive attention of society at large to grow up more soundly (Gender Equality Bureau 2001).

Admittedly, this formulation represents a fairly abstract perspective on local community, one in which grandfathers’ potential contribution to their grandchildren’s development provides a very functional benefit to society, as this is one aspect of inter-generational living that enables others to work. Indeed, in this context, the reference to intergenerational childcare implies not only grandfathers looking after their own grandchildren, but also extends to their involvement with children in the community. This emphasis on considering elderly people as proactive contributors to their communities is evident in the 2005 White Paper on Ageing Society (kōreishakai hakusho) (Cabinet Office 2005). One impetus is women’s increased work force participation, which has prompted a repurposing of retirees from care receivers to care providers, as least while they are able to do so. The 2005 White Paper includes a section on ‘koreisha to kosodate (the elderly and childrearing)’ in which elderly people first appear as providers of childcare. While the Koizumi administration emphasised intergenerational linkages within the
community, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe in his book that is seen to provide a manifesto for his premiership places emphasis on particular inter-generational linkages:

I think that we should maintain the idea of the family that includes father, mother and children, and grandparents as part of family. Also, we should nurture a sense of values that views living together in such a family as the best way to achieve happiness (Abe 2006:219).

Abe’s focus is on intra-familial connections, privileging the traditional concept of the extended multi-generational family in which grandparents are included. For Abe, this view of family is not held pragmatically owing to any functional benefit to the national economy; rather his is an ideological assertion that such family values will lead to the happiness of family members, even though this requires finding and coming to appreciate some (unspecified) way to live as an extended family.

Echoing Abe’s views on childcare and family, the core message repeated throughout Égalité Ōtemae’s advice book is that grandfathers’ involvement in caring for their grandchildren can be a source of personal fulfilment and happiness in retirement. The introduction encourages grandfathers to be proactive in taking the first steps toward involving themselves in childcare:

Most importantly, in an era when the form of family is dramatically changing, you can have an irreplaceable experience by taking the initiative in grandchild-rearing. To become a sofurie is the first step towards achieving such times of ultimate happiness (shifuku) (Égalité Ōtemae 2011:11).

The book emphasises that fulfilment of grandfathers’ ostensibly long-held desire to practice and participate responsibly in childcare serves as a source of happiness. While multiple reasons are given as to why this should be so, a major reason is that grandfathering allows recently retired men to establish ‘trust’ (‘shinrai’) in their relationships with their grandchildren. Young grandchildren are said to trust grandfathers unreservedly and to come to depend on them, ultimately providing their grandfathers with a source of joy in life (ibid.:13). To illustrate this, the book suggests that a crying baby will lose trust towards adults if nobody picks her up and holds her. A corollary of this, the book implies, is that the crying baby will come to recognise the person holding her as someone important. It claims that for a grandfather to comfort a baby signifies his acknowledgement of her desire for expression, and grandfathers are thus
encouraged to pick up crying babies to foster dependence, trust, and happiness. Thus, the book calls for a substantial reconstruction of the basis of relatedness between grandfathers and grandchildren, with an emphasis on trust. Further, it is not just the role of grandfathers that is reconstructed, but also that the emotional benefit to the self, happiness, is claimed to be central.

The grandfathers’ happiness, however, does not give license for them to impose their own approach. Rather, the guidebook’s advice is that to enjoy the experience of being an involved grandfather, grandfathers must give absolute priority to the child-rearing principles of the child’s parents. As such, great importance is to be placed on communication with the parents to receive direction. By conforming to these guidelines, grandfathers can ensure the satisfaction of the child’s parents, who will appreciate the grandfather’s help (ibid.:11–14). In this regard, grandfathers are akin to professional caregivers in that they should be guided by the policies of the parents.

A particular emphasis that remains implicit in the guidebook is placed on grandfathers’ involvement with the care of young children up to the age of three. For instance, all illustrations in the book are of infants and toddlers, and only one instance depicting a mother. For anyone with experience of parenthood in Japan, a focus on this age-range will seem rather remarkable. Not only are grandfathers being asked to take on a very new, very broad role, they are also being called upon to do so with children from a very challenging age. As compared to the care of babies and pre-school-aged children, older children (e.g. those already enrolled in elementary school) might seem more feasible and reasonable. Children of this age are old enough to appreciate their grandfather’s experience, while grandfathers already possess the knowledge to provide, for instance, guidance in science-related activities and support homework – they would not need to learn the specific new skills (e.g. changing nappies and negotiating feeding schedules and routines) that babies or toddlers would require. Given that this focus on very young children might be considered unrealistic advice on the part of Égalité Ōtemae, it is worth considering why this age range has been targeted in particular.

Despite the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s debunking of the ‘myth of the three-year-old,’ many mothers continue to believe that children respond optimally to nurturing by the mother until the age of three (see more details in Chapter 3). For mothers who hold this notion, the idea advocated in the guidebook of having grandfathers look after children – and thus avoiding reliance on childcare facilities – serves to reduce the guilt mothers feel when spending time away from childcare, whether for work or simply for taking some time to relax. At the same time, despite the Koizumi administration’s goal to eliminate waiting lists at childcare facilities, this has proven difficult to achieve in practice (MHLW 2015b). The introduction of the NPO’s book, training courses, and certification scheme for involving grandfathers in the
care of young children thus addresses both mothers’ needs and government priorities. In effect, this group of healthy and recent retirees, who suddenly find they have more time available to do something fulfilling with their everyday life, have been ‘discovered’ by government as a suitable substitute resource to help offset the need for childcare providers. By trying to promote grandfathers as also appropriate family members to rely on for the care for children, the government has found a way to reduce the pressures it faces with regard to the public provision of childcare.

In fact, it is worth noting that Égalité Ōtemae is deeply embedded with the Japanese government at multiple levels. Over 90 percent of Égalité Ōtemae programmes are co-sponsored by local governments across Japan, whose endorsement by hosting the NPO’s programmes validates the substance of the workshop and its text. Some staff of Égalité Ōtemae have worked with local and regional governments in their careers (Égalité Ōtemae 2013). In effect, Égalité Ōtemae represents an arms-length agency for the dissemination and implementation of public policy.

The approach advocated by Égalité Ōtemae may therefore be seen as distinct from the image of the retired head-of-household from the days of the ie family system, when such men may have been involved to some degree with their grandchildren. Neither is it consistent with the stereotype of domestically marginalised retired men of earlier post-war generations. Rather, the NPO’s approach radically redefines grandfathers’ family role in some respects: Égalité Ōtemae proposes what appears to be a relatively comprehensive and internally consistent model.

The advocated approach rests in part on an appeal to seek personal pleasure and edification in childcare. In return for their childcare practices, grandfathers are encouraged to seek enjoyment in childcare, the time spent with their grandchildren. Indeed, this approach essentially is a claim on grandfathers’ time, which consequently leads to the necessary childcare practices. The attendant practices, however, represent a radical break relative to the practices of the same men as fathers or the prior generation of grandfathers. Such practices re-shape family relations, as intergenerational relationships, especially grandfather to grandchild, become closer and relatedness is enhanced through the provision of care. Implicit here is the restructuring of family relations.

However, this implies grandfathers’ masculinity in the family, as compared to their masculinity when they were working, is neutered as rebuilt on an entirely different base: the NPO’s advocated approach likely threatens grandfathers’ sense of masculinity. Égalité Ōtemae’s proposal is radical, at least in terms of the changes called for in grandfathers. While the need for reconstruction of grandfathers’ masculinity is clearly necessary upon retirement, it is not evident that this necessitates such limited, if any, continuity with their past sense of
masculinity, at least from grandfathers’ perspective. At the core is a claim on *dankai sedai* retirees’ time that stems from an aim to support the retirees’ children through grandchild-care. In effect, this is a means to drive implementation of government objectives in childcare.

### 4.2. The Government’s View of the Role of Retired Men

The implication of the government in Égalité Ōtemae’s approach to encouraging grandfathers’ involvement in childcare necessitates that we take a wider view of what the government perceives to be the societal role of retirees. Welfare policies have typically been based on the assumption of retired people as a potential (financial) burden requiring support (e.g. long-term care and income support) through the Japanese government’s long-term care insurance and pension schemes. Accordingly, in this section I discuss a perspective of the government on retirees through a case study of a new gift tax policy implemented in 2013. My main focus here is not the impact of the policy, but rather on the government’s motivation for this policy and how the government conceives a role for older people in society. As banks are key actors in implementing the policy, I analyse how banks appeal to grandfathers, as their communications provide a perspective on how the role of grandfathers is conceptualised so as to promote the policy.

#### 4.2.1. The Recent Gift Tax Reduction Scheme

Under the Abe administration, as part of the FY 2013 Tax Reform (*Heisei 25-nendo zeisei kaisei taikō*), the government launched a new gift tax exemption policy (‘*Kyōikushikin no ikkatsuzōyo ni kakawaru zōyozei no hikazeisochi*’ Gift Tax Exemption for Lump-Sum Gifts for Educational Funding’) that allows grandparents to give a tax-free lump-sum gift to grandchildren to fund their education (Ministry of Finance 2013a: hereinafter MOF). This specific policy provides a case through which to assess the government’s intentions with regard to policies targeting the elderly.

For the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the main purpose and approach of the policy are

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26 Japan’s National Tax Agency levies a tax on significant cash gifts between individuals, with the tax being paid by the recipient of a gift. In 2014, a gift of 15 million JPY (the limit of the new policy) would have incurred a 50 percent tax. The scheme supplements the existing general exemption, which applies to gifts up to 1.1 million JPY per year (including those from grandparent to grandchild for educational purposes) (National Tax Agency, Japan 2016).

27 According to the Trust Companies Association of Japan (*shintaku kyōkai*), the total funding amassed by member banks had reached 963.9 billion JPY by September 2015 (Trust Companies Association of Japan 2015).

28 This new gift tax exemption was initiated at the joint request of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Financial Services Agency (FSA), and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). When first launched, the scheme – a significant addition to existing exemptions – was only
After extracting to the market abundant financial resources that have been allocated to society’s elderly as educational funds for children’s futures, our goal, along with working to ensure children’s educational funding, is to put these funds to effective use as money for growth. Funding given as a lump-sum gift by grandparents to their grandchildren as educational funds shall be exempted from the gift tax. (MEXT 2013)

By allowing for a significant one-time transfer of funds to grandchildren solely to be used for broadly defined educational purposes, the new gift tax exemption is clearly intended to support the education of Japan’s younger generation. 29

It is worth noting that while the funds are intended to benefit family members (i.e. the nominated grandchildren) the potential impact on family relations does not appear to factor into the government’s policy calculations. Rather, the magnitude and duration of the policy together suggest that the primary purpose of the policy is to realise a broader societal impact by serving as a medium-term economic stimulus. This is apparent from a speech delivered by Shinzō Abe shortly before his election as Prime Minister of Japan. In the context of the Liberal Democratic Party’s plan to leverage all available resources in order to stimulate the Japanese economy, it was reported that:

Abe Shinzō proposed the activation of wardrobe savings (tansu chokin) as a measure to combat deflation, asking “How might we draw out the money that lies sleeping in the wardrobes [of the nation]? We should explore all options.” (Yomiuri Shinbun 16 November 2012: Yomidasu Rekishikan)

Abe’s reference to Japan’s ‘wardrobe savings’ (tansu chokin, literally ‘savings stashed away in a wardrobe’) alludes to a significant economic resource. 30 As Abe’s choice of words intended to remain in force for a limited period of two and half years (from April 2013 through to the end of December 2015), but was later extended to March 2019.

29 Grandparents may devote money towards their grandchildren’s school fees with one-time tax-free gifts of up to 15 million JPY deposited in specially administered savings accounts at banks opened under the receiving grandchild’s name. This scheme can be used only once for each grandchild up to the age of thirty. According to regulations set out by the MOF, the gift may be used for school tuition from kindergarten through to university and graduate school, as well as for incidental school-related expenses such as meal and travel fees (MOF:2013a). Of the total amount, up to 5 million JPY may also be used to fund extracurricular educational expenses, such as tuition at private after-school academies (juku) or sports lessons (MOF 2013b). The broadly defined educational remit allows for substantial flexibility as to how and when the recipient may spend the gifted funds.

30 In 2012, Japanese citizens aged 60 and older held around 40 percent of the total amount of issued currency (approximately 40 trillion JPY) in the form of cash savings. The disproportionate concentration of this savings contributed to what has become an increasing financial gap between retirees and the working age population. Whereas in 1989 Japanese citizens aged 60 and older held just over 30 percent of private financial assets, by 2012 the same demographic had amassed approximately 60 percent (MOF 2013a, 2013b).
demonstrates, in targeting retirees’ savings to fund education, the primary objective was nevertheless to achieve a significant impact on Japan’s flagging economy. The government’s intention with the new tax policy is thus to put the money of affluent elderly (now sitting dormant as cash savings) into circulation as a measure to combat deflation. Because the policy is focused on retirees with substantial savings, it effectively targets the relatively well-off newly retired men of the *dankai* generation. As the wealth transfers in question take place within families, the aim of the policy is not the redistribution of wealth at large but rather within extended families between generations.\(^\text{31}\)

Thus, the gift tax policy implies a two-fold role for grandfathers: an explicit familial role in so far as they fund the younger generation’s education and an implicit societal role to stimulate the broader economy by mobilising dormant savings. It seems unlikely that the idea of stimulating the economy would motivate such economic activity on the part of grandfathers on its own. On the one hand, prior to their retirement, these men held the discursive position of *daikokubashira*, for whom support of both family and state was seen as a source of pride (Mathews 2003:111‒112). And while this may indicate that these men would have no real objection to being a part of a scheme to help stimulate the economy, it is nevertheless the case that the idea of ‘supporting the nation’ in retirement is a novel one. Building on Fu’s (2012) notion of the importance of work for the benefit of others, contributing through work to others was indeed a basis for the grandfathers’ working careers, as *daikokubashira*. Extending this idea into retirement is a novel aspect of the government’s proposal, calling for these men to be once more ‘a societal person (*shakaijin*)’. However, it is not evident that such a narrative would resonate from grandfathers’ perspective as emphasising just a societal effect with no corresponding work effort.

Indeed, the approach used to promote the policy to grandparents is that of supporting their own grandchildren’s future through education, which offers grandparents, as compared to supporting the overall economy, a more legitimate and attractive reason for mobilising their savings. The government is thus attempting to achieve economic objectives by appealing to family-focused objectives. While we cannot generalise about government policies through the case of this single policy, in this instance at least it seems the government has re-conceptualised the elderly, particularly in its identification of a category of ‘youthful elderly’ epitomised in the recent wave of retired post-war baby boomers. From the state’s perspective, this category of

\(^{31}\) Indeed, a concern could be that this is ultimately a means for wealthy retirees to avoid inheritance tax. Also, as recipients may save the gift for later spending the short-term impact on the economy may be limited. On the other hand, even if the gift itself is not spent in the short term, the perception on the part of grandchildren (or their parents) that such gifts can act as a substitute for their own savings may nevertheless actually serve to encourage consumption in the short term.
retirees – who are still relatively young, healthy and well-off – are even in retirement still potentially able to serve in a contributing role towards both the state and their families. They have thus been re-framed in public policy from notional recipients (of benefits) to providers of funds for both the family and the state, just as they once were during their careers.

4.2.2. Promoting Through Banks the New Tax Policy to Grandfathers

Whether a retiree with funds available chooses to take advantage of a tax exemption depends in part on their expectations, which may be influenced by how the scheme is promoted to them. Since the policy described in the previous section is administered through banks, in this section I examine the banks’ promotional materials as a means of understanding how the banks perceive the role of grandfathers in society and the family. Banks are key actors in promoting the policy given their mandated role in administering its implementation.32

In this section, in order to analyse how banks conceptualise grandfathers in terms of their role in society and in the family, I compare the promotional approaches of two major banks, Mitsubishi UFJ Trust and Banking (Mitsubishi UFJ Shintaku Ginkō, hereinafter MUTB) and Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank or ‘SuMi Trust’ (Mitsui Sumitomo Shintaku Ginkō). Both banks have launched new service lines to serve clients who wish to open accounts for their grandchildren under the new tax scheme for trust gifts for schooling expenses (kyōiku shikin zōyo shintaku). This has also entailed creating dedicated new organisational units, which serves to underline the significance of the tax exemption policy for the banks. For example, MUTB doubled the number of their consultants from 150 to 300 while SuMi Trust increased the number of their gift tax consultants by 30 percent to as many as 250 consultants (Nihon Keizai Shinbun 18 March 2013: Nikkei Telecom 21). As the policy-mandated gift tax reduction is common across banks, each bank has an incentive to distinguish their services from the other banks through promotion and service delivery.

The banks analysed here differ in how they aim for their customers to make appropriate use of their gift. Thus, the banks work to create their own respective consumption experience. To promote the policy to grandfathers, MUTB focuses the terminology they employ in their

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32 Banks set up dedicated savings accounts and monitor whether funds are being used in line with policy guidelines, such as by auditing invoices for educational fees. In the first two months of the policy launch, Japan’s four major banks accepted total deposits under the new scheme of around 70 billion JPY (Asahi Shimbun 6 June 2013: Kikazo II). By the end of July 2013, the total amount of deposits under the policy at Japan’s trust banks (shinyō ginkō) reached 177 billion JPY (Asahi Shimbun 14 September 2013: Kikazo II). The average amount deposited to individual accounts has been approximately 6.8 million JPY (President 2013). The economic benefits the banks derive from the scheme include the opportunity to launch new fee-based services and to attract savings not only from their own existing customers but also from those of other banks. Thus, the banks have a pecuniary interest in appealing to grandfathers to take part in the scheme.
marketing materials on an emotional appeal that emphasises the direct link between grandparent and grandchild.

The marketing campaign is called ‘Rejoice in Your Grandchildren (Mago Yorokobu),’ which features in large eye-catching characters in the branding of the campaign (Figure 1). The bank allows grandparents to customise the service by adding a handwritten note and personal picture to the passbook used for the account, suggesting to clients that this should be a picture of the grandparent with the grandchild. The claim is that the grandparent is not only giving a gift for the future, but also creating a memory of the past. There is no mention of the tax savings realised through the gift that has occasioned the account, as this is not the main basis of the emotional appeal.

Figure 1: Brochure for MUTB's 'Mago yorokobu (Rejoice in your grandchildren)' campaign
MUTB’s promotion of the scheme is based on deepening the bonds of affection (*kizuna*) between grandparents and grandchildren. The explicit use of the term *kizuna* likely reflects to some degree the popularity of this term as a buzzword in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. In its use of this term, the bank’s approach is attempting to project the meaning of this gift forward and backward in time, despite the one-time lump-sum nature of the gift and the related tax exemption. For grandchildren, the booklet and photograph serve as reminders of their grandparent each time the account is used. While these savings might well be viewed by the grandchildren as fungible savings, mutually interchangeable with other funds, the personalised passbook links the originator of the funds (the grandparent) with their eventual use, a personalised earmarking that de-commoditises the money in the account. Over time, repeated withdrawals to pay ongoing educational bills – and therefore repeated encounters with the passbook – invites the possibility of the ritual remembrance of the grandparent’s generosity. In turn, the grandchild’s gratitude will be fostered through the reciprocity engendered by the gift; the repetition of such practices supports the formation of bonds of affection. It is this process that creates relatedness between grandparents and a grandchild. The bank’s appeal to grandparents is thus in part the opportunity that the program represents to create such lasting memories, intimating how the act of giving in the present will have a future impact on their grandchildren. MUTB’s approach may thus be seen to centre on the generation-skipping bond between grandparent and grandchild.

In contrast, the focus of the approach taken by SuMi Trust is explicit about including the parental generation in addition to grandparents and grandchildren. Although the bank’s service is marketed to grandparents as *Mago e no omoi* (‘Affection towards Grandchildren’), the marketing materials of the bank refer explicitly to three generations:

> Why not demonstrate the affection you feel for your grandchildren? […] We live in an age when two generations are present to support our children’s education. Affection for your children and affection for your grandchildren – together these two affections magnify their impact (SuMi Trust 2014).

The reference to three generations may also be seen in the branded imagery associated with the service offering:
Indeed, the grandparent’s gift is portrayed as being a gift to both parents and grandchildren, with the gift of money for education seen as a demonstration of grandparental affection. The implicit assumption of such affection is thus the basis of the appeal. In contrast to the previous example, the emphasis of the SuMi Trust campaign is not on engendering affection after the fact by creating an ongoing bond between grandparents and grandchildren. Rather, here the gift is portrayed as in tune with current times, the ‘age we live in.’ By claiming that two generations are needed to support the youngest generation, the campaign mobilises grandparents into the role of providers (as opposed to dependents) for their extended families, upending the more traditional notion of younger generations supporting their parents or grandparents in old age. Thus, the act of gift giving serves as a means for grandparents to position themselves in a somewhat novel role, that of provider, within their extended family network.

Neither bank appeals to grandparents’ gift giving as a means to support the economy; the government’s ultimate motivation is not evident in how the policy is deployed through the banks. Rather, in their distinct campaigns, the underlying instrumental benefit provided by the tax exemption notwithstanding, the financial transaction is characterized as a means to (re)shape family relations. With grandparents being in the novel position of providing funds to their extended families, the differences in how the two campaigns situate grandparents within the extended family – by foregrounding grandparent-grandchildren ties or multi-generational ties – reflects the contemporary fluidity and potential for change in roles of grandparents.

While the campaigns appeal to such family relations, the underlying practices to support such relations are for the most part left implicit, other than from repeated use of the passbook. So, the ongoing connection of practices to family relations is at best relatively weak. Further, the scheme appeals to men as financial providers to their families, which for men who associated themselves with salaryman masculinity prior to retirement is a degree of continuity with what was previously an important aspect of their masculinity.
Indeed, connecting with the prior discussion of the NPO Égalité Ōtemae’s grandparenting advice for grandfathers highlights the challenges for grandfathers to feel themselves active contributors to society. For such grandparenting advice the issue is the extent to which grandfathers are asked to take on care practices they do not readily associate with; whereas for the gift tax there are no associated ongoing practices as grandfathers are just asked to give economic resources. Taken together these strategies do not seem to indicate an integrated, coherent policy toward dankai sedai retirees. Whereas the policy initiative seeks to direct retirees’ money towards their grandchildren’s education, it does not seek to foster any involvement with school-age children. While in the retired grandfathers of the dankai sedai the government has discovered a pool of people from whom new forms of social contributions might be expected, its policies seem to be more akin to piece-meal attempts to leverage this latent resource potential within this social group than a concerted and well-considered policy.

4.3. Ethnographic Cases: Grandfathers’ Practices of Grandchild-care

In contrast to the banks’ overt emphasis on family relations, the government’s underlying policies seek to harness the dankai sedai retirees’ funds and time resources in support of broader social goals, particularly to stimulate the national economy and to support women working. Thus, to understand the context for grandparental involvement in childcare, it is important to consider how post-war changes in the Japanese family have allocated the relative distribution of childrearing responsibilities by shifting these onto mothers in particular. As the nuclear family became more prevalent over the post-war period, even while three-generation households persisted (cf. Ochiai 1994), the traditional structural link to the husbands’ parents’ household grew weaker, while husbands themselves became increasingly absorbed by their role as salarymen devoted to Japanese companies. As a result, mothers found themselves bearing the burden of childrearing even more than in previous generations.

One perspective on how mothers have adjusted is provided by Mitsuko, a woman in her mid-40s who serves as the Director at the Kosodate Sentā (Centre for Childrearing), a public childcare facility launched in 1988 in Hōjō. I interviewed at her office at the child-care centre. In her view, the expectation that mothers should look after children (‘hahaoya ga ko o mirun ya’) has weakened, while at the same time it has become easier for daughters to ask their parents to take children to the facility. She has also observed a growing trend for grandparents to travel to Hōjō from the larger centres of Kobe and Osaka, one to two hours’ drive away, to mind their daughters’ children, such as by accompanying them to immunisation appointments and the like. Mitsuko further observed a number of young mothers having come back to Hōjō to live close
to their parents, often at their parents’ encouragement. The pressures of motherhood thus lead to closer relations to mothers’ parents.

Traditionally grandmothers have played an important role in grandchild-care especially for mothers who struggle to meet work commitments and family responsibilities (Kenjoh 2007). Yet whereas grandmothers have typically provided support in the form of domestic help (Vogel 1963), grandfathers’ involvement in grandchild-care (especially with the children of their daughters) is a truly novel pattern of family interaction. For grandfathers the absence of any established patterns or role models on which to draw means that the nature and basis for such relationships represents an important matter for ethnographic inquiry. To this end, the following section introduces the experiences of a number of men who have established relationships with their grandchildren as a starting point for understanding the scope and limitations of grandfathers’ practices of grandchild-care. This is followed by an in-depth look at one informant in particular whose experience suggests how involvement with grandchildren can also redefine grandfathers’ relationship with their own daughters.

4.3.1. The Scope and Limits of Grandfathers’ Involvement in Childcare

In the context of a novel family relationship, grandfathers need to establish their role in grandchild-care. This depends, in part, on their own lived experience of the practice of grandchild-care, as was explained to me by Mitsuhiro, a 61-year-old man whom I came to know after meeting his daughter Mari at a local summer festival event for families. A former salaryman for an accounting firm and city hall worker, friendly and approachable, in his retirement Mitsuhiro has set up a real estate business with his son, though his participation in the venture is only part-time. In addition to our interview, I had the opportunity to talk to him several times at summer festivals and in the neighbourhood. In his view, the personal enjoyment derived from spending time with his grandchildren is sufficient explanation for his involvement in grandchild-care:

On weekends, I sometimes take my grandchildren out for meals without their mother for things like sushi, yakitori or okonomiyaki, when I’m in the mood for these foods. I take them when I feel like it (boku no kimagure). […] I take them out because it’s fun to eat with my grandchildren. […] It’s not to give my daughter and son-in-law time to go out as a couple, leaving their children with me. That is not a concern of mine.

(Author’s emphasis)
Mitsuhiro stresses his own enjoyment and takes care to point out his grandchildren’s parents’ leisure time is not a motivation for spending time with his grandchildren. Babysitting to allow parents to have time for couples’ activities is not considered by my informants to be something that warrants their help. For the older generation, marriage tends to be viewed more as a pragmatic relationship, less as an emotional link between spouses (Tokuhiro 2010). Grandfathers thus tend to view couples’ leisure together as being of limited importance for sustaining the relationship, which means they generally consider such matters beyond their sphere of interest.

Grandfathers’ provision of help depends on their own values. Whereas leisure may be devalued, a job is seen as an activity that warrants a mother being away from her children, and so helping their daughters meet work commitments is another reason that my informants offer to explain their involvement in grandchild-care. Hiroshi, aged 65, is a retiree who worked at the city hall. He has two adult children; a son whom he lives with and a daughter who lives about a five-minute drive from him. He told me when we met at his home that ‘I feel sorry for my adult children having to live at a time when income levels are so low.’ This sympathy motivates him to provide grandchild-care and to support his daughter’s career so that she can earn an income and find fulfilment, while he gets to enjoy time with his grandchildren.

Grandfathers may also sometimes offer support that allows daughters to pursue activities that their fathers do not consider strictly necessary. For instance, on one occasion, Mitsuhiro looked after his grandson for almost a full day in Osaka while Mari attended a seminar out of personal interest. While Mari would not have been able to attend the seminar without her father’s help, it seems clear in this situation that decision-making lay with Mitsuhiro rather than his daughter.

Some grandfathers I interviewed became quite animated and passionate about the prospect of passing on part of their own knowledge, experience and customs to their grandchildren. For instance, Shinji, a former high-school teacher introduced to me through K-Family Support, a local not-for-profit childcare facility: He has a single daughter, who has one child. I interviewed him at his atelier, where he teaches water-colour painting, and he kindly invited my children and I for a lesson. He told me that he feels duty-bound to teach his grandchildren about nature:
To learn by experience – this is key. For example, I taught my grandson about the seven grasses of spring (haru no nanakusa) by pointing out seri (Japanese parsley) growing on the roadside in spring on the way back from his kindergarten. This way, he can learn about the nanakusa through personal, hands-on experience. [...] I think there’s great value in learning our connection with nature. [...] As grandparents, we have lived in touch with nature, and it’s a very important task for me to give my grandchildren a way of thinking about nature. Teaching them this is something that I can do as their grandfather. [...] I can teach them about life through my own experience.

Along with the substance of his learning, Shinji implicitly desires to impart a way of life (‘in touch with nature’) and a way of learning (‘by experience’), a charge he feels he is in a unique position to fulfil as a grandfather.

My informants frequently expressed their wish to transmit particular interests to their grandchildren. Mitsuhiro wants to teach his grandchildren how to hold chopsticks so as not to embarrass themselves in public, a skill he believes they might otherwise not learn. Hidetoshi, who I interviewed at the office of T-Plus Family Support following an introduction by Tetsuya, has two daughters and one son. He feels the desire to teach his grandchildren about regional customs and rules, such as how to pray at a local shrine, in order for them to learn to fit into the local community. He believes this is important even though his own children (the parents of his grandchildren) tell him that such things are no longer relevant to Japanese society. Hiroshi, for his part, is keen to instil respect for hierarchical relationships of seniority (jōge kankei) and courtesy (reigi) towards others in greeting:

I scold children in our community as well, because these parents today, they don’t scold. [...] Seriously. Now in my day, we weren’t brought up to speak to our elders without using respectful language. But these days there are no seniors, no juniors – they’re all just friends … I just simply can’t think that way. [...] Children should talk to their elders and their older friends using respectful language. [...] I don’t think I’m asking for too much, but these young parents don’t say anything. [...] Children who have a grandfather and grandmother are a bit different – these kids are polite, they

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33 The phrase ‘seven grasses of spring’ refers to the custom of eating rice porridge made with the seven grasses (nanakusa gayu) to celebrate the arrival of spring.
can do what they’re told, like greeting people on the street properly. […] I don’t think grandfathers and grandmothers are useless.

While Hiroshi feels disappointed by young parents who do not scold their children, he considers the real problem to be families that lack a grandfatherly figure like him to play a disciplinary role. The reproduction of social customs, a charge he associates with the role of grandfathers, is for him a prime motivation. In their respective emphases on social courtesy, chopstick etiquette, and religious observance, these men express a common desire to socialise their grandchildren into their own conception of customs and manners, regardless of whether this accords with the views of the interceding generation. This contributes to grandfathers’ sense of self-worth, as they feel they can do this particularly well.

Even so, my informants demonstrate a preference for steering clear of potential conflicts with parents when it seems that their actions might be seen to go too far. In the words of Shinji, the former schoolteacher:

I don’t care to involve myself with the grandchildren to the extent that my daughter and I might disagree. […] When I am involved, I’m able to imagine how the person feels, so I try to avoid such situations. I don’t want to be involved in grandchild-care to that extent (soko made). I don’t do that much because that is not my obligation (gimu) as grandfather.

(Author’s emphasis)

Although discussing concerns about children’s behaviour with parents was part of his professional duties as a school teacher, as a grandfather Shinji does not feel the obligation to voice disagreements about his grandchild’s behaviour and development to the extent of straining his relationship with his daughter. For him this represents a clear boundary on the extent of his involvement. In this he could be seen to be acknowledging the possibility of inter-generational differences over ideas of propriety. This is not to say that Shinji ignores parental views; rather, he determines his actions by factoring in his understanding of parental preferences through self-reflection rather than discussion.

Grandfathers’ concerns for avoidance of short-term harm are generally much more evident than any emphasis on the grandchildren’s longer-term development, such as for example in terms of physical growth or academic performance at school. Mitsuko, Director at the Centre for Childrearing, stresses the sense of responsibility grandparents feel to ensure that their grandchildren do not suffer any physical injury while in their care. As Hiroshi notes:
It’s easier in a way, as I don’t have responsibility for my grandchildren like I had for my children. […] I have a responsibility while I’m looking after them, but I just have to make sure they do their homework and do not hurt themselves.

Hiroshi’s feelings of responsibility towards his grandchildren’s development do not extend beyond the time he spends with them. Not that he ignores their longer-term development, as evidenced by his concerns that ‘we shouldn’t spoil grandchildren by helping too much (amayakashi sugitara akan) […] such as by getting their things ready for school,’ but he does not feel such things to be his main responsibility. Like my other informants, he believes that the parents retain responsibility for ongoing care of the children.

Similarly, requests for assistance for domestic chores such as cooking, doing the laundry or cleaning for their grandchildren are seen by my male informants as jobs for grandmothers, rather than themselves. Nor do they generally take on grandchild-care in the evening (such as by getting children ready for bed) or overnight, as this would require grandfathers to acquire particular skills and capabilities with which they have little previous experience. Even when taking on the novel role of grandchild-caregiver, then, these men continue to take it for granted that domestic work is a woman’s domain. They tend to take on roles which they know how to perform, differentiating their duties much as they did during their working lives.

The enjoyment of time spent with grandchildren is a source of happiness for grandfathers. Such grandfathers are embarking on novel practices, relative to their own life as fathers or the prior generation of grandfathers. Their childcare support entails practices that do not fundamentally challenge their ongoing sense of certain domestic aspects being a feminine domain: they are likely to pick up grandchildren from school but not to prepare a meal for them. They wish to influence their grandchildren through passing on certain practices. Such involvement with grandchildren starts to chart for such men new dimensions of masculinity in the family. Yet, they avoid conflict with parents, and are selective as to their reasons for providing support and the specific practices they are willing to perform. These limits suggest that from the grandfathers’ perspective the benefits of grandchild-care need to be regarded not so much in the context of the child’s development than of the grandfather’s overall relationship with the children’s parents.

4.3.2. The Impact of Grandchild-care on Grandfathers’ Relationships with Daughters

Grandfather’s involvement in grandchild-care practices may deepen their relationships with their children. Conversely, intimacy in relations with their adult children may lead to
grandfather’s involvement in grandchild-care. A perspective on un-packing the relationship between intimacy and involvement is provided by Mitsuhiro’s experience. Mitsuhiro’s involvement with his son in the family real estate business notwithstanding, it is evident that he has a much more intimate relationship with his daughter and her three children than with his married son, who has one child. Although he sees his son most days at work, he seldom visits his son’s house – just two to three times per year, for example on Father’s Day and on his own birthday. Conversely, he visits his daughter’s house for dinner three to four times per week and regularly goes out for dinner with his daughter’s family. He does not go out with his son’s family, despite the fact that they live very near. Yet, when his children were young, Mitsuhiro describes his relationship as having been equally close with both his son and daughter:

Since my children were elementary school students, they participated in the sports club activities of baseball (for my son) and volleyball (for my daughter) until high school. At the time, I was close to both children equally by always accompanying (them to their practices and taking them to the competitions). […] I often visited my daughter when she was a college student in Kobe but I rarely went to see my son when he was a university student in Osaka … because he was not so pleased with my visits. My wife usually went to see him by herself by train. […] (Even when I did visit) he was not so glad although he did not complain about my visit. I had a feeling that I was not welcome. It was much more comfortable visiting my daughter. My wife and I would visit her (almost self-invited), and take her and her friends out to dinner. I went to my son’s place only when I needed to bring something from home for him which required using the car as he was in Osaka.

By the time when the children were at university, the divergence between Mitsuhiro’s feelings towards his adult children had deepened. In particular, he feels distanced by what he regards as his son’s emotional independence:

I talk with my son about some things, but not private matters – things like social relations in the local community, the elderly, our business. […] It’s also that I feel bad when I visit his family because it’s as if I were walking into his home with shoes on (kazoku no naka ni dosoku de agaru kanji). Also, I feel like I have to be on my best

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34 The phrase dosoku de agaru literally means to enter a place without taking off one’s shoes (a breach of etiquette wherever shoes should be taken off, such as in a private home). The phrase is used to refer to intruding on or disturbing someone’s privacy.
behaviour around my son’s wife (wakayome ni ki o tsukau). So I visit his house only when I am invited, whereas I visit my daughter’s house when the mood strikes me. In particular, her husband [his son-in-law] is usually not there in the early evening. I feel like I can relax (ki o tsukawanai) at her house. […] It’s much more comfortable to have a chat with my daughter. […] We talk about the children [his grandchildren], and even make a lot of jokes and laugh together over dinner. It’s fun. […] Women become soft and friendly when they chat but men instead start to contain themselves. […] Sons become like complete strangers (aka no tanin).

Mitsuhiro feels welcome at his daughter’s house, and is keen to visit her, especially when the absence of his son-in-law dispenses with the need for formal behaviour. These are moments of pleasure for him, as is apparent from his expressiveness when he recounted these moments during our interview. On the other hand, Mitsuhiro feels presumptuous when visiting his son’s family without having a particular reason or excuse because he considers his son’s home to be his daughter-in-law’s domain. He is reluctant to intrude on his daughter-in-law’s space, though not his daughter’s. This attitude is inconsistent with the ie system, which would place him in a comfortable position in his son’s household, and also out of sync with the traditional pattern of the nuclear family, given his desire to maintain the relationship with his daughter and her children.

Mitsuhiro’s 36-year-old daughter Mari suggests an alternative perspective on this relationship. Mari, who teaches at one of Hōjō’s kindergartens, says that ‘My father helps by going to fetch my child at the school bus stop every day. This actually helps me out a lot as I cannot pick him up myself, since I work full-time.’ She greatly appreciates his constant support of her parenting, emphasizing that, ‘Our household wouldn’t be able to function without my parents (Oya ga inai to uchi wa mawaranai).’ In practical terms, her father’s contribution is instrumental to her ability to work at a job she finds personally fulfilling.

Mitsuhiro’s desire to protect his daughter from potential pressure from her colleagues represents another core motivation for his involvement with his daughter’s children. At the time of my first interview with him, in fact, Mari was on leave due to poor health. Even so, Mitsuhiro continued to pick up her son Takeshi at the bus stop, despite the fact that his doing so was no longer strictly necessary. He explained that he continued to do so in part because he was concerned that were people to see that Mari was well enough to fetch her son, they would think that she was therefore able enough to work and judge her harshly. He feared that she would lose face and trust at her workplace. Understanding this, Mari was grateful for him to continue
picking up Takeshi during her illness, while, for his part, he derived fulfilment by shielding her from a difficult situation.

Over time, as Mitsuhiro has become aware of the daily joy afforded by fostering a close relationship with his grandchild, he has come to look forward to these moments together with his grandson:

I see my grandchildren [daughter’s children] every morning and evening. [...] I fetch Takeshi [his daughter’s eldest son] from the school bus stop every day. I’m happy to do so, just because I like doing it! Fetching my grandchild is something I look forward to (tanoshimi). After picking him up I take him back to my office and let him play on my computer or take him back to his home.

(Author’s emphasis)

For Mitsuhiro, grandchild-care provides two benefits, namely the intrinsic satisfaction of performing the act, and the instrumental sense of self-worth gained from being needed. Mitsuhiro derives day-to-day pleasure from grandchild-parenting practices embedded in his affection towards his daughter.

As other cases discussed in this chapter, Mitsuhiro is an example of a grandfather who differentiates his time investment in his grandchildren, devoting greater attention to his daughter’s children than his son’s. His decisions about which relationships to prioritise reveal that he does not feel constrained by traditional arrangements privileging his relationship with his son’s family. As his children grew up, he became closer to his daughter, whose marriage and motherhood have necessarily changed her situation and the nature of their relationship.

Mitsuhiro’s desire to help his daughter allows him to enjoy spending time with his daughter and grandchildren and gives him something to look forward while supporting her with childrearing and facilitating her decisions to work. The link between women’s careers and parental support is central to Roberts’ (2011) discussion, which evidences how the wives’ parents or the young couple relocate close to live close to each other, so that the wives’ parents may support their daughter’s well-being, in particular through the wives’ mother supporting childrearing. By comparison, I provide evidence on the involvement of daughters’ fathers in enabling their daughters to pursue their careers and raise their families: this contributes not only to their daughters’ but also their own well-being. For Mitsuhiro, happiness includes not only moments of joy experienced in the practices of everyday life, but also the anticipation of these moments. In this fashion, Mitsuhiro and his daughter have developed and are maintaining a close emotional relationship through the daily practices associated with childrearing. Building
on an initial base of intimacy, grandchild-care becomes a reflexive strategy for reinforcing father-daughter intimacy, an intimacy that is important for Mitsuhiro’s sense of well-being.

4.3.3. Gift-Giving Practices in the Family

The previous sections document how grandfathers have become involved with grandchild-care for the pleasure of time spent with their grandchildren as well as that derived from supporting their daughters. As a novel social role, this involvement entails negotiation with their grandchildren’s parents, consistent with the view that roles are being negotiated anew in Japanese families. As argued by family sociologist Yamada, the Japanese family can no longer be seen as a fundamentally stable unit (if ever it could), and that family relationships are now being ‘restructured,’ in no small part due to the economic pressures families have faced over Japan’s long years of economic recession (Yamada 2003). As Japanese family have been in transition, therefore, access to economic resources may be expected to surface as a topic of major interest in the ongoing and mutual negotiation of roles and relationships.

For the grandfathers I interviewed, access to and control over economic resources play an important part in (re)shaping family relations, not only in terms of their daughter’s ability to work but also with reference to more tangible family resources. Many of my informants, in fact, provide financial support to their married daughters in the form of gifts, and all discussed economic resources in their accounts of family relationships. This section addresses the question of why grandfathers might provide such support, and how such support is framed.

Commensality is one example of a practice that illustrates the role of gifts in family relationships. Although sharing of food and other substances has been shown to be a basis for moral and affectionate ties extending beyond links of affiliation or consanguinity (Lambert 2000), my fieldwork reveals how the sharing of food can play an important role in relatedness among family relationships.

Susumu, a 69-year-old retiree I met at a symposium on regional development hosted by a local business association and I interviewed him after the symposium. He is a former automotive company employee, very lively and energetic, with on 35-years-old daughter, married with three children, aged eight, ten, and 17. He lives approximately ten minutes’ drive away from his daughter’s house and generally meets with her family once a week during the school term and twice a week over school holidays, often treating them to meals at restaurants. In Susumu’s words:

Grandchildren are thought to be the centre of the family, but in fact I’m the centre because I pay for meals. I pay because I have money. […] It’s a good deal for them
to go out with me. So they ask me to go for meals together! (He smiles) The children’s parents think wisely. […] We can have family contact (kazoku no fureai) over a meal out, which is precisely why I go out for meals with my daughter and her children. I sometimes ask my grandchildren at the beginning of the meal if they love me. They say “I love you!” although my oldest grandchild has stopped saying this. They are so adorable!

By choosing to pay, Susumu feels able to secure a central position (chūshin) in the family, ‘centre’ of the family, at least for the duration of the meal. His gift-giving is thus a strategic attempt to elicit a reciprocal return on his gift in the form of the gratitude and affection of his daughter and grandchildren.

This provides an interesting example in contrast to the argument, advanced by Katherine Rupp (2003), that gift-giving sustains the patriarchal system. Rupp observes that in the context of gift-giving for seasonal and life cycle events:

The women exchange for the benefit of men … Although women wield influence through their primary responsibility for practices of giving and receiving their very participation in this system reinforces their subordinate position in relation to men. […] It is usually not men themselves who offer gifts to the people who hold power over them, but rather their wives and mothers. It is women who must explicitly acknowledge the higher status of the other person and ask for that person’s continued favour and assistance. […] Although women are the primary givers of gifts, they give as the subordinate halves of the martial units (Rupp 2003:161–162).

(Author’s emphasis)

The structure of social relations determines the form of the exchange – who gives, who receives, and for what purpose – thereby reaffirming and sustaining the hierarchical structure. In contrast, I would argue that Susumu’s strategy is not based on a pre-supposed hierarchical relation with his daughter and grandchildren, but rather his hope to nurture these family relations. He expects that by paying for meals, he is creating occasions that generate ties of affection with his daughter and grandchildren.

Though Susumu stresses the desirability of ‘family contact’ with his daughter and her children, his notional family conspicuously does not extend to his son-in-law. As in the case of Mitsuhiro, Susumu’s involvement with his daughter and her children does not accord with
notions of family based on the traditional *ie* or basic nuclear family. Rather, it is reflective of a sense of relatedness that has arisen out of the nature and frequency of their interaction.

Indeed, Susumu feels uncomfortable visiting his son-in-law’s home for dinner, where he feels that he would no longer be the ‘centre’ of the family. Rather, he creates situations by arranging for meals at restaurants, which enable him to protect his masculine pride by paying for the meals and positioning himself as the provider. Although retired and living off his pension and savings rather than a salaried income, he feels the need to express and maintain his masculinity through providing financial support, just as he did when his daughter was single. His contributions shape his relationships with his daughter and her family, allowing him to feel content as a valued family member who plays a part in the family’s sense of well-being.

The pattern of financial support in relationships also features prominently in Mitsuhiro’s account. When his daughter married, Mitsuhiro bought a house for his daughter, which he felt to be his role as a parent:

That house came on the market just before the wedding, and since they were going to be getting married, I bought the place thinking that I would have them live there (*sumasō to omotte*). […] I guess I kind of pushed them into it (*oshitsuke*). It would be easier for them to live here than in some apartment. That was my pitch. […] Anyway, my daughter was also working, and so was my son-in-law, so when a kid came along, well, my office is near here, and we [my wife and I] knew we would have to look after the kid, so you could say it ticked all the right boxes. […] I didn’t really think about [how it might be hard to pull off if his relationship with his son-in-law soured]. I never thought about how it might feel [for the son-in-law] from a personal perspective. I just thought it would be convenient to set them up in a house close by (*chikaku ni oite oitara ee*). [I also thought it would be nice if our sweet Mari would live close to us]. […] Well, there’s that too, but I also believe it’s our role as parents. Afterwards, they can do what they like, since I’ve done this much (*soko made*) [with regard to the role of the parents]. You could say it’s the cornerstone (*ishizue*) of being able to live so as to provide stability for your own children. To that extent, I think it’s something we parents have to do. And I believe a home is the best foundation for that.

Acting on his own strongly held views, Mitsuhiro prepared what he considered to be the most important base for his daughter’s new married life. His belief that a house is important for married life impelled him to ‘push them into it.’ Recognising that he and his wife will provide childcare support, he still acknowledges his desire to be physically close to his daughter.
Mitsuhiro considers his parental responsibility to include his daughter, even though she is now married, and he has re-defined his notion of immediate family accordingly.

As the distinction between fathers’ and daughters’ households becomes blurred, family structure is no longer as reliable a guide to family relationships as the actual practices by which relatedness is constructed and expressed (Carsten 2000). My informants, for example, bring their daughters closer by leveraging material resources as well as facilitating opportunities for commensality and looking after grandchildren.

Nonetheless, looking at family relations through the prism of happiness cannot avoid the question of whether and to what degree such motivations are self-serving. Mitsuhiro presented the house as a wedding gift, and it is clear that he cares, in an altruistic sense, for his daughter’s well-being. At the same time, his selection criteria were self-serving in the sense that he chose a house located relatively close to his own office so as to facilitate frequent visits. Mitsuhiro acknowledges that his purchase of a good-sized home with a garden was sufficiently attractive from his daughter’s family’s perspective that it would have been difficult to refuse. His use of the term *oshitsuke* demonstrates his recognition that he effectively imposed his decision about where to live on his daughter and her husband, suggesting that he was well aware that his gift would increase the likelihood of his desires being fulfilled. At the same time, his daughter is also delighted to have received the generous gift, which she could not have afforded otherwise.

The use of financial resources as a means to facilitate the establishment of intimate relationships and pursue instrumental goals is also evident in Shinji’s experience, the retired schoolteacher. Shinji believes that relationships between grandfathers and grandchildren are strong because of the economic dependency of the interceding generation. He speculates that more economic opportunities would prompt young parents to move to where they could earn higher incomes and send their children to childcare facilities when they could afford it, resulting in fewer opportunities for grandparents to look after their grandchildren. Desiring to ensure that his daughter stayed close at hand (*temoto ni oite okitai*), Shinji bought land just fifteen minutes’ walk from his house for his daughter to build a house after her marriage. Shinji’s son-in-law, although an eldest son, has no intention to move back to his home town of Kobe, where his parents live, as this would entail a commute of more than an hour. Living in Hōjō, where they pursue dual careers as school teachers, their reasonable, stable income and lack of

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35 This inversely echoes the results of a comparison of grandparental involvement in childcare in Taiwan and Japan by sociologist Wei-Hsin Yu (2009), who found that it was the relative poverty of the older generation that ensured grandparental involvement in the Taiwanese case. By contrast, Yu found the relative wealth of Japanese grandparents to reduce the likelihood of their involvement (or being asked to become involved) in providing care for their grandchildren (Yu 2009: 104–105).
mortgage, thanks to the gift of property, affords them a comfortable lifestyle, and allows Shinji to keep his daughter physically and emotionally close.

Importantly, Shinji’s access to financial resources gave him not only the ability to be generous, but also control over how to be generous. A gift of land comes with an implicit obligation to remain close, and while Shinji’s daughter and son-in-law might take the time and trouble to sell the land and move, to do so would likely damage their relationship. This gift may be considered through the distinction American anthropologist Annette Weiner (1985) makes between ‘alienable’ and ‘inalienable’ goods. The value of an alienable good does not depend on the owner: for instance, had Shinji given a gift of cash this would have been essentially alienable in that his daughter’s family would have been free to spend it as they wished. Inalienable goods, conversely, derive their value from their owners; even when they are gifted, the relationship established (or reinforced) between giver and recipient makes them difficult to pass on. Through gift-giving, property, which in normal transactions is an alienable commodity, becomes to some degree inalienable, as the substance, location, and occasion of the gift effectively work together to tie the land to the giver. For Shinji, then, his gift may be seen to bind his daughter and son-in-law to him.

Gift-giving thus offers a way for grandfathers to place themselves in their families. This contrasts with the often negative view of retirees as non-contributors to society (Ueno 2008) or of being of limited value in domestic settings where women dominate (Alexy 2007). Thus, for grandfathers who are able, the careful selection and provision of gifts in the form of significant and durable financial resources – even houses and property – may be regarded as an integral component of grandfathers’ relational strategies. Still, material resources are simply a means to an end, namely the emotional happiness engendered by the affection, gratitude and attention they receive when spending time with their daughters and grandchildren. However, because gift-giving also entails the restructuring and establishment of new relationships with daughters and their immediate families, it is important to examine how this reciprocity plays out in the longer term.

4.3.4. Masculinity and Future Well-being through Gift-Giving

As we have seen, while most of my informants enjoy visiting their grandchildren regularly and providing occasional help to their daughters, these acts do not in themselves constitute a primary motivation for their grandfatherly involvement. While gift-giving tends to shape relations across the extended family, from my informants’ perspective, it is the relationships they negotiate with their daughters that they consider truly important.
One means for grandfathers to connect with their daughters is through their grandchildren. Susumu, who often takes his grandchildren to go shopping and out for dinner, is very happy and excited to talk about his everyday experiences, often remarking that ‘grandchildren are so adorable’ (mago wa kawaii yo). However, more in-depth discussion reveals that Susumu’s primary interest in caring for his grandchildren is that doing so offers regular opportunities to spend time with his daughter. At these meetings he often provides her with ‘secret money’ (naishokin), small amounts of cash he intends her to keep hidden from his son-in-law to save against the possibility of some future emergency, especially divorce, which is a subject Susumu is particularly concerned about. As there is still a stigma in Japanese society towards women who wish to live by themselves, he worries that his daughter would face a very difficult situation in case of divorce, particularly financially. For her part, his daughter is glad to receive the secret money, acknowledging that it might become useful one day, as well as that it gives her father some joy to be able to provide it. His concern about divorce is not the only reason why Susumu wants to keep the cash gifts secret.

The secret money is part of a strategy by which Susumu seeks to negotiate the transition to retirement. Being a financial provider, it has been argued, is a key element of salaryman masculinity during one’s working life (Dasgupta 2013a). As their daughters marry out, the sense of masculinity associated with the role of being the daughter’s financial provider is potentially lost. For dankai generation grandfathers, who retain access to economic resources even in retirement, finding ways to continue in the role of provider offers a chance to maintain this familiar sense of masculine identity. To do so openly, however, risks being seen as a challenge or deceit to their sons-in-law. The secrecy of the gift, justified by the spectre of (potential) divorce, allows Susumu to support his daughter and maintain his role as financial provider, continuing the terms of their previously existing relationship, and thereby sustain his sense of masculinity in the family.

The grandfathers I interviewed do not give gifts or offer their time capriciously. Rather, they take care when considering the nature of their material gifts and remain selective as to how and when they involve themselves with grandchild. They do so in order to maximise the gratitude and appreciation they receive from their daughters, thereby affirming their sense of masculinity as providers. They protect their sense of masculinity by limiting their involvement, for example by declining to change diapers or cook children’s meals – activities in which they may be capable, but still consider inconsistent with manliness. This re-affirmation of their sense of masculinity provides emotional stability, and thus a foundation for their well-being.

While Susumu’s practice of doling out his gift-giving a little at a time allows him to spend more time with his daughter and nurture their emotional bond, his hopes extend beyond this
interaction. After divulging the secret of his covert financial support, Susumu revealed to me that he hopes to be looked after when he is no longer able to care for himself. Even should his daughter not be able to take care of him personally, he hopes that she will use the funds he has provided to maintain their relationship: ‘I’d like my daughter to continue visiting me, using the secret money to buy me apples and other treats (naishokin de ringo kattari shite mi ni kite hoshii).’ The secret money may thus be seen as an investment intended to nurture long-lasting emotional bonds that will ensure the maintenance of their relationship, and thus provide an incentive for her to visit him when he is no longer physically able to visit her. The anticipation of care in old age is something Susumu regards as a reciprocal return for his investment of time and money in his daughter and grandchildren, expedited by the financial mechanism of the secret money. The ongoing investment of time and economic resources during grandfathers’ years of relative good health are thus deployed in particular ways in an attempt to assure security in later life.

In supporting their families, Susumu and the other grandfathers thus feel that they are also investing in the future; they commonly expressed a wish to be cared for by their own daughters if and when this should become necessary later. Mitsuhiro, for one, is troubled by the idea of no longer being able to care for himself, remarking that ‘I would hate to impose on so many others – better I should die suddenly, while I’m still healthy. That’s the way I’d like to go (ōzei no sewa ni nattara meiwaku. [...] Koron to shinana akan shi koron to shinitai).’ However, while Mitsuhiro expects to be able to afford any necessary end-of-life care, he also confided that, ideally, he would like to be looked after by his daughter, though he acknowledges that this would be difficult in reality. He hopes that his development of a more intimate relationship with his daughter before her marriage and their ongoing relationship afterwards (e.g. buying the house, their visits and frequent communication, picking up his grandchild from school, paying for meals at restaurants) will ensure that she maintains the relationship when he begins to require care.

This anticipation of receiving back that underlies retired grandfathers’ gift giving to their daughters is something that can only unfold over the longer term. Looking to the future, they hope to enjoy their daughters’ continued support when they require care towards the end of their lives. Their daughters, however, are not under any binding obligation to care for their fathers in old age. This is not a transfer to their own daughters of a duty of care that once fell to the daughter-in-law. Rather, grandfathers aim to channel their daughters’ choices and efforts through the careful nurturing of emotional bonds to secure their future well-being. This reveals a tension underlying the grandfathers’ gift exchanges with their daughters and the immediate families of their daughters. The ways in which grandfathers care about and find happiness in
their daughters’ well-being certainly have elements that could be regarded as altruistic. Yet these altruistic elements are tempered by the self-serving desire of these men, in the near term, to safeguard their sense of masculinity by acting strategically and selectively in regard to the help they are willing to provide, and, in the long-term, to secure care for their old age. Grandfathers offering gifts that balance their own interests with those of their daughters increases the well-being of both.

4.4. Conclusion

The recent emergence of the novel phenomenon of Japanese grandfathers’ involvement in caring for their daughters’ children invites us to consider the question of how such practices might contribute to their well-being in retirement. Though they have gradually come to better appreciate the intrinsic enjoyment to be derived from spending time with their grandchildren, they are a long way from taking on the role envisioned for them by the NPO Égalité Ōtemae – as substitute parents able to care for even the youngest children and willing to do so under the supervision of the child’s parents’ wishes. Rather, involvement in the care of their grandchildren is seen by these men as a means to establish and maintain positive new family relationships that provide a foundation for their emotional stability.

This sense of well-being is also supported by expectations of care and support in their old age. Grandfathers carefully arrange their gifts of time and money in the hopes that their families, in particular their daughters, will assuage their insecurities about the future. While such gifts are consistent with government policy objectives that reposition retirees as contributors rather than recipients of benefits, grandfathers’ individual motivations are not purely based on altruistic affection. Nor are they directed to supporting the state.

Thus, I contribute to address masculinity for men who up to the point of retirement have, as middle-class salarymen, received much attention in academic literature but thereafter less so. With the loss of work through retirement, the mainstay of their sense of masculinity, they face an important transition in their life course. In shaping family relations, these men continue in some ways their past role as daikokubashira, the family’s financial provider, thereby providing them an element of continuity in their sense of masculinity. At the same time, grandfathers engage in selected forms of grandchild-care and the creation of moments of family sociality, such as meals: these are novel practices that place grandfathers in the family. Further, such practices I observed in the present are complemented by accounts of past practices and expectations of future practices. Notwithstanding the inherent uncertainty in how these family relations will unfold, there is a significant congruence between the practices undertaken, the
family relations formed and sustained, and grandfathers comfort with their masculine role in the family. Thus, for such men I contribute an understanding of their masculinity in the family.

The relative wealth of the grandfathers I have discussed in this chapter, a result of having spent a working life during Japan’s economic boom as opposed to the next generation’s experience of a stagnant economy, represents a key element in their practices of gift exchange. This suggests that whether the roles being created by the grandfathers of the dankai generation will be open to the next generation will depend in large part on the relative levels of intergenerational wealth. Moreover, recognising this, we might also consider the question of whether and how less affluent grandfathers with access to fewer material resources, but still blessed with relatively good health and long life expectancy, might derive happiness and well-being in the context of their role as grandparents. This remains a subject for further study. Also, for future study there is the broader issue of how retired men address their well-being through renegotiating their social roles, such as how they are involved in their local communities as volunteers, and how they reconstruct family relations, beyond the relations as grandfathers that I focus on.

Finally, the grandfathers and their daughters I interviewed expressed their current satisfaction with the balanced relations of gift exchange they share. It remains to be seen how they will feel about their choices when the need for care becomes a reality. In the longer term, will such gift exchanges continue to be perceived as a source of happiness? In establishing and maintaining novel relations with their daughters’ families, grandfathers do not simply accept their predetermined role but actively form the families that they wish to be part of: They find self-worth and feel content in their relationships with loved ones.
Chapter 5. Who Cares for Frail Parents? Negotiating Masculinity in Elderly Care

Elderly care which as discussed in Chapter 4 is a central concern, albeit a future one, of younger healthier grandfathers of the *dankai* generation is not only an issue for care recipients but also for care givers. For middle-aged couples, care for their respective parents is a prevalent area of attention. Such couples need not be the sole provider of care for frail parents, as other extended family members may be involved. Hence, in this chapter, I focus on men of the generation that has elderly parents requiring care, considering their perspectives as sons, brothers, husbands, and sons-in-law in order to understand how they are implicated in family caregiving. Thus, complementary to prior chapters that each focus on men’s sense of masculinity from one of men’s family relations, through the domain of elderly care I provide a perspective on how men’s sense of masculinity is inter-related across family relations.

How the extended family coordinates, or not, to provide elderly care to the parental generation is important, as increased longevity has extended the period for which care is necessary, particularly the significant assistance with everyday life tasks required by those who are frail or ill. At the same time, a declining birth rate implies that there will be fewer siblings to share tasks associated with the care of elderly parents. Further, care for the elderly is still to some degree influenced by social expectations stemming from the *ie* system: in the context of elderly care, by *ie* norms I refer to first sons having the duty of filial care with the consequent elderly care fulfilled by their wives. Nonetheless, there is evidence of marked transition from such *ie* norms of care as a formal burden of affinal daughters-in-law to be fulfilled as part of their structural role, to being a form of support whose provision is motivated by intimate and affectionate relations with consanguineal parents (Knight and Traphagan 2003; Long et al. 2009; Lee 2010). As daughters are increasingly drawn into the provision of care for their parents (Long et al. 2009), concomitant changes can be inferred in terms of how sons-in-law relate to the older generation. Significantly, as well, such changes increasingly lead couples to care for the elder parents of both spouses either concurrently or sequentially.

The conventional understanding of caregiving as a gendered domain of women has been a touchstone in gender studies and research into long-term care of the elderly (Finley 1989; Spitze and Logan 1990; Dwyer and Coward 1991; Hogan et al. 1993; Glenn 2000; Long and Harris 2000; Hequembourg and Brallier 2005; Lee 2010). Men’s contributions in this sphere have received less consideration, though the reshaping of intergenerational care relationships suggests the necessity of including men in any overall understanding of contemporary
caregiving (Harris et al. 1998). Notably, a more recent and growing body of literature has begun to showcase men as primary caregivers (Harris et al. 1998; Thompson 2005; Matsuura 2013; Hirayama 2014; Tsudome 2015). Nonetheless, roles and practices of men in elderly care in the contexts of wider family relationships remain relatively understudied. Given substantial changes in patterns of caregiving for the elderly, it is important to understand caregiving arrangements across the extended family as encompassing family members in auxiliary as well as primary roles.

In this chapter, I address the following questions: How is the allocation of responsibility for care provision negotiated and distributed in extended family contexts, in particular across siblings? How do husbands and wives coordinate to ensure appropriate care for their respective parents? What does ‘care’ mean for the men, what are men’s practices in this sphere, and how do men reconcile their involvement in care for the elderly with their sense of masculinity? These questions contribute to a broader critique of the idea of a binary relationship between caregivers and receivers of care (Jenike 2003; Long et al. 2009), in which the significance of the relational context of the wider family has been underestimated. In the following sections, based on my ethnographic fieldwork I first focus on how siblings coordinate and negotiate care for their parents, then shift attention to negotiations within the couple, and finally to men’s practices as sons-in-law in elderly care.

5.1. Gendered Care Tasks Reshape Sibling Relationships

Amongst my informants, women tend to be the providers of daily care to elderly parents. To make such a generalisation, however, is not to specify who takes on such tasks, nor does it imply that men are not involved. The decreasing prevalence and strength of the Confucian ethics of filial piety, particularly the eldest son’s duty to care for aging parents, and an increasing parental desire for their daughter’s involvement in their care (Long et al. 2009; Lee 2010) suggests the merits of examining other siblings’ contributions to parental care, as well as how siblings coordinate and negotiate the provision of care for parents.

We must therefore be open to the possibility that the provision of care for parents may lead to conflict amongst siblings. While informants with parents in need of care shared the view that the sibling who is physically closest should normally be the primary care-giver, this does not mean they necessarily agreed on how their parents should be looked after or on the contribution of other siblings. An example of sibling conflict is relayed by 73-year-old Katsu, who lives with his 69-year-old wife, Chie, and his 100-year-old mother, Shizue, whom I interviewed at their house following an introduction by an acquaintance. Katsu is the eldest son, with three sisters, 68, 71 and 77 years old. While Shizue is able to eat meals by herself in the
family dining room, she has used a walker since undergoing an operation for a broken leg three years ago. She attends a day care centre twice a week from 8:30am to 5:00pm to bathe, have lunch, and do crafts with other elderly visitors, such as origami and paintings. The rest of the time, Katsu and his wife, Chie, help Shizue with her everyday life. This may seem the traditional elderly care arrangement with the first son and daughter-in-law being mainly responsible for providing care; in contrast, Katsu and his wife provide a very different account for how elderly care, in their case, involves the extended family. When recounting his experience of caring for his mother, Katsu shifted our conversation to his relationships with his three sisters (all married and living too far to be involved regularly in daily care routines), including the gradual deterioration of his relationship with his youngest sister, Yuki:

Yuki doesn’t come back to visit, despite living relatively close. It could be because we have a tense relationship. […] She speaks too straightforwardly to us, in a one-sided manner. So we don’t like her. […] She is very devoted to our mother. Too devoted, even. I feel it is a burden on me. She can be quite peremptory when asking me to do things for our mother.

This sibling conflict is an ongoing burden for Katsu. He implies that while he agrees that his sister’s requests reflect their mother’s needs, he finds her overzealous devotion means that she discounts his own needs as primary caregiver. One reason for this is that the siblings have a different conception about why Katsu should provide their mother with long-term care. As explained to me by Katsu’s wife, Chie:

Yuki thinks that the eldest son who, along with his wife, has succeeded the household (ie) should look after the parents (i.e. his mother) in accordance with custom. This is no longer the way things are done today. […] She thinks because I married into the ie, it’s up to me to look after her.

Yuki holds to the ie norm, wherein care is embedded in the successor’s responsibility to ensure the welfare of household members (Vogel 1963:165–168). Hence, she takes it for granted that, having succeeded the ie, her brother and his wife have a duty to care for their mother. From Yuki’s perspective as a daughter, her own marriage into another household has released her from any filial obligation. Her involvement is thus voluntary and reflective of the intimacy of

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36 For ease of reference, I refer to Katsu’s two sisters by name, Yuki and Kanako, even though I did not interview them and hence they are not listed in the table of informants.
her affection for her mother. In contrast, while Katsu feels some obligation towards Shizue’s care, Katsu and Chie do not recognise this duty as falling to them automatically (as it likely would have in the past). Rather, they believe that they are free to choose the degree of responsibility they take on, and accordingly would like for their efforts to be appreciated by Katsu’s sisters. They resent Yuki’s view of their decision to serve as primary caregivers as their natural obligation, even though realistically they have few alternatives. Further, this difference of opinion over the rationale for care provision (i.e. as to whether it stems from duty or choice) is reflected in the conflict that Yuki’s involvement generates, as expanded upon by Katsu:

I feel she [Yuki] thinks that our mother is her dear mother. She worries, asking our mother if we [my wife and I] take care of some thing or other for her, and then asking us the same question. […] I don’t want to think about her (sighs). […] As she lives away, she is anxious. Her main concern is whether our mother is treated well, which [from my perspective] she doesn’t have to think about. I say to her, “Don’t worry. She is our mother, too; we also think she is very important.” But she seems unconvinced. […] She doesn’t ask us if we wash our mother regularly and take her to day-care centre – she takes these things for granted. She doesn’t say much about practical details, just worries about our attitudes and feelings toward our mother. From my perspective, as you see, it’s annoying because we do look after my mother properly. So what she says to us sounds offensive, bothersome. She should leave us alone. That’s the way I feel, anyway. Ultimately, what she says sounds as if we don’t properly care for my mother. At any rate, she thinks our mother is sweet (kawaii). Our mother thought that she was sweet, too, as Yuki is the youngest daughter. Since she was young they had a close and good relationship. Now she hesitates to come here as she knows I dislike her. A year ago, I shouted at her over the phone for being too bossy. This is her personality – she just can’t stop bothering us.

(Author’s emphasis)

For Katsu, the stress and burden in providing care for his mother is dealing with his sister Yuki regarding care to their mother, not actually providing care. This is an example of Pearlin’s (1994) argument that stress in elderly care need not arise from the relationship between the care provider and receiver but also from other factors, such as the attendant relationships with others, consequent restrictions on social activities, family conflicts and financial difficulty.

For Katsu, a main sibling tension reflects sharp difference in what constitutes ‘proper care.’ This entails helping Shizue with rehabilitation in their home (for which he has trained at
the clinic she attends), bathing her (including assisting with changing clothes and washing her hair regularly), and other everyday tasks. For Chie, this entails preparing meals, doing the shopping, and collecting medications from the pharmacy. Katsu explains that ‘I do the things a woman can’t do, such as hard and heavy work,’ by which he means activities requiring physical strength and tasks that require direct physical contact with his mother. Chie attends to the daily routines of the household, which includes neighbourhood activities and tasks outside home, which she enjoys doing, since they offer opportunities for interacting with others at shops and in the neighbourhood. As spouses, they observe a division of labour that reflects the tasks of greatest personal concern and their perceptions of who is best suited to taking these on. In determining his involvement in care, it is not that Katsu resists activities he considers to be feminine (cf. Brannon 1976; Doyle 1989) but rather that he favours activities he considers to be masculine or compatible with masculinity, such as explaining that he bathes his mother based on the physical strength required, as she takes a bath, not a shower, and so she needs help getting in and out. Indeed, bathing could also be associated with femininity, which points to care tasks’ association with gender being subjective.

While Katsu’s view is that the result of such spousal coordination results in proper care, in contrast, Yuki’s view of proper care places greater emphasis on emotional support. This includes things like weekly telephone conversations to see how her mother is doing and discussions of whatever is concerning her mother at the time. Yuki’s notions of care, moreover, are affected by the specific nature of the parent-child relationship she enjoys with her mother. Yuki’s abundant affection towards her mother is a product of their close relationship since her childhood. Her expectations for ‘proper’ long-term care entail not only physical support and assistance with the logistics of their mother’s everyday life, but also the expressions of deep affection that she feels her brother is not providing sufficiently. The distance between the siblings’ perception of proper care reflects gendered differences in communications that highlight how men are socialised to be less communicative (Itō 1996; Hane 2006; Mizushima 2013) and that this is then also manifested in such family relations as for elderly care. Based on a view of care as comprising labour to perform tasks and providing affection (c.f. Abel 1990; Finch and Groves 1983), there is a marked gendered difference in the conception of care between the siblings.

Yet, while this may capture Yuki’s conception of care, Katsu’s conception is more akin to Mason’s (1996:26) emphasis on the ‘sentient activity’ in care. Mason argues that an important part of care is the management, organisation and planning of care, which is a proactive, intellectual aspect for which, indeed, affection is not necessary. In such a conception, the focus is not just on the care provided, but also the understanding of the care recipient’s
needs, preferences and condition. Also, Mason argues, ‘… care is a relational activity … not only are activities performed relationally, but that commitments to care develop relationally’ (Mason 1996:25). This recognises that care is embedded in the care receiver-and-giver’s relationship, which for Shizue-and-Katsu means their mother-and-son relationship. As the main carer, Katsu knows his mother’s everyday life in detail so as to organise her care.

While Mason’s conceptualisation captures the emphasis Katsu places on arranging care based on his mother’s situation, Katsu’s case exemplifies a limitation of Mason’s approach as centralising the bilateral relations between a main caregiver and receiver, which indeed is common in discussions of elderly care. However, my informants’ accounts, including the case of Katsu, point to the importance of understanding care as multifaceted activities (c.f. Toronto 1993) in the contexts of wider family relationships. In Katsu’s case, he and his wife are significant providers of care and his sisters are also involved: in particular, the conflict with his youngest sister indicates that agreement and coordination amongst those providing care must not be presumed to be readily achievable.

Specifically, Katsu is troubled by his sister’s ‘bossy’ attempts to direct his care provision, which he finds intrusive. The fact that he feels his sister is overstepping boundaries suggests that he retains some notion that, as the eldest son, his status amongst the siblings is at least first amongst equals, if not superior. Indeed, this tension over what constitutes proper care is exacerbated by their differing views as to Katsu’s rationale for care provision. Katsu does feel some pressure from being the eldest son, though his wife does not. Nevertheless, Katsu and his wife acknowledge becoming Shizue’s primary caregivers is something they have chosen, which they see as also implying that they have an appropriate attitude and depth of affections. In contrast, as Katsu’s younger sister holds to the traditional notion that the eldest son should care for his elderly parents. Accordingly, she does not recognise that they have much (if any) choice over whether to provide care. Consequently, she is concerned that they are not necessarily providing care with the appropriate attitude or affections. Thus, in Katsu’s case, the role of eldest sons is a contested area, both in terms of inter-generational and sibling relations.

Indeed, these various arguments and differences of opinions seem to ignore how their mother, Shizue, is feeling. She is truly very grateful for the care provided by her son and daughter-in-law:

When I pray for the dead, for my late husband, I ask him to come to gather me up. When I ring the bell at our family Buddhist altar I say to him, “You are not coming to fetch me. Is it because you’ve found a nice lady there [in heaven]? I really don’t mind, please come to take me to where you are.” […] We don’t need to live this long. I face
only hard times. I can’t do anything good for society (yo no naka) but they have to look after me. Of course, if somebody were to tell me that they shall kill me, this would also be a problem for me. I am in trouble, really. These days, I try to think that I simply follow the flow of my life. The young ones [her son and daughter-in-law] have the most problems. They try hard to look after me (sewa o yaki masse). (Bursts into tears) I am trying to do what I can do by myself. Honestly, living long is not such a good thing. […] But they take it for granted that they must take care of me – I am grateful. They look after me very well. Really, they do everything thoroughly. Sorry, I should not have cried. Sorry and thank you.

Shizue sees herself as a burden for her son and daughter-in-law and thus feels a deep sense of shame for living so long. She despairs that she is unable to do anything useful in return for the assistance they provide. She feels she is accruing debt without any future prospect of repayment. Notably, a number of my informants who are care providers expressed views in line with accounts of Japanese culture which hold that children are seen to owe a debt of gratitude to their parents (such as for raising them and being involved with the raising of grandchildren) that is seen to be repaid with the provision of care in old age (e.g. Ogawa and Retherford 1997; Stein et al. 1998). For instance, Fumiyo, whom I was introduced to through the Care Manager at City Hall, is 53-year-old and works full-time as telephone-operator. She helps her father, who is aged 84 with a heart problem and living alone about 45 minutes from her house. Indeed, I interviewed Fumiyo at her father’s house, during which she explained that:

Providing care for my father is ongaeshi (deft of gratitude) … (silence) … for raising and helping me. I had relied on my parents, so it is time for him to depend on me.

As for Fumiyo, it is common for my male and female informants to relate provision of elderly care to the notion of dependency, even if they at the same time do not feel a sense of duty in this regard. Amongst my female informants, when referring to elderly care several used the term ‘childcare (komori).’ For example, Yasuko, a 64 years old widow with two daughters and four grandchildren, who lives with her mother (as her father passed away around thirty years ago) and works part-time. I interviewed her at her house in the tatami mat room, while we drank cold tea. Her mother is not sick, just frail with age, as aged 91, and with very limited hearing. Up until now, Yasuko has taken care of her mother alone, though just before we spoke she had started to make arrangements for some support from public care services. Yasuko feels that:
My parents raised my children. I just needed to go to work. I care for my mother everyday thinking it is my turn now for me to provide childcare for my mother.

The term childcare indicates an involvement much beyond just providing necessary functional support to daily life and a sense that the elderly become completely dependent. Indeed, my informants’ tone and feeling they conveyed in using the term childcare is correspondingly one of nurture, closeness and caring: their parents become not only physically but also psychologically dependent. In contrast, my male informants do not use the metaphor of childcare, even while referring to repaying a debt of gratitude. Returning to Katsu, his mother, Shizue’s dependency provides occasions to perform the traditional duties of eldest son which to some degree he feels bound by, thereby allowing him repay his and his wife’s perceived ‘debt’ to Shizue for having raised Katsu and taken care of their children. Shizue does not, however, think in these terms. For Shizue this dependency only increases her sense of shame. The reciprocity of dependency between parent and (adult) child becomes unbalanced when the former loses the prospect of future repayment. Shizue feels ashamed precisely because of her dependence. Further, it is not how others, such as her son and daughter-in-law, think about her that leads to her sense of shame; rather it is based on how she views her own situation. The extent of Shizue’s dependence is contested in a way that leads not to conflict, but rather to efforts by both herself and her son as much as possible to ensure her independence. To alleviate her sense of shame at burdening the couple, she cherishes her independence, demonstrating determination in her attempt to reduce the unbalance. She truly appreciates the attention and practical assistance, such as daily walks, that allow her to remain relatively independent. Katsu also emphasises his support of his mother’s mobility; he recognises the importance of not only maintaining her current physical condition but also helping her to feel less dependent. The fact that Katsu knows how Shizue feels about his help exacerbates his irritation and upset toward his youngest sister.

In contrast, Katsu enjoys a completely different relationship with another sister, Kanako, who visits from Chiba once a year (at most), but otherwise has little contact with either her mother or brother. Between themselves, however, the siblings have established a mutually beneficial arrangement to support their mother. Kanako sends 100,000 JPY every month, which began in response to a particular need (a hospitalisation) but has continued since. Though she sends the money through Katsu, she stipulates that the money is for their mother’s use. In effect, these siblings each provide what they can to their mother’s elderly care: the sister provides funds as living far away. While the funds from both siblings are ultimately for expenditure on their mother’s care, Katsu repeatedly insisted that he has never pushed for his sister to contribute
financially: by not asking his sister for support he implicitly underscores his ability to provide for his family, including for his parent’s care. Kanako, by directing her funding to their mother, does not challenge – indeed she supports – her brother’s sense of ability to provide financially for his mother. Thus, she does not put pressure on Katsu’s masculine pride, which for many men of his age is based on being a producer and financial provider for those dependent on him within his immediate family (Hidaka 2011; Dasgupta 2013a). As discussed with reference to grandfathers in Chapter 4, men’s sense of masculinity continues to be based on financial provision, even in retirement.

Recognising that financial support is one of the only ways that Kanako can contribute to the care of their mother, Katsu also regards this as evidence that she cares for his well-being, as well. Making regular payments serves to remind him of her ongoing and generous contribution in a way that a lump-sum payment would not. In doing so, she contributes not only as a daughter but also as a sister, reducing her brother’s economic burden and expressing her gratitude to him, which in turn fosters a pleasant sibling relationship.

In comparison to Katsu’s classic arrangement of first-son living with a parent, an alternative situation is that of a daughter who lives close to her aging parents. In this case, what is the role of the daughter and her sibling(s), and what is the nature of the sibling relationship? A perspective on such a situation is provided by Suguru, a 59-year-old salaryman, who regularly works also at the weekend: indeed, I interviewed him at his office on a Saturday. His wife, Yoshiko, is five years younger.\(^{37}\) His parents, both over 80 years old live together with the couple, while his wife’s widowed mother, also over 80 years old, lives nearby. He and his wife care for both sets of parents. Yoshiko’s older brother, the eldest son, lives in Osaka, two hours away from Hōjō by car. For Suguru, it makes sense that he and his wife should look after her mother:

> After all, my wife lives close to her mother. If she lived farther away like her brother, there’d be nothing she could do about it (shikata ga nai). But in fact, she lives close by, so it makes sense for her to go to look after her mother. Whoever lives closest to the parents should look after them.

Katsu does not question why Yoshiko should be the one to look after her mother, despite her brother being the eldest son. When her mother was hospitalised with the onset of Alzheimer’s disease, Yoshiko began visiting her mother in the hospital twice a day so they could spend time

\(^{37}\) For ease of reference, I refer to Suguru’s wife by name, Yoshiko, even though I did not interview her and hence she is not listed in the table of informants.
together, chatting over a cup of coffee and at times bringing home-cooked meals. Yoshiko helps arrange her mother’s hospital room and takes her out for a walk in her wheelchair. Though meal preparation and other chores are provided by the hospital, Yoshiko must still devote a substantial amount of time to her mother. Even so, Suguru does not believe that his brother-in-law has any duty to take on these responsibilities. He does not define his wife’s or her brother’s roles based on family structure, this case thereby shows the weakening persistence of social expectations stemming from the *ie* system.

Also, Suguru has clear views on provision of financial support for long-term care, an important issue in relations across the extended family. As Suguru explained with respect to Yoshiko and her brother:

> My mother-in-law pays for general expenses from her pension but my brother-in-law makes bank transfers when she needs to make large expenditures. *Needless to say (mochiron) my brother-in-law supports her financially.* […] We [my wife and I] don’t support her financially at all. In fact, you might say he supports us. You see, we bought a car recently. My wife said to her brother, “Could you pay half of the cost of the car as I look after our mother so much every day? […] The car is a sort of care vehicle for her.” He said he would and actually did so. We thought that was great, very helpful. […] We often go for dinner when he comes to visit, and of course he pays. We bring our children along and all go together. He always says to me, “I am sorry that you have to look after my mother,” to which I usually reply “Don’t worry. We’re [physically] closer. We’ll look after her.”

(Author’s emphasis)

Money is a means for Suguru’s brother-in-law to contribute to his aging mother’s care. Because he has an income, he contributes financially, whereas Yoshiko supports their mother’s daily needs. This gendered division of long-term care responsibilities between siblings across the extended family echoes prevailing gender patterns that exist within the nuclear family: on the one hand, the extension of such gender-based roles may limit somewhat scope for negotiation between siblings; on the other hand, it makes for an arrangement less prone to being contested. Nonetheless, whereas in a nuclear family the husband’s income would be fully considered as income for the family, the split in responsibilities between siblings does not however substantively determine the extent and scope of Yoshiko’s brother’s financial support.

Yoshiko’s brother contributes to his mother’s relatively large health care bills. Suguru expects this contribution from his brother-in-law on the basis that a son should naturally
(‘mochiron’) pay for his mother’s care. Implicit here is that Suguru would not be pleased were his wife to look to him to provide financial support for her mother’s long-term care. Thus, this family’s care arrangement combines aspects associated with traditional arrangements, in that the first son contributes funds, and novel arrangements, with the daughter providing everyday care even after marrying.

In addition to direct expenses incurred, such as health care, Yoshiko’s brother contributes to incidental expenses incurred by Suguru and Yoshiko, such as their new car. The appropriate amount of financial support is negotiated between the siblings. It might be argued that, as the daughter living nearby, Yoshiko has internalised her situation and accepted to be their mother’s primary caregiver. Even in the process of negotiation, brothers and sisters can still naturalise the gendered ideology in which care is seen as a woman’s task. Practicing care tasks may place women in a subordinate position to men (Stoller 1993; Sodei 1995; Sasatani 2005). Women could internalise their situation, which might lead to thinking that Yoshiko has naturalised gender role divisions in her relationship with her brother. This would suggest that female siblings are in less influential positions than male siblings, obscuring her perception of her choice as to whether to and how to care for her mother.

This, however, is not the case for Yoshiko. Though she may feel limited scope for choices within her role, she recognises the choices and makes them consciously. Thus, this situation is in contrast to situations in which women recognise their influence but yet remain effectively subordinate. For example, Ogasawara’s view of how, given the highly male dominated gendered career structure, office ladies’ daily practices give them some power over men within corporate offices through their influence on individual men’s careers (Ogasawara 1998:156–162). Whereas in Ogasawara’s case the office ladies recognise their limited influence and so confirm their power relation to men in the office, in Yoshiko’s case she is not subordinate to her brother. Yoshiko cares for her mother, but she also attains what she wishes (e.g. a new car) by requesting that her brother make a significant financial contribution, thereby receiving economic support commensurate with her involvement. Both Yoshiko and her brother are fully aware that she might contest the current care arrangements at her discretion. Though it would be difficult for Yoshiko not to provide help based on her emotional ties with her mother; nonetheless, she could alter the scope and extent of her involvement. In turn, her brother would find it very difficult to replace her or compensate for a reduction in her involvement. Recognition of this possibility, even if it is one that both parties wish to avoid in practice, provides Yoshiko with a basis from which to negotiate with her brother.

In turn, her brother appreciates his sister’s efforts, and aims to demonstrate this appreciation beyond his financial contribution to their mother. During his regular visits to his
home town, he takes his sister’s entire family out for dinner, thereby expressing his ongoing gratitude and acknowledging his perceived debt towards his sister and her husband by paying for meals and thanking them verbally. Suguru and Yoshiko are grateful for her brother’s financial support not only because it literally contributes to their everyday life, but also as a token of Yoshiko’s brother’s appreciation of their care for his mother. The exchange of financial resources and care provision so as to address parental care thus serves to smooth the sibling relationship.

Thus, Yoshiko’s case provides a view into the process of sibling negotiation and coordination underpinning care arrangements. This builds on Hequembourg and Brallier’s (2005) study of sibling arrangements in care. They characterise brothers’ contributions as either helping their sisters, or co-providing care with their sisters, with the sisters being the main coordinators: in both cases they highlight the division of care tasks based on gender ideology. I contribute an understanding of how such care arrangements emerge through the process of sibling coordination and negotiation rather than the enactment of pre-fixed gender based roles in care. Further, the siblings’ exchange is not just about the sharing of care tasks but also importantly includes other compensatory arrangements, such as funding for the car and dinners to show appreciation, which enable care and support the sibling relationship. In turn, this broader exchange significantly affects how the siblings feel about care arrangements overall and about care provision per se.

Indeed, from Yoshiko’s perspective her willingness to help care for her mother and begin repaying her debt of filial gratitude, as well as her enjoyment of spending time with her, stems in part from the fact that she is otherwise free of the financial and emotional burden of having to provide financial support, either on her own or negotiated through her husband. Thanks to her brother’s financial contribution, Yoshiko is more able to recognise the happiness she derives from caring for her mother. In this case, the caregiver’s perspective on caregiving is strongly influenced by broader family relations through which the allocation of long-term care responsibilities is substantively determined. Her case is thus evidence that daughters’ willingness and wish to support their parents’ long-term care should be understood in the wider context of care practices and contributions by other siblings and their husbands, who may be indirectly involved in care.

Among my informants’ families, I found that siblings often had different notions of the appropriate division of family labour in providing for their parents’ long-term care. In particular, siblings were likely to differ as to the duty of the elder brother, attesting to the complexity of families’ transition away from social expectations based on the *ie* system. Also, the degree of intimacy that siblings (especially daughters) enjoy with their parents shapes the nature of their
involvement in care and provides a basis for their influence. Further, in the absence of strong social expectation of duty as to who should look after frail parents, siblings’ negotiations significantly determine care arrangements. Siblings’ capabilities and availabilities mean they have differential bases from which to negotiate their mutual contributions to parents’ long-term care.

Sibling contributions to the provision of care for parents (financial and otherwise) are highly gendered. Brothers are more likely to provide financial support to sisters, who in turn are more likely to serve as the primary caregiver for their parents: This intra-generational financial flow supports sibling relationships by complementing non-financial aspects of long-term care provision. In contrast, sisters’ financial support tends to be used directly in support of elderly parents. In families like Kanako’s, this inter-generational financial flow (in practice a direct contribution to overall expenditures by the household responsible for providing long-term care) is arranged so as to not to overtly challenge a brother’s ability to fund his parents’ care.

Thus, elderly care is a site in which men’s sense of masculinity is influenced by several family relations. Brothers and sisters negotiate respective contributions, with several factors impinging including geographic distance, relative financial capabilities, and gender-based views on care tasks. The scope for negotiations across siblings as to elderly care practices points to an associated sense of masculinity as brother that is relatively fluid and contingent. Indeed, an important contingency is with the sense of masculinity arising from other relations. As sons, men’s contribution to elderly care is inter-twined with notions of duty as son and debt for prior care received, which vary in relevance across men. A significant inter-dependence is with men’s relationship with their spouses, due to the gendered nature of the provision of care for both sets of parents, which invite analysis of how care roles, responsibilities, and actual practices are negotiated inside families, between husband and wife.

5.2. Reconfiguring Husbands’ Masculinity?

My informants, amongst whom women tend to be viewed as the primary caregivers in the context of parental care, also tend to recognise a shift towards greater involvement on the part of daughters. The novelty of this situation raises several questions: how are married daughters’ husbands (i.e. sons-in-law) implicated within these relationships, since such involvement may be expected given that elderly care requires substantial time, effort, and (in most cases) financial resources? How do couples arrange care for their parents in old age, how are their respective roles negotiated, and how does care for the elderly affect the spousal relationship? I found that most of my male informants were supportive of their wives’ involvement in care for the wives’
parents, many even taking such practices on their wives’ part for granted as expressions of filial responsibility.

Nonetheless, reconciling care responsibilities with the management of a household and pursuit of a career remains a challenge. Shigeru, aged 65, is a former schoolteacher married to Emiko, aged 59, who works several full days each week at a café. I interviewed Emiko at her work place, the café, and Shigeru at their house. The couple lives together with Shigeru’s frail and elderly mother, aged 92, whom I met when visiting their house. Her room is somewhat separate as connected to the end of their house, and is tidy and organised, and decorated with watercolours painted by Shigeru of local landscapes. Emiko has two brothers, but still occasionally travels two hours by car to provide care for her parents. Her husband has never objected to or prevented her from making such visits:

I suppose my wife doesn’t take it for granted that she can go home to take care of her parents. She’s hesitant to some extent, as though she knows we’re allowing her to go. I get a sense that she’s thinking of us when she goes. […] It’s like she’s apologising to my mother, asking permission to go back to visit her parents. But she doesn’t express it like that, I think – she doesn’t say anything to my mother directly – but I feel that preparing the evening meal is an indirect way of conveying this, as though she’s doing what she can beforehand. […] Realistically, she’ll also be doing housework here, too, so I don’t really blame her. […] Now, if for instance she were to take it for granted that she could go without seeing to her duties or giving any consideration to us here, I might say “hang on, now ...” I haven’t said anything so far, because she’s been doing her job here. […] Ultimately, I guess it’s because she’s here now – she married in [to this household], and she lives here now. That might be her parent’s home, but she’s left it now.

Shigeru has a clear and strong view that his wife married out of her birth family into his own. From his perspective, she is a true member of his household, which means that her first priority is to perform her role at home by taking care of the housework and caring for her husband and mother-in-law. Thus, subordinate to and limited by her responsibility in their shared household, Shigeru considers Emiko free to go to care for her parents, which indeed he even consider that as a daughter she has an ‘obligation’ (gimu) to do so: ‘As a child, providing care to the extent that she is able – that’s more than her role, it’s an obligation’ (author’s emphasis). Were he to think otherwise, he would raise the issue of his wife’s reconciliation of her involvement in her parents’ care with her immediate household responsibilities as a daughter-in-law, which is a
key calculus in their mutual negotiation. If she were to stop caring for her parents, she may well desire to stop, or at least limit, the time she spends caring for his mother. By viewing her as being under obligation to support her parents, he rationalises her continued care for his own mother. The responsibility for such domestic tasks remains hers; despite the fact that she works part-time and that Shigeru is retired. So, Emiko finishes any housework (such as preparing meals for her husband and her mother-in-law) before going out to care for her parents.

While Emiko understands her husband’s priorities, she also has her own desires to fulfil. In her view: ‘I go to my parents’ house feeling awkward as I will be away from my ie. I don’t feel that way when I go to work … (although) work is a way of escaping from the housework.’ From her perspective, working to generate household income as well as for her own pleasure is a valid excuse for not staying at home all day, even if she remains responsible for doing the housework. In contrast, she is less at ease when caring for her parents, when she feels herself torn between her responsibility to her husband’s family and intimacy to her parents. Since she does the housework even when she is working, she feels even more responsibility to do so when she goes to care her parents. Indeed, she does not question why she should be the one to care for both her husband’s and her parents – she has naturalised the gendered role of women as caregivers.

Yet Emiko does not think this is only her role. Rather, she thinks that her husband should help to look after her parents: ‘I take it for granted for my husband to help my parents to some degree because I do my best here (to care him and his mother).’ Emiko says that she encourages her husband to accompany her to help with her monthly care visits. She performs her domestic duties, at her own home, not only for the benefit of other family members, including her mother-in-law, but also to gain a voice to ask him to take action to care for her parents. Performing housework is a means to negotiate with her husband over their respective roles vis-à-vis each other’s parents. This demonstrates that she has not internalised caring for parents as an obligation; since it is something she feels she does voluntarily. Indeed, she makes efforts to look after her home and mother-in-law as a way towards fulfilling her desire to provide long-term care to her parents.

Shigeru’s perspective is not only based on considering current care arrangements, but is also informed by their relationship in the past and prospects for the future:

In the end, there are family relations to consider. It’s not something that happened all of a sudden. Ever since we married in our youth, and my father was fighting illness for a year and a half – there’s that history between us. Getting over that, raising our children, doing everything they required of us – there’s all that too. Marriage is like
that, you know? […] We’ll need to be cared for, too, right? I’m healthy now, but sooner or later. […] So while I’m healthy it’s important to have a solid and strong bond in our marital relationship. And my wife also did her best to take care of my father though he’s since passed away. I remember these things. […] If she begged off without doing anything, this history might on the other hand make me say something, but I feel secure in knowing that this wouldn’t happen.

Emiko looked after his father in the past, and now cares for his mother. Looking ahead, Shigeru expects them to need to care for each other. Yet, he does not simply assume that his wife’s filial piety would necessarily extend to sympathy for him: he does not believe there is a spousal expectation that would bind his wife to look after him. Instead, he feels the need to foster and support their relationship as a couple. One emphasis is on their joint past efforts with the intention to shape future behaviour. This is an example of the making of an historical narrative, in this case of the couple’s relationship, through emphasising selected events and moments such as raising a child together. Further, Shigeru hopes that his current engagement in long-term care of her parents contributes to her someday feeling a responsibility to care for him. Supporting his wife’s efforts and wish to care for her parents thus contributes to sustaining their good relationship.

Simultaneously maintaining the household, holding down a part-time job, and caring for both her mother-in-law and her parents gives Emiko influence over her husband. Similar to other female informants’ experience, taking on responsibilities outside the home does not diminish existing responsibilities in the home. Yet for Emiko and many other wives I spoke with, fulfilment of her triple-responsibility is not recognised as such. They are not internalising care provision as an obligation – they sincerely appreciate their husbands acknowledging and valuing their efforts at reconciling care with other pressures. Emiko is able to influence her husband’s activities, while also continuing certain practices, such as domestic routines related to cleaning and meal preparation. In turn, however, these wives ask for and receive their husbands’ support with care for their parents. The recognition of intention and reciprocal effort help the couples cement their relationships. They reshape and reconstruct the basis of their relationships in preparation for a joint future while addressing priorities and concerns, especially in relation to parental care.

Another illustration of the link between the marital relationship and spouses’ involvement with each other’s extended families, especially the provision of care is provided by Hideki, aged 49, who works as a consultant and lives in Kobe, about an hour-and-a-half drive away. I was introduced by Sayuri from T-Plus Family Support, and I interviewed him at a restaurant in Hōjō,
after he had visited his mother’s house. He is well-educated and articulate. Though he has an older sister, Hideki is an eldest son. His mother-in-law, who is healthy and relatively young, lives in Yokohama, near Tokyo, where his wife also has one married older sister. His own mother is older, and lives in Hōjō by herself. Hideki explains his expectations around caring for in-laws as follows:

I can’t refuse visits by my wife’s mother [to his house in Kobe] without any clear reason. If I refuse her once, she will never visit again, and my wife would be upset and [question my reasoning]. Eventually she would refuse to visit [his mother in] my hometown. […] Refusing her mother’s visit would become a reason for my wife to stop visiting my mother. It is like a deal (kakehiki). […] I don’t like my mother-in-law coming around here, but I won’t say so to my wife. […] I won’t give her any reason to refuse the important things I request from her. […] I’m the representative of Tanikawa family (ke), so she is the wife of the representative. I won’t let her out of attending events that require her attendance, like my father’s memorial service. I won’t tolerate excuses such as that she cannot attend the event because, say, the children are sick. If she did, I’d point out that she goes back to Yokohama with the children even when they are ill. Also, my father left a bequest for us to care for my mother. He kept imploring that I look after her before he passed away. He was most concerned that my mother should not end up lonely.

Hideki feels a strong responsibility to maintain his ie and care for his mother, in part to honour his father’s bequest, though due to his career he has to be away from his home town. He wants to fulfill his role as the male head of household, and so requires his wife’s presence and collaboration, despite the difficulties of distance. Although he wishes and expects his wife to perform her role as wife of head of the ie, it is clear that he does not take his wife’s participation in ie family events for granted; his wife’s sense of duty allows much scope for determining her actual involvement. In relating their thoughts about each other’s activities, Hideki thinks strategically about how the balance of their mutual requirements, taking what is in effect a very pragmatic approach to coordinating their respective roles.

Hideki expects that by allowing his wife to visit her mother in Yokohama and tolerating his mother-in-law when she visits Kobe, despite his feelings, he establishes the conditions such that in negotiations with his wife she would not feel any hesitation about visiting his mother or fulfilling their obligations as household representatives. Hideki drives the two hours from Kobe to Hōjō to check in on his mother on his own every two weeks, and once a month with his wife.
and children. For her part, his wife does not enjoy the visits, but she has always accompanied him. Nor is she keen to attend events with his extended family, though she attends these too. Hideki is pursuing what has so far been a successful strategy of placating his wife so that she will remain involved in looking after his mother and the ie. Hideki is not involved in care for his mother-in-law, other than tolerating her to stay at his home. As individuals, they have clear intentions regarding parental care that implicitly guide their negotiations with each other as a couple.

While some husbands like Hideki do not involve themselves in providing direct care for parents-in-law, other informants consider such care to be one of their responsibilities as a husband. One such informant is Tadashi, whom I met through his wife Chizuko, whom I was introduced to at a summer camp. Tadashi and Chizuko are both 55-years-old with three children. Chizuko works as a juvenile probation officer. Tadashi is principal of a junior high school, with limited weekend work except for school events, such as sports day. I interviewed him at his school office, during which he shared his perspective on why he is involved in care for his parents-in-law and the implications for his relations with his wife and across the extended family:

It’s great that my wife and I look after her parents together. […] I feel that I’ve fulfilled my responsibility as her husband. I’m quite pleased to be able to work together with her. […] I feel like that caring for her parents let me become a part of her family. We could have had a married life without that kind of relationship, but then I wouldn’t have gotten to know her personality as well as I have, nor the background of the Taniguchi family [his wife’s natal household]. […] I feel a kind of happiness (shiawase) being able to learn about and understand her family’s situation, not only abstractly but first-hand. We’re planning to have drinks only with her first cousins! In fact, caring for her parents expanded my circle of family acquaintances. In this sense, it was a kind of “happy elderly care,” though I suppose that’s a strange way of putting it.

While Tadashi believes that his wife and her brother should take the lead in caring for his parents-in-law, as a husband he also feels some responsibility for his own involvement. He wants to get to know her family well enough to understand its dynamics and to familiarise himself with her extended family network. Being accepted as a member of her family – something he feels he has attained through his involvement in the practice of care – is a source of personal happiness.
Despite its burdensome connotations (Ueno 2008), providing long-term care may thus be understood as a potential source of happiness. For example, for Emiko elderly care is a source of well-being, as she ‘feels it very rewarding to have my parents’ appreciation and that they depend on me.’ That is, even when the practice of care does not in itself constitute happiness, involvement with elderly care can still be a means to its attainment. Amongst my informants, daughters in particular reported experiencing a sense of fulfilment when spending time with parents and providing care to express gratitude for their parents’ years of effort and attention in raising them. Conversely, many also expressed exasperation over the everyday frustrations of care provision. For instance, Tomoko is stressed by her parents in that, for instance, she has told them: ‘Don’t take a bath by yourself as this is dangerous - you may easily slip.’ Despite her exhortations, they try to take a bath alone which causes her stress. Another example is Yasuko, who is irritated by having to repeat many times to her mother as she cannot hear well: but then Yasuko says that ‘my irritation becomes evident and my mother’s face turns cloudy, which makes me feel bad.’ Thus, while there may be a difference in degree of frustration and satisfaction based on the kind of care people provide, my informants gave voice to both aspects in recounting their experiences. This suggests that happiness may (perhaps necessarily) be constituted by caregivers’ *ambivalent feelings* of satisfaction and struggle.

As I have suggested, caregiving arrangements will also affect the spousal relationship between husbands and wives. Many informants noted that caring for parents has led to more frequent and open communication with their spouses. This is certainly the case for Tadashi:

I drive my wife to her parent’s house in Toyama Prefecture on the weekend – I don’t like her driving because she gets tired after looking after her father and we wouldn’t want any accident. There is not much for me to do caring for my father-in-law, so I do very little. I usually visit the public hot spring bath near my parents-in-law’s house to soak for a few hours. If I were to stay at the house, just sitting on the sofa without doing anything useful, my wife would have to care about how I feel. It would be more efficient for her to look after her father and sort out housework without me hanging around. […] Driving my wife to her parents’ house also give us time to be together, which we wouldn’t have if I stayed home. […] We combine the trip with some shopping on the way there and on the way back. We have lunch all together at the parents-in-law’s house and then I go to the hot spring and don’t come back until around four in the afternoon. In the meantime, my wife helps her father.
Tadashi’s principal motivation for helping his wife is not for her father’s sake, but rather as an
opportunity to spend time with his wife on the journey, which takes a couple of hours each way.
His involvement in actual care is limited as he plays only a supportive role by driving his wife.
He is not interested in helping with domestic tasks such as housework – he leaves such direct
care to his wife and her elder brother. In fact, he does not even feel any pressure to help in this
capacity, as evidenced by the way he imagines himself sitting on the sofa while his wife works.
Nor does his parent-in-law or wife have any expectation that he should do so. In contrast, he
has no hesitation about driving, a more masculine activity that does not feel to him an
incongruous contribution. Although he initially explains his motivation for driving his wife as
out of consideration for her safety, he gradually reveals his desire to spend time with his wife
on weekends when he is off work. Driving offers a way to provide practical help while also
creating an opportunity to discuss his work, their care arrangements, their families, as well as
to go shopping together. Caring for her parent thus creates an opportunity for the couple to
spend intimate time and deepen their relationship.

The impact of providing elderly care on couples’ relationships is recognised by other
informants, such as Naomi, who looked after her husband’s parents and now is starting to care
for her parents. While she vividly recognises the pressures this created on her and her family,
she also feels this was a choice of hers that had lasting effects on her spousal relationship:

After all, through both of us caring for his elderly parents, I feel that we strengthened
our bond (kizuna) and my appreciation toward my husband flowed out. He made a
good effort to care for his parents and even I managed to keep working. […] I feel that
we took steps forward and got over (the difficult time): I may not have had much
appreciation towards my husband and children if we did not have the experience of
providing elderly care. […] Although I did not expect that I would feel like this, I think
it was a good experience doing elderly care as I saw how kind my husband is. It was
very tough though. […] I would provide elderly care for my parents and parents-in-
law if I wish to do so, but would not do so if I didn’t like them, as totally dependent
on the relationships in question including the past relationships.

For Naomi, providing elderly care to her parents-in-law or parents is not driven by a sense of
duty nor simply from necessity. Her care provision is importantly contingent on whether she
wishes to do so based on her relationships. Thus, as with other informants, practices within the
extended family depend not on roles determined by family structure but on family relations,
which in turn, shape other family relations. Thus, even if daughters feel a debt of gratitude to
their parents, to what extent this leads to actual elderly care practices depends on their relationship. In Naomi’s case, elderly care for her parents-in-law was a family endeavour, as the children, who were teenagers, also helped with tasks such as changing nappies and feeding.\textsuperscript{38} Further, it is not just that Naomi viewed her husband as helping, but also that she gained a fuller appreciation for aspects of his personality and behaviours, which in turn drew her emotionally closer to him.

Long-term care arrangements for aging parents, which are inevitably demanding in terms of time, effort, and financial resources, necessarily affect the relationships between husbands and wives. Recognising this, couples use care arrangements as a forum in which to reshape their own relationship as well as how they interact with other members of their extended family. In this sense, ‘care’ is a fundamentally important site to understand how family members relate to one another, that is the basis for their ‘relatedness,’ especially as care arrangements are transitioning from duty of sons and daughters-in-law to being taken care of by daughters and sons-in-law, and other siblings. Husbands’ tacitly recognise that marital relationships are increasingly held together less by duty and commitment than by spouses’ efforts to work actively to sustain and develop their relationships with each other.

The attention and effort to developing the relationship contributes to reconstructing husbands’ sense of masculinity. According to Itō, important parts of men’s sense of masculinity are notions of superiority, power, and possession over women (Itō 1996:163–71). Husbands can only protect the basis of such masculinity, however, by acceding to their wives’ wishes; it is not clear they really have the option not to agree to wives’ wishes to be more involved in caring for their own aging parents. This point is in sharp contrast to Itō’s argument that domestic work is ‘shadow work’ (Itō 1993:113–114): such work comes out from under the shadow as the social expectation of a duty to perform care, notably of daughters-in-law caring for parents-in-law, declines. While husbands desire and appreciate that their wives prioritise the fulfilment of domestic matters, which might be considered as evidence of their husbands’ superiority, from the wives’ perspective this is so that they may feel able to draw their husbands into providing care to their parents. Long-term care is a domain that is increasingly important and in flux, and thus comparatively open to the re-negotiation of spousal roles and relationships. Indeed, husbands recognise that they can no longer assume, as they might once have, that their relationship with their spouses would continue.

Paradoxically, though husbands may aim to preserve aspects of the traditional basis of their senses of masculinity, this identity is simultaneously undergoing a reconfiguration through

\textsuperscript{38} Indeed, this points to an interesting avenue for future research on the involvement and role of grandchildren in elderly care.
their wives’ demands that they be more involved in caring for their parents. This suggests that men’s sense of masculinity depends on women’s expectations of them. Furthermore, it is also apparent that men do not simply react to women’s expectations, but as these husbands show, they also take an active and self-interested approach towards nurturing a shared future. The sense of masculinity is thus fundamentally relational.

5.3. Sons-in-Law and the Emergence of Alternative Masculinities?

Husbands have historically had limited involvement with the families of their parents-in-law (other than muko yōshi or ‘adopted sons-in-law’). However, in light of the analysis above, as daughters become increasingly implicated into caring for their parents, any understanding of a changing sense of son-in-law masculinity must be based on an understanding of the ways in which sons-in-law contribute to such care arrangements and how this contribution affects their wider family relationships.

While, at a minimum, husbands are just tolerant that their wives also look after their parents as long as they fulfil all their responsibilities to their immediate family and parents-in-laws, my informants tend to become more involved in providing care for their parents-in-law, which raises the question of specifically how they do so. A perspective is provided by Kazuhiko, whom I was introduced to by Tetsuya. Kazuhiko is a 44-year-old garage mechanic who runs his own business with two employees, so with limited late-night work though some weekend work. I interviewed him at his office mid-week, during a quieter time in the day. His wife’s parents (in their seventies and eighties) live with their eldest son, a bachelor, about twenty minutes’ drive away. While his mother-in-law is free of any major health problems, Kazuhiko’s father-in-law has been bedridden for the past four years:

I do think that I have a role in care as a son-in-law. But I don’t think I could support my parents-in-law financially – they’d feel awkward (ki o tsukau) and our relationship could be ruined if money were involved. […] My brother-in-law understands this. I can help out by, for example, driving them to the hospital. […] I think I should care for them within the scope of my ability. […] That is, when I have time – I can’t go out so easily due to my work here. […] I could maybe feed them if I were asked to. […] But I don’t think I could change their nappies. […] I might be able to do some of the heavier physical work (chikara shigoto) like helping them to take bath. […] I might have to do more if there weren’t anyone else to take care of them.
As seen here, Kazuhiko envisions a clear range of activities appropriate to his contribution as son-in-law. This extends to driving his parents-in-law to hospital, but not to more intimate physical tasks. It does not extend to financial support, which he feels should be the responsibility of his brother-in-law, who shares this feeling. His boundaries are contingent on his own availability and that of others, as well as his own self-perceived suitability. He said, if neither his wife nor sister-in-law were available, he would be willing to take on other duties, such as feeding his in-laws. He could also see himself being involved in areas where physical strength might be required. From Kazuhiko’s perspective, his involvement in long-term care consists of practical matters such as transportation (for medical purposes, but not necessarily only this) and (if necessary) at-home personal care such as bathing and feeding. While this is a fairly broad range, his characterisation of his involvement does not touch on the more emotional aspects of such a relationship, such as for example providing his in-laws with companionship or sharing in their subjective experiences.

In explaining their methods of contributing, people I spoke with explained the perceived suitability of their roles in a variety of ways. A common theme for many informants was to relate their activities to work or their careers. For instance, Yukio, a carpenter in his late fifties, married to Satoko, an elementary school teacher. I met them through a friend of mine: I interviewed Yukio and Satoko at the weekend when they visited Satoko’s mother, who is 84 years old and living alone. The trip is about two hours and they tend to visit once a month. Yukio explains:

My work relates to long-term care. My jobs include installing handrails and ramps inside houses and replacing Japanese-style squat toilets with Western style toilet bowls. I’ve been thinking of putting in ramps for these large gaps between the floors and ground [at his mother-in-law’s house].

To explain his involvement in caring for his mother-in-law, Yukio began with an explanation of his job. His main role has been to address accessibility problems at his mother-in-law’s house, adding handrails and finding a bath chair to allow his wife’s mother to bathe more comfortably. He will sometimes even take time off to undertake repairs, he told me, as his job allows him to be flexible. He is more than happy to help his mother-in-law within the scope of his professional competencies.

Yukio’s mother-in-law, Yoshie, appreciates his contribution, which she compares with the experiences of her friends at the day care centre she visits:
I am very grateful [for my son-in-law]. I couldn’t find a better person than him…. Nowadays, it seems that only sons come back to visit their own elderly parents, leaving their wives at home. Even if sons come back and help with outdoor work (soto shigoto), their elderly mothers will still have to cook. I don’t know why, but the wives [i.e. daughters-in-law] don’t come back to visit [their parents-in-law]. I guess they think it’s their husbands’ responsibility to look after their parents. […] When we were young, the custom was that women would look after their parents-in-law … The situation is significantly different now.

For people of Yoshie’s generation, the duty to care for elderly parents fell seemingly naturally to sons and daughters-in-law. Sons, as heads of household, were responsible for matters outside the house, such as weeding and help in cultivating rice, and daughters-in-law for domestic chores. Having been raised with this view, Yoshie appreciates her son-in-law all the more as spontaneous expression of kindness, above and beyond what she feels she might expect from a daughter’s husband. This assistance is also appreciated by Yukio’s wife and sister-in-law. The latter, who lives near Tokyo, is too far away to provide frequent in-person support. Yoshie’s lived experience demonstrates a significant shift in the configuration of family care responsibilities over her lifetime.

Yukio’s characterisation of his involvement in long-term care for the older generation emphasised his experience and skills as a carpenter. Another example of how care engagements are framed in the language of masculine sphere of work is provided by Suguru who speaks of his care experience using the idiom of ‘management.’ Suguru lives with his parents, who are in their early eighties. At the time of our interview, his mother-in-law had been hospitalised as the result of an operation:

I care for my mother-in-law by managing (kanri) her household. Since I live nearby, this includes such things as trimming her lawn. I keep her empty house in an adequate condition in order not to trouble her neighbours. I can handle the heavier aspects of this work (chikara shigoto), the things men can do … I have never cleaned … I weed when I have time, as in any case I have to take my child to a cram school very near her house. I keep asking my wife to weed but she always finds excuses – “I don’t like frogs” or “I’m too busy.” I think that she just doesn’t want to do it. So there’s nothing for it (shikata ga nai) but to do it myself when the grass gets too long.
For Suguru, ‘management’ (kanri) is a familiar concept from his workplace, where he is a senior manager. He draws on the experience and idioms of his work role and practices in his subjective engagement with long-term care. Looking after his mother-in-law’s house falls within the scope of management: his primary aim is to ensure that the task is done appropriately. Not that he necessarily wants to do the tasks himself – he mows the lawn and weeds because while he categorises these as household management tasks, his wife will have nothing to do with them. Also, he only weeds once the grass is high enough to be seen from the street, partly motivated by the desire to avoid being seen as negligent. Thus, what he deems to be appropriate encompasses the external perspectives of neighbours, in addition to the wishes of his wife and parent-in-law. Though the garden is a private space, through his approach to its maintenance he makes this to some extent a public space, thereby extending the scope of what ‘care’ entails while distinguishing his own involvement from care within the home.

For Suguru to take on unfamiliar activities, such as cooking for his mother-in-law, would likely require learning new skills. For salarymen in Suguru’s generation, in particular, the popular view of the husband’s authoritarian rule over the household is as teishu kanpaku (‘husband as the ruler of the home’), a term that came into common use during the Japanese bubble economy of the 1980’s. Returning late from work, domineering husbands expected their wives to serve drinks, run their baths, and prepare their beds. Such everyday demonstrations of power and authority in the household serve to maintain a particular men’s identity (Kamada 2010). For such men to have to seek instruction from their wives on the basic aspects of domestic chores may negatively affect their masculine pride. Instead Suguru’s view of his contribution to care of his in-laws emphasises activities that serve to reinforce his pride as a man.

As well as work experience, informants frequently highlighted transportation as one of their key contributions to caring for parents-in-law, as in the case of Kazuhiko earlier. Some are happy to drive on a regular basis. For example, one informant explained that ‘I drove my wife once a week to visit the hospital where my mother-in-law was staying, as my wife could not drive herself [due to problems with her legs].’ Some were willing to drive parents-in-law to hospitals or shopping centres on the condition that no one else was available. For my informants driving is an everyday activity; the vast majority of people in this region commute by car to their places of employment. As a means of supporting parents-in-law, driving thus recapitulates a familiar everyday activity. Further, driving would seem to not necessarily just be about transportation. One informant described a recent past experience with his father-in-law, who had been institutionalised at a nursing care facility, telling me, ‘I take my father-in-law out for a drive, as I figure it’s boring to sit around all day long in the same place [i.e. the care facility],
though we don’t go far. Usually I fetch him, take him for a drive, and then come back to the
care facility in the late afternoon.’ My informant is providing companionship and diversion; not
just transportation. Yet, his description places less direct emphasis on this than on the act of
driving, reflecting a tendency to describe contributions to care of the elderly in terms of
activities they associate themselves with, such as driving.

Informants also tended to foreground activities requiring physical strength associated
with notions of masculinity, as with cutting weeds. Sons-in-law describe these activities in
terms such as ‘(otoko ni dekiru) chikara shigoto,’ implying physically arduous tasks that require
bodily strength. The need for physical strength is not the only factor, however. For instance, in
the case of one informant, while he weeds his mother-in-law’s house, he does not help his own
mother to tend the garden at his own house, despite the fact that she is over eighty years old.
Weeding is thus a selective expression of involvement in the provision of care, purposefully
chosen from a range of possible and familiar activities that other family members appreciate
him doing.

Seen in spatial terms, sons-in-law tended to relate their contributions to care of elderly in-
laws with reference to recognisably public roles. This can be seen in the explicit contrast by
some of their own involvement in caring for parents with that of their wives, whose
contributions were more focused on domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and
help with toilet activities. The use of work-related idioms can be seen as another example. Also,
sons-in-law take part in local community activities on behalf of parents-in-law, such as by
attending local community meetings. This reflects these men’s engagement with matters they
already consider familiar, leaving more domestic affairs largely to their wives.

This pattern of sons-in-laws’ involvement in elderly care may be contrasted to
expectations of men as carers. Harris et al (1998) expect that greater involvement of men in
care would lead to the ‘androgenisation’ of care. In contrast, I find that sons-in-law care giving
is highly gendered, in the activities taken on and their approach to these activities. Thus,
recognising gender in care is crucial: distinguishing caregivers as ‘gendered persons’ enables
identification of the effect of gender on caregivers’ views of care practices and how they should
be carried out. Also, Britt Almberg (1998) argues that men would view the totality of their
involvement in care as their work, which would also reduce their stress through taking a holistic
view to their involvement. In contrast, I find that men are selective in care tasks they are
involved with, leveraging their familiarity with such tasks from work to reduce potential
stress.39 Thus, in relation to more general discussion of men’s involvement in care, I find sons-

39 My informants’ care practices reveal an implicit definition of their contribution to long-term care that may be
contrasted with the MHLW view of ‘long-term care (kaigo).’ From the MHLW’s perspective, one definition of
in-law’s involvement in elderly care is distinctive. Sons-in-law rationalise their activities, additional help, by expanding notions of care to include public engagement and physical labour, allowing them to feel comfortable providing care for their parents-in-law. Thus, they introduce aspects of practices they are more familiar with into a new family relational context, namely as sons-in-law providing care to parents-in-law. This enables them to constructing their masculinity as sons-in-law, which is a substantially novel aspect of manhood in the family. These men are open to re-shaping their masculinity in the family as sons-in-law as for them there is an inter-linkage of their son-in-law and spousal relations, with these relations in combination supporting their overall sense of self-worth in the family.

Indeed, my male informants are regularly involved in various caregiving activities for their parents-in-law. Shigeru expresses a clear preference with regard to the manner of his involvement in such activities:

I’d like to care for my parents-in-law to the extent that I am able (dekiru han’i de). For instance, I’d rush over to help them in an emergency, and I’m happy to help to clean graves or do something like set up a snow fence. Setting up a snow fence is a really tough job. […] I am relatively used to doing heavy jobs (chikara shigoto) such as cutting weeds and cleaning graves.

Shigeru seeks to channel his own involvement by contributing in ways with which he has some familiarity, in particular through activities requiring physical strength. The example of setting up a snow fence shows that he has a specific idea of activities he considers appropriate. Such familiar activities do not present a challenge to an existing sense of masculine identity that values physical strength in the context of a domestic setting.

Further, Shigeru’s wife, Emiko, and others in her extended family also value these types of activities as well as Shigeru’s contributions in these areas. According to Emiko:

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care, driven by funding considerations, is to specify services for the purpose of long-term insurance reimbursement (MHLW 2013b). A broader view of what constitutes care for the MHLW is revealed in a detailed list of sixteen support activities used in a survey of care to assess not only public or private sector support but also family-provided support. These care activities consist of ‘bathing, washing hair, wiping the body, cleaning inside the mouth, accompanying on walks, cleaning, washing the face, assisting with toilet activities, helping to adjust the position of the body, changing clothes, preparing meals and tidying up, shopping, feeding, doing the laundry, helping with medications, and facilitating communications’ (MHLW 2013a). The MHLW list purports to be gender-neutral with regard to the care receivers and providers: it is a narrowly focused list of nursing care and communications activities that the government aims to apply universally for all caregivers. While this raises the question as to how gendered are care receivers’ needs, there is also the issue of how gender affects care providers. In contrast to the MHLW’s explicit definition of care, my informants had markedly different assumptions, both in terms of who would be involved in its provision and the actual scope of everyday care practices in real life – which for them includes a broader set of activities. Thus, considering male caregivers’ everyday practices challenges established governmental notions of what constitutes care.
My parents asked my eldest brother to put up a snow fence on their property, but we were happy to help out [without being asked]. In summer, we go to clean the graves up on the hill that belong to my father’s ie. […] My husband expects to go clean them soon [with Obon approaching at the time of the interview]. Last year we cleaned the family graves together with my eldest brother, as it was hard work … we had to use the strimmer to cut the weeds. My husband is more helpful than my brother, who is hopeless at yard work, since he claims to be scared of handling a strimmer. […] Once we finish we usually have a meal together with my parents and catch up.

Emiko explains that her parents consider the responsibility to help with chores such as setting up the snow fence and cleaning the ie graves – tasks they carried out for many years on their own – to belong to their son, her brother, while she and her husband are free to help or not, as they choose. Emiko explains their decision to help with these tasks as a result of the fact that she is keen to support her parents, and cutting weeds at her family’s grave sites provides for her a good reason to visit them. For Shigeru, cleaning graves, while arduous, is nevertheless work that he is familiar with, and thus finds easier to handle than do his parents-in-law or brother-in-law, which earns him their gratitude. For, despite the inherent difficulties, Emiko’s family does not wish to abandon their graves, as this would mean severing the historical continuity of the family line and forsaking their ancestors [thereby rendering their ancestors as muen botoke, spirits with no link to the living].

Importantly, cleaning the ie graves in summer to prepare for the Obon festival in mid-August, when family ancestors are commemorated, is an act with cultural significance. Usually it is members of the ie who clean the graves to welcome the temporary return of the households’ ancestral spirits. Because sons-in-law usually belong to a separate household, they do not usually take part in this activity with their wives’ families, though they might visit during the festival. In her discussion of graves and Japanese society, anthropologist Kawano Satsuki argues that graves are sites that connect the dead and the living; ‘connections bring persons, families, objects and even the dead into interactive states’ (Kawano 2003:126). For Japanese, such ‘connections’ (en) are a key constituent of personhood. The most essential connection is that to family, which confers insider (uchi) status on those who hold them (Kawano 2003:126–131). By intentionally choosing to cut weeds at the ie graves, Shigeru is performing an activity associated with being a part of a family, making him an insider in his wife’s family household, notwithstanding his actual relationship as a son-in-law. Shigeru’s actions reconstitute his kin
relations, blurring the boundary separating the two households. His motivation for doing so reflects in large part his concerns with family relations in his own household:

[He helps his parents-in-law] because my wife looks after my mother even though she is not her own mother. She did the same for my father as well. It doesn’t matter if the relationship is with one’s parents or in-laws. […] To be honest, my wife is looking after her mother-in-law. As a sort of reverse case, I do what I can do for my parents-in-law regardless of the [kinship] relationships. I don’t feel that it’s odd to do so. I don’t think that my brother-in-law [the eldest son] should care for his parents [on an everyday basis] alone.

Shigeru wants to care for his parents-in-law in exchange for the care his wife provided for his father and continues to provide for his mother. He does not take his wife’s efforts in looking after his parents for granted. Rather, he feels the need to reciprocate. He is willing to support her parents in ways they can appreciate, and that will enable her to affirm the value of his help. She may thus feel that she is being recompensed for her devotion and efforts to care for her parents-in-law.

Shigeru recognises the need to cross some kin boundaries to achieve his goals. Were he somehow prevented by rigid kinship rules from being able to repay his wife for her efforts within his own household, there could be a risk that she would withdraw her labour and stop looking after his mother, as indicated by her reasoning of why he has to help his parents-in-law discussed before. For him to take on the responsibility of caring for his mother, including the unfamiliar household chores that this would entail, would challenge his sense of masculinity. He therefore dismisses any sense that it might seem ‘odd’ to cross the notional boundaries between lineages, as it is precisely this that enables him to help parents-in-law. Further, he does not think that the oldest son should provide everyday care for his parents alone. This not only explains the possibility of his providing support – as his brother-in-law may not be involved – but is also consistent with his desire for his parents to be cared for by his wife. This demonstrates his recognition that the basis for caregiving is not merely a fulfilment of social and family responsibilities, but rather a negotiation of practices.

As wives are increasingly involved with both sets of parents, sons-in-law are redefining notions of family by performing ‘additional help’ for their in-laws that is not only familiar, but also likely to be appreciated. Sons-in-law are thus able to engage in caregiving while still fulfilling their sense of what a man’s family contribution should be. At the same time, they recognise their involvement is contingent on necessities, so boundaries for their involvement
are to some degree flexible. Thus, to the extent to which such sons-in-law tend to be involved, what is novel about the practices undertaken tends to less the specific tasks (such as weeding) and much more so to whom these are directed (such as for parents-in-law) and their motivation (such as also to strengthen relationship with wives).

Husbands provide ‘additional help’ for their wives’ parents’ care in appreciation of care for their parents by their wives. While my male informants expect their wives to care for aging parents in the marital household, they recognise that such an expectation need not necessarily be fulfilled. At the same time, they recognise their wives’ desires (and sometimes necessity) to support their parents. This opens up an important space for marital negotiations. Importantly, the emerging form of how sons-in-law are being implicated in care for parents-in-law enables the sustaining of traditional family care arrangement and practices, in which the daughter-in-law looks after her parent(s)-in-law. With the shifting of filial piety obligations, this mutual dependence supports achievement of desired care practices of both spouses.

In turn, my informants recognise the significant potential effect of care provision on their own marital relationship. Thus, men’s willingness to engage in practices of elderly care as a son-in-law, indeed, whether to undertake any practices as well as which practices, is significantly informed by their perspective on how this affects their spousal relation. At the same time, the prevalent perspective amongst my informants is the actual or potential for such inter-dependencies to strengthen the couple’s relationship. Importantly, this suggests that even the married couples’ relations benefit from being considered in the context of the broader pattern of relatedness across the extended family.

5.3.1. Moving in with Elderly Parents-in-Law

While the specific daily practices of care in which sons-in-law become involved depend largely on particularities such as family living arrangements, the inverse can also be true. Toshihiko, a 58-year-old salaryman, is married to Tomoko, a 54-year-old nurse. The couple lives together with Tomoko’s parents, while Toshihiko’s 92-year-old mother lives with his elder brother. His father-in-law, aged 83, is blind in one eye and has mobility problems with his legs. His mother-in-law, aged 79, suffers from Parkinson’s disease. Toshihiko describes the couple’s decision to move to his wife’s parent’s house to care for the parents-in-law as follows:

My wife told her mother, “It might be time for us to come to live with you [to provide care]. But if we move in, it won’t be easy to live in this old house. Even more so for my husband. Toshihiko will be giving up his own house to come live here, so we need something good for him. He’s making a considerable effort, and I don’t want him to
have to live in the house in its current state. So I’d like to rebuild a part of the house … Would it be possible for us to use your savings to pay for it?” And they did.

Tomoko coordinated their move into her parents’ house and the financing of the renovation so as to ensure comfort for everyone involved, especially her husband. And while Toshihiko benefitted from his parents-in-law agreeing to pay for half the renovation fee, his own mother is very much against the arrangement. Indeed, he has kept secret from his mother that he had to take out a loan to pay for his share of the renovation cost.

The considerable expenditure on the renovation attests to Tomoko’s parents’ appreciation for their son-in-law’s willingness to move in with them. Yet, his status in the extended family is not one of superiority or centrality. As a son-in-law, he prefers to avoid confrontation or conflict with his parents-in-law, with the result that Tomoko must serve as a mediator to strike a delicate balance across the extended family in daily life:

It’s fine if my wife says something to her parents – she’s their child. But if I spoke up, it might create conflict. I try to speak my piece to my parents-in-law, but I won’t say it to them directly. I tell my wife to ask them to do bit more this and that.

Tomoko illustrates the situation with an anecdote:

For example, my parents don’t close the door of the toilet completely when they are using it. […] I told them, “Please close the door. Toshihiko doesn’t like it either.” I mentioned it to them because Toshihiko complained to me.’

(Author’s emphasis)

In the extended family, Tomoko is the mediator. As Toshihiko explains, ‘My wife passes on what I am thinking to my parents-in-law.’ Tomoko tries to mitigate points of possible conflict between her parents and her husband, and makes an effort to make a nice environment for him and her too. In her request to her parents, Tomoko strengthens her position by indicating that her husband feels the same way (‘Toshihiko doesn’t like it either’), but makes it clear that she is the aggrieved party. As son-in-law, Toshihiko lacks the status to ask directly, let alone impose his will. Thus, Toshihiko’s status in the household is ambivalent. He is catered to, but does not have the same autonomy as he might have had in his own house.

Indeed, Toshihiko’s main contribution to the provision of long-term care is not what he does on a daily basis but rather that he has enabled Tomoko’s provision of care by agreeing to
give up his own independence and move his family. Tomoko is an only child, and Toshihiko is glad to support her desire to take care of her parents.

The household’s division of labour is otherwise in line with other informants. Tomoko handles most domestic chores, including meal preparation, laundry, and cleaning, while Toshihiko provides ‘additional help’ by attending local community meetings, taking out the rubbish, tending the moss garden, and taking care of other odd jobs, such as hanging reed screens on the windows. Toshihiko has not allowed himself to be drawn into daily care tasks that he would prefer to avoid. While he does not consider himself as having done anything particular for his parents-in-law, he does make some effort at companionable interaction:

Honesty, I don’t like spending time with my parents-in-law! It is sometimes annoying ... For example, I was having a cup of coffee one weekend morning. My father-in-law came in to read a newspaper, flipping pages noisily just in front of me. I thought “give me a break!” So I don’t like being with them. But I sometimes ask my parents-in-law if they want to join me and talk together. [...] I try to makes occasions to talk with them. I think that talking about various things and asking them how they are doing can be a form of emotional support. [...] My relatives told me that my father-in-law was very pleased to live with us. [...] It was a real effort to move in here, so we have to make it meaningful. I am hoping that my parents-in-law appreciate having us here. So I make efforts to talk as much as I can, not to make a wall between us. [...] Before moving, my wife and I wondered if we could live with them for ten years. We do hope they live a long time, and enjoy living together with us. When they eventually leave us, my wife and I hope they will know our deep gratitude towards them ... My parents-in-law have raised our three children as much as we have. So I’d like to pay my debt of gratitude (ongaeshi) ... by talking to them, to make sure that our everyday lives together are meaningful.

Toshihiko makes sure to greet his parents-in-law civilly every day. On weekend mornings, he spends time chatting with them over a cup of coffee, despite feelings of reluctance. He regards fostering such companionship with his parents-in-law also as recompense for their prior help in raising his three children. As both Tomoko and he work full-time, his parents-in-law, who lived nearby, frequently looked after their children. Indeed, one reason Toshihiko and other informants gave for why they care for their elderly parents-in-law is return debt (ongaeshi): importantly, sons-in-law are feeling this debt-of-gratitude, whereas traditionally their link to parents-in-law was quite limited.
Further, for the sons-in-law’s wives, the daughters, elderly care is motivated by more than return debt. I have shown in Chapter 4 how some grandfathers provide financial support for their married daughters’ couples as a part of grandfathering, such as giving occasional cash towards their daughters, paying meals at restaurants, even buying them property. A stated reason why grandfathers are willing to help with their married daughters’ childcare is partially their wish to be looked after when they require care in later life. Hence, they try to induce their daughters to provide care in return for their long-lasting intimacy to their fathers. Relatedly, wives engaged in elderly care for their parents relayed not only a sense of gratitude but also of intimacy towards their parents as a motivation for caring for them.

Whereas eldest sons and their wives once saw to the care of their elderly parents within the mechanism of *ie* succession as a debt of gratitude partly incurred through the care of young children, the experiences of my informants suggest the locus of this debt in contemporary Japanese families is much more negotiated than structural. This highlights the value of framing discussions of long-term care in the Japanese family away from structural-functional paradigms, such as those that privilege the influence of the *ie* system, toward more relational and intimacy-based models.

From Toshihiko’s perspective, however, the desire and need to move in with his parents-in-law house may still challenge his masculinity. It is not that Toshihiko is a primary caregiver for his parents-in-law (as we shall see in the case of Minoru in the next section); rather the challenge to his sense of masculine identity comes from Toshihiko’s decision to give up his own house, which is evidenced by his reluctance to confide to his own mother about his contribution to the renovation expenditure. Toshihiko would seem to have made a choice that others in his own family find difficult to understand or agree with.

One issue for Toshihiko is the ambiguity that now exists between son-in-law and father-in-law in terms of the relative distribution of autonomy and economic resources associated with masculinity in the family. In practice men address such concerns on a case-by-case basis. On some matters, they coordinate, such as by both contributing equally to the renovation. On others, such as toilet habits, Tomoko negotiates as daughter and wife. Other matters are addressed through some degree of spatial separation, as with recognising and respecting the mutual division of the renovated home space between generations. These mechanisms and arrangements reflect Toshihiko’s relatively limited autonomy within the home. The fact that Toshihiko considers his situation to be *temporary*, even if of relatively long duration as likely to last at most a decade or so, may also be interpreted as another strategy for reconciling himself to his situation. At the same time, Toshihiko’s relation as a son-in-law and the associated choices he has made are inter-linked with his spousal relation. He recognises the importance to
Tomoko of caring for her parents, independently of his own feeling of debt: his consequent choices to enable care for her parent in turn strengthen the couple’s relationship.

5.3.2. Son-in-Law as a Primary Caregiver: Dislocating Masculinity?

Although sons-in-law are increasingly involved in providing long-term care for their parents-in-law, it is very rare for them to serve as the primary caregiver. Even so, such cases are not unknown. And given Japan’s current demographic circumstances, increased participation by women in the work force, and unstable employment patterns, they may become more common in future. In this section, I discuss one such case that a City Hall care manager introduced me to as an illustration of how such a relationship comes to be formed and understood by its participants.

Minoru, 58 years old, lives with his wife and adult son in the same household as his own mother and his wife’s father. I interviewed at his house, which is a large, well-maintained and tidy traditional-style house. Minoru is the eldest son and his younger sister lives an hour away by car with her immediate family. His father is institutionalised at a care centre, while his mother-in-law has passed away. Even before she moved in with them, Minoru’s mother’s health had been failing for several years. Even so, she was able to do basic things by herself and visited a day services centre regularly, so Minoru and his wife had managed to look after her while both worked full-time jobs. Then, one year before our interview, Minoru suffered a breakdown from overwork. After recovering he decided to quit his job, which he felt was too much for him. When finding another job proved difficult, his wife suggested that he stay at home; she and their son worked full time, so Minoru did not need to worry about the overall family income. Thus, he decided to stay at home to look after his mother. Around the same time, his father-in-law seriously injured his leg in a fall, and was no longer able to live on his own. Minoru’s wife’s older brother already lived with his parents-in-law and wheelchair-bound wife. Taking pity on his wife’s father as someone who had always shown him kindness, Minoru proposed that he move in with them. Thus, he became the principal family caregiver due to contingent circumstances.

Given the family situation and support available through the day services centre, it might be seen as only reasonable that Minoru should look after his mother and father-in-law. However, he sometimes finds everyday life tough as a man:

Still, I struggle [with the transition from working to being a long-term caregiver]. I sometimes wonder if I’m doing the right thing. I think I’d rather still be working. If my situation were normal (furatto, i.e. ‘flat’), it would be absolutely impossible to stay
at home. Absolutely impossible. I still want to work despite my back pains and poor health. I’m still a man! [...] At the moment, I’m something of a jack-of-all-trades (nandemoya). If somebody asks me to do something, I do it. If somebody asks me to fix their machines, I fix them. I tell people I’ll do whatever I can do for them. My friends call me “NPO Minoru” or “Minoru the Volunteer.” Some people bring cans of beers [instead of money]. [...] I’ve dropped by the community centre to see if they need my help. They pay 1,000 yen per hour for me to do some work such as cutting grass. [...] I spend the money on cigarettes and gear for my car, now not so much as before. [...] As a man, it feels good to earn money, even though it is only a little. [...] People in the neighbourhood see [my work] and trust that I can do a good job. [...] The other day I was asked to trim trees! [...] I think it would be very hard if all I did was provide care for those two. Definitely hard if I had to do it all day long. [...] I go out to drive my car at least once a day: I like to listen to the roar of the car engines – I need to listen to the roar of the engine of my car; otherwise I lose my motivation for everything. I sometimes go to a motor circuit to let off some steam. [...] Still, I feel I am trapped. I sometimes ask myself if it is all right.

Minoru is conflicted in his role as a man. In his view, a man should keep working (i.e. outside the house) even in times of poor health. Staying home caring for the elderly is unsatisfying in this regard. To solve this problem, he seeks out odd jobs, and while this does not necessarily produce much income, the gratitude and trust he earns from people in his neighbourhood for providing good service counts much more for him than the income. This is an interesting contrast to the daikokubashira ideology that men work to support financially their family. For Minoru, it is the act of performing tasks outside the house and earning (even if very modest amounts) *per se*, rather than supporting his family financially, which serves to support his sense of masculinity.

Minoru’s experience is in contrast to the argument of Hane Fumi (2006) that elderly care necessitates Japanese male family caregivers to embrace gender ideology more strongly, as compared to non-caregivers, in order to maintain their identity as men. Paradoxically, this occurs particularly because they are involved in care, which is assumed to be a female domain. Hane’s illustration of gender ideology in elderly care is that men tend to de determined to take charge and complete elderly care by themselves without involving others, reflecting men’s tendency to be independent also in other matters (cf. Courtenay 2000; Tanaka 2015). Further, Mizushima Yōhē (2013) discusses that men, as constrained by male social expectations of autonomy and independence, have difficulty in their ability to construct and maintain their
relationships and intimacy with others. Consequently, Honma and Nagata (2014) argue that male family caregivers often contain care problems themselves and are socially isolated. While Minoru also struggles to reconcile his sense of masculinity with his care provision, Minoru does not necessarily aim to address his sense of masculinity through his care provision. Even though in practice his household chores rattle his sense of masculinity, he does not feel it necessary to complete these if another person may be involved, such as purposefully leaving a part of care cooking to his wife. Minoru often needs to prepare lunch, which he says he keeps simple, and while he may help when preparing dinner, such as by washing and cutting vegetables, he leaves the last part of cooking for his wife to finish off. That way, she remains ‘in charge’ of dinner preparation, if only marginally. He explains that he once worked part-time as an assistant chef, emphasising that this experience is the only reason he is able to help with cooking at all. That is, rather than having learnt a domestic skill, he has repurposed a professional skill for domestic use. Further, he counter-balances these domestic chores with masculine pastimes that he enjoys, such as revving the engine while driving his car. Also, because he strongly feels that men should work, he actively seeks work outside of his house, which leads him to expand his social relations. Eventually, these social relations provide a means for him to sustain his male identity, as they provide him some occasional work.

Minoru finds himself as primary caregiver, which may be considered as a case of an ‘unexpected career’ (Harris 1993: Pearlin 1994); however, from Minoru’s subjective perspective he does not at all perceive this as a career and, indeed, finds himself in a state of a struggle and conflict. He remains deeply reluctant to accept this role fully. It is not, however, that Minoru is idling away his time. He is providing care and thus engaging in work for others. What makes the difference for Minoru is that he feels he is losing his sense of masculinity, which precludes him from feeling fine about his practices. Thus, Minoru has cultivated activities that offer temporary escape to sustain his sense of masculinity. Further, in a way somewhat analogous to Toshihiko’s case, while he is a son-in-law taking on the role of a care provider, he has only been able to reconcile this with his sense of masculinity considering (or hoping) that his situation will be transient. Thus, while care provision deeply affects men’s sense of masculinity, the resulting pressures need not be addressed within elderly care only but also through other aspects of men’s lives and inter-temporally.

5.4. Conclusion

Men drawn into care for the elderly as sons, brothers, husbands and sons-in-law are for the most part crafting novel masculinities in the family, as care to date has been seen as a largely feminine domain. In the discussions on Japanese elderly care, within and beyond Japan, male care
involvement is relatively invisible. My study evidences the importance of addressing care beyond the relations between the main caregiver and receiver to take a holistic view on family relations involved in elderly care.

My informants recognise the potential fluidity in practices needed to address elderly care; at the same time, they seek to maintain some degree of continuity in their sense of masculinity in what for them is the novel domain of care. They apply discretion to care practices undertaken, privileging practices they consider familiar. They characterise their selectively undertaken activities, additional help, using idioms related to professional and masculine spheres, extending the notion of care to include physical labour (*chikara shigoto*) and public engagement. Yet, they do not appeal to notions of appropriateness in justifying their practices, such as based on gender division of labour in principle. In contrast, their considerations are more practical: while what they have done before is most suitable, as needed they can undertake other practices. The finding that such male carers as I study select from a broad set of care practices, which are also valued by other family members as a contribution to care, is an important extension of understanding men’s involvement in care.

In contrast, for men who are primary care givers there may be less scope for selection of care practices. Married male primary care givers may, nonetheless, be able to share tasks with their wives. More generally, as is evident for the families I study, multiple family members tend to contribute to care. In such instances, I emphasise the significance of selection in allowing men to contribute to care while addressing their own sense of masculinity. I also chart the limits to such an approach, which become evident in the relatively rare cases when men, particularly sons-in-law, end up being the primary caregiver to their parents-in-law. Despite this potential challenge to a son-in-law’s sense of masculinity, this may be mitigated by encompassing compensatory activities outside the domestic sphere and (critically) considering the caregiver status to be temporary.

This highlights the importance of understanding the well-being of men as family caregivers, as the challenges to their masculinity indicates the pressures and stress they feel, and may in turn place at risk the well-being of care receivers. That is, an inadequate understanding of the moods and motivations of male caregivers jeopardises the well-being not only these men themselves but also care recipients, other family members and society as a whole. It is important to understand how men today perceive their roles as caregivers in increasingly diverse ‘families’ and the significance of ‘gendered’ choices. For some of my

40 While my focus is on men and masculinities, men’s care involvement has broader implications. In particular, the multiplicity of family members contributing to care is significant from a policy perspective, say, to address how to facilitate the sharing of care of across family members.
informants, their involvement with long-term care of the elderly deeply challenged their notions of masculinity, but this was not always the case. In all cases, however, the sense of masculinity was contingent on the re-shaping of family relationships.

As men negotiate their own contributions to care, they implicate members of their extended family, leading to a re-shaping of sibling, marital and son-in-law relations. Indeed, sons-in-laws’ contributions to long-term care should also be understood not only in terms of active everyday involvement, but in the opportunity costs of their choice of living arrangement. Co-residence with parents-in-law enables care while re-shaping everyday contact: sons-in-law establish everyday practices through the mediation of a spouse. Indeed, in such an arrangement, the challenges to men’s sense of masculinity from crafting a novel son-in-law relation need to be placed in the context of their marital relation. Long-term care of the elderly, then, must be seen as being embedded in the wider family context of changing family relations shifting toward supporting new care arrangements.

Indeed, this raises the interesting question of how men transition with ageing into receivers of care. As men undergo these transitions, they are no longer able to undertake certain practices, such as chikara shigoto, which raises the issue of what this does to their sense of masculinity. While this question is for future research, my informants clearly have this transition in mind as they address the care of their parents and parents-in-law.

Thus, one of the most important relationships is that of the married couple. My informants’ concern is not only care of their parents’ generation but also, in the future, of their own. Indeed, care provision may support the couple’s relationship. Comparing to care for young children, discussed in Chapter 3, while a common aspect is men’s selectivity in the additional help men undertake, a distinctive aspect is the effect on the couple’s relationship. Child-care does not primarily serve to bring the couple together, as my informants do not question the need for them as a couple to care for children: rather, they coordinate the allocation of child-care tasks. In contrast, addressing elderly care needs provides an opening for an exchange involving wives’ involvement with parents and parents-in-law and, importantly, husbands’ support for their parents-in-law: these reciprocal contributions may strengthen couples’ relations.

The couple’s negotiation of care practices is in contrast to women viewed as passive care providers. Yamane Sumika (2010) argues that women passively perceive their responsibility as carers, and often lack negotiation power to reverse it. This is because women are located between two discourses: care is women’s domain and responsibility, and women are stuck in a lower status in the labour market. In contrast, I find that women have leverage in negotiations with other family members. The pressure for family-based care is increasing, driven by: government policy, due to a paucity of formal institutionalised care and longstanding aversion
to immigration; and demographic pressure that makes it more likely for middle aged couples to need to look after *both* sets of parents. While women do not necessarily perceive care involvement only in negatively terms, especially for parents, they appreciate their husband’s support. Men are happy to provide care for parents-in-law as additional help, but not necessarily to radically reconstruct their masculinity for care of their parents: thus, men need wives to care for their parents. Through such factors, women have a good position from which to negotiate and coordinate care practices.

Indeed, while couples negotiate care for their respective parents, my informants also seek to nurture their own marital relationships so as to favour reciprocal care when the need arises. This is important for my male informants as they do not perceive their spousal relationship as otherwise necessarily providing sufficient assurance of care in their own old age. In part, this reflects the dissolution of previous social expectations as well as the greater variety of life path choices available to their wives. Both of these are broader social shifts that impact the daily practices of couples. Thus, men construct novel masculinities in care. This includes sons-in-law providing care, which is a striking departure from prior patterns of familial relations. In so doing, men give preference, where possible, to care tasks that they feel more familiar with or deem more masculine: they introduce an element of continuity in crafting novel masculinities related to providing care across the extended family.
Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have explored the everyday practices of men with their families; how they situate themselves in family relationships; and how they coordinate and negotiate these interconnected family practices that sustain their relations as husbands, as fathers, as sons-in-law, and as grandfathers. Through a focus on men’s relations I provide a better understanding of masculinities in the family. Further, through men’s family relations I also elucidate the relations of women and other family members, thus pointing to the broader relevance of my findings. In this concluding chapter, I first discuss my main findings so as to develop my contributions to understanding masculinities and gender in contemporary Japan. I close discussing indications for future research.

Men’s family relations as husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, and sons-in-law across the extended family may be understood through the process of exchange, which importantly involves additional help, financial resources, and intimacy. Introducing the notion of additional help in family relations is a means to understand the emergence of novel masculinities that are a break with respect to key notions within hegemonic salaryman masculinity even if for some men work pressures limit the extent of adoption of related practices. How men selectively seek intimacy in some family relations is an important aspect of reshaping men’s sense of masculinity. I find that men’s provision of additional help and seeking of intimacy varies across family relations, which lead to men’s (re)construction of masculinities differing across family relations. Given the broader changes in Japanese society and in families, I find an important reason for men to select their practices so as to craft their family relations is to address their sense of well-being. Further, the pattern of men’s family relations reveals the emergence of substantially novel sons-in-law relations. This evidence suggests a fundamental shift from a vertically-dominated set of family relations, as in the ie household, to a more horizontal, fluid set of relations across the extended family.

6.1. Crafting Novel Gendered Family Relations

An important aspect of my approach is to address how men differentiate their relations across the extended family, such as where they seek intimacy. The practices that support such relations arise from coordination and negotiation with family members. I find that viewing the negotiations of practices between family members through the prism of exchange, the giving and receiving of gifts, highlights a core dynamic within these relations. Here, it is instructive to examine for family members what they give and what they receive, and, importantly, to whom
they give and from whom they receive. By nurturing and sustaining family relations, in the longer run my informants seek to contribute to their well-being and address everyday needs and desires for the companionship and affection which stem from the practices that comprise the exchange.

While some practices provide men continuity in their sense of masculinity, other practices provide an opportunity for reconstruction of their masculinity. The resolution of this tension depends on the family relation in question, which evidences men’s masculinities as relational, and on how their pattern of family relations affects their well-being.

6.1.1. Additional Help

Importantly, for my informants, men’s structural position in the family no longer serves as the basis for family relations, at least not in the ideological terms stemming from the *ie* system. In the *ie* household system, prior to its abolishment in 1947 men had legal authority as heads of household, with substantial control of the household’s material resources. Nakane (1967) argues for persistent influence of the *ie* household system, based on a vertical principle in the family and society beyond legal abolishment. In addition, Confucian beliefs informed daily practices and perceptions, fundamentally shaping men’s family relations, such as husbands over wives or fathers over sons (Morishima 1988; Kumagai 2008). However, given the gradual disappearance of the *ie* system influence, the nature of relationships within the family are no longer self-evident.

The changing nature of family relations is argued by Yamada (2003) as a reason why men such as my informants purposefully develop and sustain their family relations:

We are said to be experiencing an age of individualisation. It is also said that that family bonds are growing weaker. And yet, the desire expressed by the people seeking such familial bonds has not been in any way weakened. Here, let us define these “bonds” (*kizuna*) as dependable relationships *with long-term stability*. In economic terms, they might refer to a safety net of mutual aid in times of difficulty; in psychological terms, they might represent an emotional cornerstone. […] In traditional society (that is, until the Meiji period in Japan), such bonds were provided by collective groups such as the household, village, and family, and supported by religion. […] The family has been modernised … people sought these dependable relationships with long-term stability in families of a smaller size. […] Families provided a psychological cornerstone and a frame of life security. To create and maintain institutional families was regarded as being equal to the preservation of their
 constituent bonds. And so, families became symbols of these bonds. [...] There are lifestyle risks in contemporary society that arise from within the family. [...] This is the risk posed by the family’s dissolution. [...] In other words, the emerging situation is one wherein being disliked makes it impossible to depend on a husband’s income, a wife’s care, or the assistance of children. Our age is thus one in which we must take into account the risk that “we might be disliked” (Yamada 2003:3–7, 20–25).

Yamada’s argument distinguishes between a past characterised by family relations anchored in ‘bonds (kizuna)’ between family members that provided support in case of need and the situation now for contemporary families. Yamada’s main point is that now risks lie also at the heart of the family. And while my informants may not have used the term ‘risk’ to describe their various family situations, they explicitly recognise potential problems in the family, how appropriate family relations can mitigate these problems, and that such family relations are to be nurtured and developed.

I provide evidence that for men to (re)construct family relations is through an important evolution in men’s practices: men contributing ‘additional help.’ Through coordinating and at times negotiating with their wives, my informants are adapting to changing social conditions – particularly with reference to their wives’ full-time employment. The practices they undertake I refer to as ‘additional help,’ which provide husbands with a means to reconcile gender-based views on respective roles with the daily pressures of household tasks and childcare. An important shift in husbands’ views of their wives is represented by the move from having a culturally prescribed duty to perform domestic matters to simply having responsibility for domestic matters. This has opened up the possibility for husbands to offer additional help in the domestic sphere: for instance, a husband whose wife also works full-time helping by taking out the rubbish. This is help, as it is necessary to do, and additional from the husband’s perspective as he may undertake this without substantial changes to his other commitments, notably work. Yet while such additional help could encompass a wide range of domestic tasks, it nevertheless tends to be limited and specific so as to encompass practices to the extent possible compatible with their manhood. Thus, men combine exploration of practices in the domestic sphere with undertaking practices they feel most appropriate and comfortable performing. Additional help leads not to a radical transformation but to a significant evolution of gender-based practices.

For the husbands and fathers I focus on, an important reference point is the sense of masculinity associated with the notion of salarymen. Whereas additional help could be viewed in terms of absolute time involved, which would suggest a limited difference as compared to
hegemonic salaryman masculinity, I suggest this is not the appropriate perspective. My informants do face substantial claims on their time from work, but they do not conform to the devotion to and primacy of work: importantly, they also give priority to their wives’ needs, with wives’ work a significant driver of their practices. The important underpinning is that in intention and attitude they have moved away from sharp gender-based division of duties: wives are considered as responsible rather than duty bound to perform domestic practices. This opens up the scope for a change in practices and, significantly, points to a significant difference in attitude as compared to the canonical salaryman model. Furthermore, fathers often seek deeper, more intimate relationships with their children achieved through more active involvement in parenting. Also, spousal relations support addressing personal interests and needs. Thus, their spousal relations are not arranged so as to primarily complement their career.

These practices and ideals are strikingly distinct from previous characterisations of male involvement, such as the ‘absent fathers’ of past decades. My informants are not radically questioning their and others’ practices: they are not *ikumen* fathers in Ishii-Kuntz’s (2003) discussion about active fathering. My informants are middle-class men who for the most part may be deemed salarymen from a career perspective; I argue, however, that it is questionable to associate them with the hegemonic notion of salaryman masculinity. They are crafting an alternative masculinity of men in the family. This is distinct to Dasgupta’s (2013a) argument that salaryman masculinity is reforming from the perspective of men at work. To the extent that men’s alternative masculinities are emerging at work and at home simultaneously, they point to a more fundamental transformation of the masculinity of men typically associated with salaryman masculinity.

### 6.1.2. Extended Family Relations Founded on Exchange

The processes for determining which practices men undertake highlights the significance of choices, negotiation and coordination, which depend on the relative resources amongst extended family members as well as their interests in forming family relations. In regards to the dynamics of such family relations, Ōno Sachiko (2016) argues that for family relations: ‘If we understand each other and make partnerships we respect, daily interactions as a matter of course reflect flexibility and concessions towards others’ situations. This actualises “doing family”.’ Thus, Ōno places emphasis on the give-and-take that allows for the construction of family relations that lead to family well-being. I argue that such a process of negotiating and coordinating practices to sustain and develop family relations may be understood through applying the process of exchange in a family context, placing emphasis on how reciprocity is
achieved through giving and receiving of what, in the context of exchange, are referred to as gifts.

Indeed, in studies of gift-exchange, the form of the gift has received much attention, including whether this comprises a commodity as gift and the burden on the receiver of receiving the gift (Daniels 2009), related to the issues discussed in Chapter 4. Indeed, many forms of additional help are alike in the sense of entailing consideration not to burden gift receivers. Within the notion of additional help, a range of practices that feature prominently as gifts could be viewed as quasi-commodity services, such as hiring taxi drivers, babysitters, gardeners, or cleaners. For instance, a non-family member could be hired to carry out a given task instead of it being provided by a family member as additional help. Yet, the value my informants attribute to such practices is not reducible to the equivalent of a service provided through a market mechanism. In part, no doubt, the resistance and reluctance to make use of such services is a function of the difficult logistics of accessing and arranging such services. More importantly, though, even the simplest of such tasks affords moments of emotional contact for both giver and receiver. Based on Fu’s (2013) argument, to have a sense of being a contributing member of family, an important aspect is performing work, with work broadly interpreted as individual labour for the benefit of others. In this regard, my informants’ experience suggests amplification of the impact of work. Not only may the work be useful in a utilitarian sense, it may also be useful from an emotional perspective: the potential for emotional benefit to the provider, such as by fostering positive feelings of self-worth. Thus, providing elderly care need not be only a burden, as is often focused on, but also very importantly a source of fulfilment and happiness in its own right, leading to care providers’ ambivalence of feelings.

Another prominent feature of the gift exchange of my informants involves financial resources. In some instances, as with siblings coordinating elderly care, money retains its essentially fungible quality, for example when used to fund the purchase of a car partly used for transport of elderly parents. In other instances, namely where it is used for inter-generational gifts that aim to foster intimacy, efforts are made to render money less alienable, as with the bank scheme creating reminders of the grandparent as source of funding to the grandchild, or through grandfathers’ purchase of property for their daughters’ families. Thus, while practices that might be viewed as commodity services are central to my informants’ accounts, through gift-giving the commodity-like characteristics can be attenuated or augmented by other aspects that, importantly, confer emotional benefit through the exchange. Indeed, the greater the extent to which monetary gifts are arranged not as just a commodity but rather comprise other aspects that provide emotional benefits is an indication of the importance of such relations.
Focusing on exchange should lead us to consider not only what is given, but also that which is not, as we are reminded of by the notion of ‘giving while keeping’ proposed by Weiner (1985). In the context of their exchanges, one tension my male informants face is what aspects of their sense of masculinity they prefer not to give-up as part of the exchange. For instance, grandfathers who in retirement seek to maintain aspects of their masculinity related to their working careers, as financial providers, while at the same time being open to new practices, such as involvement with grandchildren that represent a break with practices of prior generations. To some degree, what is kept provides them with some degree of stability. Yet, this needs to be recognised as relational: the aspects they seek to preserve need, to some degree, to be valued by other family members, as these give rise to practices that form part of the exchange supporting the family relations. Thus, the construction of masculinity is not just, say, about adding new practices to existing ones: men’s negotiation of practices with family members is both about which practices to introduce and which to continue, so a (re)construction of practices.

Thus, in taking an approach based on exchange to understand relatedness across the extended family, I contribute to the development of relatedness in kinship. The process of exchange is not unidimensional but involves, importantly, additional help, financial resources, and intimacy. In particular, I evidence the importance of what I refer to as additional help as a basis for family relations, which contributes to deepening the understanding of the basis for relatedness (cf. Carsten 2000; Lambert 2000; Stafford 2000). I also demonstrate how gift exchange provides a means to assess relatedness across the extended family. Gift exchange provides a consistent approach yet allowing for a subjective perspective on which relations matter to a person and why, which is at the core of understanding kinship through relatedness. From the perspective of the focal subject, choosing the form of exchange for each relation and which relations to place more or less emphasis on represents an important set of choices relating to how relations are developed and sustained. That is, for a particular person, the pattern of exchange reveals what family means to them.

The substantial variation in men’s family relations I document contributes to understanding relatedness across the extended family. Assessing exchange in the context of elderly care reveals the importance of sibling relations, which are an important part of family relationships yet with limited academic attention in the Japanese context. As brothers, with respect to care for elderly parents, men feel to some extent released from pressure to support their parents, but also find themselves on a more equal footing with siblings, among whom relative seniority and gender count for less than they once did. Further, as an important reference point, the salaryman model (cf. Dasgupta 2000; Mathews 2003; Hidaka 2010) that
privileges a view of men centred on work and their nuclear family at best implicitly captures men as brothers. I find that not only how men are involved in elderly care affects sibling relationships, but also importantly sibling relations through the negotiation and coordination of elderly care affect men’s reconstruction of masculinity. Thus, a contribution I make is to evidence aspects of men’s sense of masculinity in their relations across the extended family with regards to elderly care.

In the resulting negotiation and coordination over respective practices, such men on the one hand prefer to undertake familiar practices; on the other hand, my informants recognise the necessity potentially to fulfil practices often deemed feminine. Importantly, they have relatively muted gender based expectations of respective practices: thus, elderly care provides a significant illustration of how masculinity is relational as arising from negotiation of practices. Indeed, my informant who as a son-in-law provided elderly care as a full-time main caregiver but felt he had limited choice over this was not at ease with his sense of masculinity. This suggests the possibility to negotiate is a part of a sense of masculinity in such settings. This echoes the importance given to choice, freedom and self-determination by men in other contexts (Gill 2011; Taga 2011; Cook 2013). Thus, in characterising men’s practices in elderly care, I indicate important instances in which gender-based notions that associate elderly care with femininity are being actively re-shaped.

Furthermore, through the prism of elderly care, I extend understanding on family relations often less focused on in discussions of masculinity, namely as brothers and sons-in-law. More generally, in the context of men’s relations with their extended family, I argue for the emergence of novel patterns of relatedness for men as sons-in-law, in contrast to their traditionally marginal place in discussions of Japanese family relations. As emotional intimacy has become a key basis for father-daughter relations, the son-in-law relation is becoming more prominent in family relations. This includes, amongst my informants, men providing additional help such as weeding as well as on occasion moving in with their parents-in-law. While sons-in-law are engaging with parents-in-law in novel ways, this is not without challenges. For instance, an informant who moved in with his parents-in-law on the one hand is vexed by having to vicariously express his views about their day-to-day behaviour through his wife, their daughter, yet is grateful for his parents-in-law past help and support with childrearing. My informants addressing such challenges are evidence of their intentionality in forming of family relations. As these practices are a break with past practices, I provide evidence, from a kinship perspective, of a fundamental re-orientation of Japanese family away from vertically structured patrilineal family relations. Further, to the extent that the ie system shaped notions of
masculinity, such re-construction of men’s relatedness as sons-in-law to their parents-in-law is in effect an exploration of novel masculinities in the contemporary Japanese context.

6.1.3. Selectively Seeking Intimacy in Family Relations through Exchange

As fathers and grandfathers cannot rely on the external imposition of a sense of filial duty, they seek to achieve similar ends through the cultivation of emotional intimacy in their family relations. As such, for my informants, the intertwining of everyday exchanges with longer-term exchanges is a means of (re)shaping family relations. Such exchanges are for the most part constitutive of, rather than determined by family structure. This contrasts with Rupp’s argument (2003) that social structures determine the form of gift-giving of seasonal and life cycle events: as women have ‘primary responsibility for practices of giving and receiving their very participation in this system reinforces their subordinate position in relation to men’ (Rupp 2003:161). Rupp’s study has drawn attention to gift-giving between households in the public sphere, to material objects and gift exchanges triggered by particular recurrences. Within families, by contrast, and across extended families, I have observed many everyday gift exchanges that do not necessarily feature material objects in any prominent way, and which are not prompted by any particular recurring occasions, such as seasonal gift-giving. Thus, while giving and receiving is important for social relationships in general (Mauss 2001 [1925]; Befu 1968; Hendry 1993; Rupp 2003), the basis for exchange of family relations tends to be distinctive as compared to that for many other social relations.

Yet, the main difference I would like to emphasise is that, in Rupp’s account, women’s responsibility for gift-giving sustains the patriarchal system. The structure of social relations determines the form of the exchange – who gives, who receives, and for what purpose. As a consequence, the vertical hierarchical structure is reaffirmed and sustained. In contrast, I find the men in my study are engaged in exchange in their everyday life in order to nurture and sustain their family relations that are substantially less or even non-hierarchical. Thus, my informants’ practices are not determined by structure: rather, my informants’ accounts are replete with examples of strategic considerations of how to influence their family relations. This would not seem to be more in line with the view of Japanese family sociologist, Iwakami Mami (2007):

The family, to date, has been discussed as a cohesive social unit. In this sense, the form of the family was an important concern for people, such as whether a family was a three-generation family or a nuclear family. […] However[,] families have also begun to be called upon to find possibilities suited to their individual members. This is not to
say that families have become entirely haphazard, but that people have begun to seek out family forms suited to who they are. While it may seem paradoxical, the more individualisation progresses, the more the family comes to be valorised as “irreplaceable” for individuals. This is because the acquisition of one’s true desires requires efforts and ingenuity, and the family is no longer any exception. […] I believe that families will continue to be the most significant bastions of support for individuals. However, … nor are there any guarantees as to which family members will always be around (Iwakami 2007:98–100).

(Author’s emphasis)

Indeed, the extent to which my informants have made strategic choices that ‘requires efforts,’ in Iwakami’s terminology, is evidenced by their accounts. Building on Iwakami’s argument, I find that men seek to create and sustain particular family relations through a positive emotional aspect, namely emotional intimacy, in particular as grandfathers and fathers by making efforts, such as through additional help.

The grandfathers of the dankai generation seek to become more involved in their daughters’ lives. Sustained engagement in short-term cycles of giving and receiving is integral to longer-term processes of exchange in the context of family relations. Through these everyday practices of exchange, like grandchild-care and treating their daughters’ families to the occasional dinner at a restaurant, grandfathers receive and develop affection, which they cherish. Even more importantly, they end up feeling closer to their daughters and receive affirmation from members of their extended family, anchoring them in the network of the family and stoking a sense of subjective well-being.

These near-term exchanges are embedded in a process of exchange likely to be played out over a longer time frame. This may extend to financial support in the past, such as purchasing a home or property for their married daughters' families. Grandfathers’ ability to influence the actual place where their daughters’ families live in part reflects baby boomers' relative control of financial resources. For instance, for one informant, the payment of nominal rent for property purchased by a father-in-law is an ongoing reminder of who bought the property. Grandfathers also hope the exchange extends into the future, with the emotional intimacy with their daughters leading in due course to them being cared for. This longer-term effect will only become evident many years in the future, subject to the uncertainty of how grandfathers and their daughters will feel as the grandfather transitions from a provider of support to the family to a receiver of care. My fieldwork, despite its brevity in relation to such
generational time frames, has therefore offered a window on longer-term family relations, leaving open the question of how these relations will evolve.

Meanwhile, I provide a perspective on the sense of masculinity of men as grandfathers. Although the importance of work and careers in salaryman masculinity raises the issue of what retirement, in the absence of such work, means for such men, to date this has received very limited academic attention. I find that such relatively young grandfathers on the one hand seek to extended aspects of their sense of masculinity into retirement, namely being a financial provider, on the other hand they involve themselves with grandchildren and with their daughters in domestic and familiar practices incongruous as compared to when they were younger men absorbed by work. I find that grandfathers’ construction of masculinity comprises, somewhat paradoxically, the pursuit of intimacy for altruistic and self-serving aims.

Further, I provide evidence of cross-generational difference in sense of masculinity, given the implications of the asymmetry in financial resources of fathers-in-law relative to their sons-in-law, in part driven by factors specific to these generations. Notably, overall economic conditions through the history of post-war Japan have favoured baby-boomer generation grandfathers' accumulation of savings over their careers, whereas their sons-in-law have faced a tougher economic climate. Accordingly, the inter-generational pattern of relationships that characterises the contemporary family is one that may not necessarily recur in future generations. At present, in the relationships with sons-in-law, on the one hand fathers-in-law maintain their existing sense of masculinity embedded in being a financial provider. On the other hand, sons-in-law simply and honestly appreciate their fathers-in-law’s generosity. Men’s masculinity as sons-in-law is not founded on providing financial resources: thus, there is a difference in what constitutes masculinity across generations in this family relation.

While grandfathers aim to deepen emotional intimacy with their adult daughters, middle-aged fathers seek an intimate emotional relationship with their children. While working husbands, given economic pressures, may have modestly increased their absolute involvement in domestic practices, they now tend to view domestic matters as negotiable with their wives rather than categorically a woman’s domain. Further, for fathers the everyday practices comprising additional help provide regular contact with their children, generating shared moments and experiences that foster closer relations that could potentially be sustained into adulthood. Thus, I evidence that for fathers, such as my informants, masculinity is grounded not only in work, so as to provide for their children but also in intimacy: within the domain of the nuclear family, this provides important evidence of exploration and evolution in men’s relations and masculinity through the practices they undertake.
My contribution related to intimacy in men’s relations is important as several strands of literature on masculinities have highlighted, if anything, a lack of intimacy or even social detachment. Salaryman masculinity does not privilege intimacy in family relations (cf. Dasgupta 2000; Mathews 2003; Hidaka 2010). Also, discussions of herbivore boys and otaku men, in spite of the main place for construction of their masculinity being their homes (Kumagai 2015) put forward masculinities with muted to limited degrees of social engagement and limited seeking of intimate relations with family. Thus, it is significant to evidence men for whom intimacy is important, which for my informants tends to be sought in cross-generational, parent-child, relations.

Whereas fathers tend to seek intimacy with their children, in contrast, amongst husbands and wives my informants did not relay seeking intimacy amongst the couple as a priority. In spending time outside the home, they are unlikely to privilege activities only involving the couple; rather they are more likely to go out as a family, including the children, or just one parent alone. For instance, husbands might provide additional help, such as by looking after the children, while wives go out to pursue personal hobbies and interests. In turn, husbands expect and receive a chance to spend time on their own pursuits, whether time alone at home or going out alone or with friends. In such cases spouses engage in an ongoing exchange in which they appreciate each other’s contributions, which develops and sustains their relation as a couple. Thus, in contrast to Bloch’s (2017) argument that being together nurture’s relationships, I emphasise how spousal coordination to spend time separately for each to address their subjective well-being, in turn, strengthens their couplehood.

Amongst couples engaged in elderly care, the process of exchange related to providing care for the parents importantly shapes couples’ relationship. Spouses engage in the careful and deliberate balancing and exchange of practices to realise the desired care outcomes for each other’s parents. Husbands provide additional help to their parents-in-law to induce their wives to care for their parents: sons-in-laws’ additional help in elderly care enables continuity in the traditional arrangement of daughters-in-law providing care to parents-in-law, not from a sense of duty but rather based on spousal negotiation. In turn, my informants feel this strengthens their own marital relationship, in particular in light of their own expected needs for mutual elderly care. Thus, the process of exchange between spouses relies not on an enactment of expected roles but rather on purposeful efforts, with the provision of additional help an important aspect.

I find that men are (re)crafting their masculinities through the practices they undertake embedded in their family relations. Intimacy is a significant aspect of selected family relations. Additional help provides an important means to understand the introduction of novel practices.
Such practices are relational, which may be considered through a process of exchange amongst extended family members. Thus, men are (re)shaping what it means to be men in the family in contemporary Japan.

**6.2. Masculinity and Well-being**

In the context of the contemporary Japanese families I study, as men undertake novel practices and form and sustain their family relations, as husbands, fathers, grandfathers, sons and sons-in-law, what comes through in my informants’ accounts is that such family relations are for them central in achieving their well-being in the family. Such accounts are consistent with viewing happiness and well-being, as in the increasing cross-disciplinary research and policy making, as not fixed in time or across people, but rather socially constructed and subjective (Manzenreiter and Holthus 2017). Further, the focus is not just on immediate sensory experiences: ‘Happiness is not just the pleasures of living that our experiencing self relishes, but also our remembering self’s overall sense of life being worthwhile’ (ibid.:9). Bearing this definition in mind, I address how men’s sense of masculinity in the family contributes to their happiness and well-being. For instance, the grandfathers I interviewed were pursing practices and forming relations that represent a break with past practices. Their family relations provide those quotidian moments that light up a day as well as the comfort and reassurance of their longer-term support by family members.

For my informants, a congruence of their everyday practices with their sense of masculinity supports men’s well-being. For instance, grandfathers are able to extend into retirement being a financial provider to their extended families, which was a main aspect of their manhood when working. In their novel daily interactions with daughters and grandchildren, practices they feel consistent with their manhood emerge: they select aspects of childcare they find rewarding and they are careful to create appropriate moments of familial intimacy, such as meals. These practices they enjoy in the moment, perceive their families’ appreciation, and feel they are thereby nurturing longer-term familial relations: this provides grandfathers a sense of self-worth.

The converse situation, in which practices that lead men to question their manhood are to the detriment of their well-being, is illustrated clearly by my informant, Minoru, who is the main carer for his parents-in-law. The necessity of the situation, as he is not able to work full-time due to his health he is the most suited to provide care, does not fully compensate for his feeling of a lack of manhood in his daily life. He is troubled by his situation, specifically not being able to work regularly and thus being the care provider, notwithstanding some compensatory practices such as going out for a drive. He would like his place in the pattern of
family relations to be different, not as the husband and son-in-law who is the main carer. Indeed, he clings on in the hope that this is temporary. His memory is of self-worth anchored in work: recognising his health problems, he nonetheless wishes to return to being a working man, which would, he expects, provide him a sense of satisfaction.

In the context of my male informants, their practices are negotiated and coordinated with family members, which places these men in a web of family relations. The reciprocity underlying these relations provides men a feeling of being valued by family members and having a place in the family: this supports their (subjective) sense of being a man in the family. From my informants’ accounts, their purposefulness and efforts in securing such outcomes comes through. This is in contrast to the past, when men’s family relations were to a great extent automatically determined by family structure and functions (Nakane 1967; Morishima 1988; Kumagai 2008). Across my informants, however, men do not derive to any great extent the ability to (re)shape relations across the extended family as husbands, sons, or brothers based on their birth order or gender. Simply being a man does not mean they are able to align their family relations so as to achieve their own well-being.

Furthermore, for salarymen, the hegemonic salaryman masculinity comprised heterosexual marriage and devotion to career (Dasgupta 2000; Mathews 2003; Hidaka 2010), thus with limited actual practices at home just because of time spent at work. For such salarymen, securing marriage, in particular the structural aspect of being married rather than the relationship with wife, and providing the income to support the resulting family, which derived from their work, was largely sufficient to address men’s sense of masculinity in the family. Beyond this, practices in the family context did not significantly determine their well-being, at least relative to the importance of work. Broader trends in Japanese society, however, including the post-bubble economy and women’s role in society, are argued to leave men seeking to reconstruct their sense of purpose and self-worth. Itō points to men facing a crisis in their sense of masculinity in addressing such pressures (Itō 1993). Indeed, evidence across successive generations of salarymen indicates substantial changes in what provides a meaning to men’s lives. Work is not necessarily as significant a source of well-being for salarymen as it was in the past (Mathews 2003; Hidaka 2010). To address their well-being, I argue additional help is an important means for men to reconcile career and family. Thus, well-being from family is important, arising from men’s negotiation of practices in the family to form desired family relations.

For each of men’s family relations, the associated sense of masculinity contributes to their well-being. Yet, these are not separate effects, as men’s family relations are interconnected. Men’s shift from viewing women as duty bound to responsible for the domestic sphere opens
up a scope for negotiation of additional help as husbands and as fathers. While each of these relations contributes to manhood in the family in a different way, the total time available for men to provide additional help needs to be allocated across practices that relate to men as husbands and fathers, which interconnects these relations. While this is an interconnection based on a constraint on time available for practices, elderly care provides a different means of interconnection. Husbands and wives negotiate provision of elderly care for parents and parents-in-law so as to also strengthen their own marital relation: thus, masculinity as son and son-in-law for elderly care is linked to manhood as husband. One of my informants, Toshihiko, moved into his parents-in-law largely to enable his wife to take care of them. As son-in-law, co-habitation brought irritation and infringed on his autonomy in the home, such as having to influence his parents-in-law vicariously through his wife. As husband, however, he feels content that this made his wife’s wish possible. His manliness was to some degree challenged as a son-in-law and affirmed as a husband: the diverse aspects of his masculinity in the family inter-relate to affect his self-worth. Thus, I argue that men’s well-being in the family reflects the totality of men’s family relations.

In parallel, men’s pattern of relatedness in the family, I argue, is underpinned by exchanges that include reciprocity that reflect attention to both self and others. In the literature on happiness and well-being, the importance of independence and self-autonomy in the West and connectedness with others in the East are highlighted (Uchida et al. 2004; Kaufman and Taniguchi 2010). While this may suggest a marked dichotomy, in contrast running through my informants’ accounts I find both of these aspects. Grandfathers’ altruistic concern for their daughters comes with a desire to address their own longer-term care needs. Also, spouses create time and space to address their needs of the self, which strengthens their relationship as a couple. Thus, men’s well-being in the family is relational in that both aspects related to self and to others are addressed through men’s family relations.

To the extent that the well-being of family members matters to men, to address other family members’ needs men could adapt and evolve their practices even more so. I find men provide additional help: but why not a more equal sharing of childcare tasks and household chores? Given the latitude provided by negotiation of practices, why do not men change more radically so as to further benefit their family members and the men thereby derive a feeling of self-worth from supporting family members. My informants’ explanations for why they do not undertake certain practices are not primarily inappropriateness or some categorical exclusion: this suggests that deep-seated aversion to such practices is not the main limiting factor. Furthermore, for men certain practices are desirable, such as fathers’ practices related to deepening intimacy with children.
For working men, the main constraint to a more radical shift in practices is the self-worth they derive from work. Notwithstanding the changes over time, for middle-aged salarymen work and career remain important to provide a foundation for their manhood (Dasgupta 2013a), and therefore addresses their sense of well-being. Thus, such men will not place at risk self-worth provided by work through their choice of domestic practices. In particular, a key aspect is the lack of time for domestic practices due to their career commitments. In making such a trade-off, additional help emerges as a viable approach. That is, well-being is not compartmentalised, with the impact of work separate to family life. Rather, men’s overall sense of life being worthwhile arises from the interaction of such different domains. Hence, men’s consideration of their overall well-being may place important constraints on the everyday practices they are willing to undertake in the domestic sphere and thus the consequent degree of change in their masculinity in the family.

A second constraint stems from the reference to ‘remembering’ in the definition of happiness and well-being. This suggests that some degree of continuity in men’s sense of masculinity in the family supports their self-worth. Such continuity may arise in several ways, including men: selecting practices they are familiar with to deploy in a new setting, such as men leveraging skills from work to provide care as a son-in-law; or maintaining the purpose but changing the form of the practice, such as grandfathers providing financial support to married daughters; as well as men privileging ongoing rather than one-off practices as these necessarily creates patterns over time, which is the case for several aspects of additional help, from helping with garbage to taking children to and from lessons. Yet, these aspects of persistence should be recognised as much as a potential constraint as an enabler of change. For instance, the familiarity of a practice supports a man also providing care to parents-in-law and the repeatability of the additional help for children may provide fathers a base of interactions upon which to develop intimacy. Men’s desire for elements of continuity in their manhood needs to be placed in the broader context of men’s family relations.

To reconcile their aims and desires, men’s negotiation and coordination with family members affects the practices they undertake. Thus, such practices sustain, challenge and renew men’s sense of masculinity, which leads to a reconstruction of manhood. The meanings and elements of masculinity differ for each relation across the extended family. Thus, the evolution of masculinities in the family is founded on men’s relations in the extended family. In turn, such familial relations enable men to achieve their well-being in the family, which is increasingly important for them.
6.3. Future Research

My findings point to several potential avenues for further research that reflect men’s family relations and issues of concern to families. One such issue is the long-term care of elderly family members, as the importance of male family caregivers is expected to increase in Japan. In particular, the gap between the needs of the elderly and the supply of formal institutionalised care is substantial, which makes the provision of care in the home critical. Such issues include men’s work and care balance,\(^{41}\) men in the ‘sandwich generation’ taking care of parents and children,\(^{42}\) never-married men caring for their parents,\(^{43}\) and men’s sibling relationships in care.\(^{44}\) In particular, as indicated in this dissertation, pressure on male carers is expected to increase as a result of demographic trends, family relationships and changes in social expectations and gender roles. To avoid the necessity of family carers giving up employment due to care commitments, the Japanese government has launched a large-scale programme ‘to reduce nursing care leave to zero (Kaigo rishoku zero)’ by 2020. The program emphasises ‘technologized care,’ and includes subsidies for ‘care robots’ (MHLW 2015c). In conjunction with the plan, major private firms such as Panasonic are developing related products and services, such as ICT-enabled ‘smart housing’ for inter-generational families including the elderly.

To better understand elderly care, it will be important to examine how working middle-aged male family carers adopt (or abandon) these novel care technologies. Given men’s experience of technology at work and the association of technology with notions of masculinity, usage of these new forms of care could mitigate the categorical sense of disconnect they might feel providing unfamiliar care that has traditionally been a feminine role. Observing how male family caregivers are situated in wider family contexts, how men today perceive their roles as carers in increasingly diverse ‘families,’ and how they balance care, work and their own

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\(^{41}\) With working-age men increasingly drawn into relations of care, tensions arise within their working lives. One report finds that 40.1 percent of male family carers work, of whom 19.7 percent are managers (Matsuura 2013), which suggests risks of work-related stress for carers.

\(^{42}\) Particular pressure from care applies to the middle-aged ‘sandwich generation.’ On top of work pressures, owing in part to demographic factors, such as that the average age of women at the birth of a first child has risen to just over 29 (OECD 2016), men are more likely to face an increased likelihood of concurrent child and elderly care (‘double-care’) (cf. Cabinet Office 2016).

\(^{43}\) There is a growing proportion of never-married men, who do not have a spouse with whom to share the provision of care to elderly parents. The proportion of the male population that has never-married increased from 4.3 percent in 1985 to 20.1 percent in 2010, and is expected to reach 29 percent in 2035 (MHLW 2014).

\(^{44}\) Although an important family relation implicated in elderly care is that of siblings, in general adult sibling relationships are relatively understudied in the Japanese context. This absence in part reflects the predominance of research focused on or inspired by the ie household system, which privileged hierarchical relations. However, with extended family relations being re-shaped, there is potential to better understand sibling relation dynamics, which is especially welcome given their likely implications in the provision of care for children and the elderly.
subjective well-being will be important issues to research in order to enhance understanding of their needs and experience, and their life given the current social situations.

Another major avenue of research suggested by the dissertation is a focus on the fundamentally novel aspect for Japanese families of the increased prevalence of the relationship between men and their parents-in-law. Given the novelty of this relation, study of the transformation of this relation over time will be of particular relevance. A vital question is how the son-in-law relation changes as men transition into married life, children are born, and parents-in-law develop the need for care. One important aspect for investigation into the course of these changes is the extent to which the son-in-law relation has transitioned to the novel relational forms emerging today. This has broader implications for family in Japan, as my evidence points to the fundamental shift from a vertically-dominated set of family relations to a more horizontal, fluid set of relations across the extended family. This would be of wider relevance in response to the broad social changes underway as I find men are reconstructing their family relations across the extended family, selectively seeking intimacy and engaging in additional help, so as to attain their well-being.
**Appendix: Profile of Formal Interviewees**

The table includes all informants with whom I had a formal interview, a narrative interview usually lasting two to four hours in length. The informants cited in the main text are drawn from those included in the table. Other informants not included in the table are those with whom I had shorter or more casual interactions and discussions.

| Pseudonym | Gender (*) | Age (**) | Marriage & Children (age) (**) | Siblings/Grandchildren as relevant (*** | Work | Other comments (****)
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hayato</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughter (5) and son (11)</td>
<td>City hall employee</td>
<td>Met at a children’s cooking class, and interviewed at a children’s event. His family lives with his widowed mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hideki</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two children (4 and 8)</td>
<td>Elder sister (50)</td>
<td>Living in Kobe city hour and half away by car. Introduced by Sayuri, and interviewed at a restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidetoshi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Two daughters (24 and 31) and son (29)</td>
<td>Three grandchildren (5, 8, and 9)</td>
<td>Introduced by Tetsuya, and interviewed at the office of T-Plus Family Support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroshi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (35) and daughter (37)</td>
<td>Four grandchildren (7, 9, 11, and 13)</td>
<td>Husband of Masae. Introduced by Tetsuya, and interviewed at his house with his wife. Living with his son’s family, and five minutes’ drive from his daughter’s house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katsu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two sons (37 and 40)</td>
<td>Three sisters (68, 71 and 77)</td>
<td>Introduced by my acquaintance, and interviewed at his house with his wife Chie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughter (5) and son (7)</td>
<td>Manager at restaurant</td>
<td>Kumi’s husband. Met through his and my children, and interviewed at a stream while the children were playing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazuhiko</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three children (8, 9, and 12)</td>
<td>A garage mechanic (own business)</td>
<td>Introduced by Tetsuya, and interviewed at his office during working hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>How Met</td>
<td>Interview Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kazuya</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughter (3)</td>
<td>Working for the municipal tax authority</td>
<td>Met at a summer camp, and interviewed at a restaurant another day. His wife works five days per week as part-time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughters (10 and 13)</td>
<td>Elder sister</td>
<td>Working for a local government office</td>
<td>Met at weekly calligraphy lessons, and interviewed at a café, while he waited for his daughter doing her ballet lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masao</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (20) and daughters (24 and 25)</td>
<td>Elder sister (60)</td>
<td>Employee for a company</td>
<td>Kanae’s husband. Met through Kanae, and interviewed at his house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minoru</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two daughters and a son</td>
<td>Younger sister (53)</td>
<td>Full-time caregiver</td>
<td>Introduced by a care manager of the city hall, and interviewed at his house where he lives with his wife, son, his mother and father-in-law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitsuhiro</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (33) and daughter (36)</td>
<td>Worked for an accounting firm and city hall.</td>
<td>Father of Mari and father-in-law of Taku. Introduced by Mari, and interviewed at his son’s office.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naoki</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Sons (6 months and 5) and daughter (4)</td>
<td>Younger brothers (30 and 37)</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Met through his wife Mami, and interviewed at his house at the weekend. He moved to within walking distance of his mother-in-law’s house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shigeru</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two daughters (33 and 36)</td>
<td>Elder sister living in Singapore</td>
<td>Former elementary school teacher</td>
<td>Emiko’s husband. Met through Emiko, and interviewed at his house where he lives with Emiko and his mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinji</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughter (40)</td>
<td>Grandson (10)</td>
<td>Former high school teacher</td>
<td>Introduced by Tetsuya, and interviewed at his atelier. Daughter’s family living fifteen minutes’ walk away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suguru</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two children (17 and 23)</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Introduced by Tetsuya, and interviewed at his company office during weekend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>How Met</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susumu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughter (35)</td>
<td>Grandchildren (8, 10, and 17)</td>
<td>Worked for car company Met at a symposium, and interviewed at the site of the symposium. His single daughter lives ten minutes away by ear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadashi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>The principal of a junior high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiki</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (8 months) and daughters (10 and 16)</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Met at a child cooking class, and interviewed at the site of the lesson. Living in the same building as his wife’s parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taku</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three children (3, 5, and 9)</td>
<td>Employee for an architecture firm</td>
<td>Husband of Mari and son-in-law of Mitsuhiro. Introduced by Mari, and interviewed at his house during a weekend. His mother lives by herself two hours away from him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetsuya</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>Former company employee</td>
<td>Staff for a NPO, T-Plus Family Support, and interviewed at its office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshihiko</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Sons (19 and 23) and daughter (28)</td>
<td>Sister (60) and brother (64)</td>
<td>Company employee Introduced by Tetsuya, and interviewed at his house where he lives with his wife and her frail parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshiyuki</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farming business</td>
<td>Single. Living with his mother. Introduced by one of my friends, and interviewed at his office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukio</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (23)</td>
<td>Sisters (61 and 63)</td>
<td>Carpenter Met through his wife Satoko, and interviewed at his mother-in-law’s house with Satoko.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three daughters in their 30’s and 40’s</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Her husband is adopted son (mukoyōshi) to succeed her kimono family business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two sons (37 and 40)</td>
<td>Two brothers and a sister</td>
<td>Not working Katsu’s wife and Shizue’s daughter-in-law. Introduced by my acquaintance, and interviewed at her house with her husband Katsu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>How Met</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chizuko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>Elder brother</td>
<td>Juvenile probation officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two daughters (33 and 36)</td>
<td>Two brothers (55 and 63)</td>
<td>Working for a café as part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eriko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Two children (3 and 6)</td>
<td>Younger brother</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etsuko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three sons (24, 30, and 35)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Worked as part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fumiyo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (12)</td>
<td>Elder brother (56)</td>
<td>Operator as full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisami</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (38) and daughter (40)</td>
<td>Younger brother (64)</td>
<td>Worked as a district welfare commissioner (minseiiin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanae</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (20) and two daughters (24 and 25)</td>
<td>Younger brother (48)</td>
<td>A PC instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elder brother, sister, and younger brother</td>
<td>Taxi driver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughter (5) and son (7)</td>
<td>Company employee</td>
<td>Wife of Kazu. Met at school events, and interviewed at the school playground. Moved to her parents’ house: living separately from her husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyōko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughter (32) and son (41)</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>Mother of Mami and mother-in-law of Naoki. Initially met at a child facility and interviewed at the site, and met on several other occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mami</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Sons (6 months and 5), daughter (4)</td>
<td>Brother (41)</td>
<td>Company employee (full-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mari</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughters (3 and 9), and son (5)</td>
<td>Brother (33)</td>
<td>Kindergarten teacher (full-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masae</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (35) and daughter (37)</td>
<td>Four grandchildren (7, 9, 11, and 13)</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megumi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Three children (3, 5 and 7)</td>
<td>Younger brother</td>
<td>Part-time cooking teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elder brother, sister, and younger brother</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>Elder sister of Kimiko. Introduced by a day care centre where her mother regularly goes, and interviewed at a restaurant in Hōjō. She lives in Kyoto, an hour-and-a-half from Hōjō.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midori</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elder sister</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>Introduced by Megumi, and interviewed at a playground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Single brother (43)</td>
<td>Company employee: full-time</td>
<td>Introduced by one of my friends in the city, and interviewed at my friend’s office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobuko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Daughters (29 and 34) and son (31)</td>
<td>Younger sister and brother (53)</td>
<td>Worked for an agricultural cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satoko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Sister (63) Elementary school teacher</td>
<td>Yukio’s wife. Met through my friend, and interviewed at her mother’s house with Yukio. She lives two hours away from her mother.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shizue</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Three daughters (68, 71 and 77) and son (73)</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Mother of Katsu and mother-in-law of Chie. Met through Katsu, and interviewed at her house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Two married sons (34 and 36) Younger sister</td>
<td>Instructor for art craft as part-time</td>
<td>Introduced by one of my neighbours, and interviewed at her house where she lives with her younger son’s family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamae</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (2) Brother (28)</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>Introduced by Mitsuko, and interviewed at a child-care centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tami</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Daughters (60 and 64) and son (57)</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Living alone. Climbed the Himalayas at age 76. Met at a day care centre, and interviewed at the day care centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomoko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Sons (19 and 23) and daughter (28) Deceased brother and sister</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Met through her husband Toshihiko, and interviewed at her house, during a weekday evening, where she lives with her husband and her parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toshiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Son (35) and twins (37)</td>
<td>Worked for a local council social welfare</td>
<td>Introduced by a care manager of the city hall, and interviewed at her house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasuko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Daughters (43 and 45)</td>
<td>Work for a local community as part-time</td>
<td>Introduced by a care manager of the city hall, and interviewed at her house where she lives with her elderly mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoshie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Daughters (59 and 63) and son (62) Grandson (23)</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>Satoko’s mother. Met through Satoko, and interviewed at her house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yumiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>No sibling</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsutomu</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manager of a day care centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitsuko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid-40s</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Director at Centre for Childrearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head of Welfare Department at the city hall (at the time of my fieldwork)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayuri</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Director of T-Plus Family Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**

(*) M: Male  
(*) F: Female  
(**): At the time of the first interview.  
(***): The number and age of siblings or grandchildren are indicated where as relevant.  
(****): Information of how and where I met my informants for my formal interviews, and other information as relevant.
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