15th Workshop  
European Research Network on Transition in Youth  
Ghent 5-8 September 2007

Draft Paper

After “The Lost Decade”:
Changing Pattern of Transition to Adulthood in Japan since 1990s

Mami IWAKAMI  
University of the Sacred Heart Tokyo

Contact
Mami IWAKAMI  
University of the Sacred Heart Tokyo  
Faculty of History and Social Sciences  
4-3-1 Hiro-o Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8939  
JAPAN  
TEL: +81 (0)3 3407 5811  
FAX: +81 (0)3 3404 5833  
E-mail: iwakami@u-sacred-heart.ac.jp
I. Japan’s ‘Lost Decade’: Introduction

In the 1990s, Japan experienced long drawn-out economic stagnation combined with a loss of direction in national politics, with the result that the opportunities for much-needed social reform were lost to the nation. The decade has been aptly referred to as ‘The Lost Decade (Kikkawa et.al: 2005)’.

The unprecedented economic growth in Japan that began in the 1960s came to a halt at the oil crisis in 1973. Whilst it slowed down considerably thereafter, the economy in Japan still maintained relatively high growth compared with that of the United States and most European countries throughout the 1980s. By the end of the 1990s however, this was no longer the case. Looking back further, with the exception of the few years immediately after the end of the Second World War, the economy in Japan had been growing steadily for over three quarters of a century since the 1910s. The floundering economy in the 1990s put an end to the country’s long, continuous upward move. From this aspect, the ‘lost decade’ has been seen by some critics to have considerable historical significance.

One of those critics, Kikkawa (2005) argues that the various structural changes that had been accumulated in Japan for some while emerged as one social phenomena in the 1990s. He points out five aspects that are characteristic of the decade: the country’s financial system became unstable to the extent that the situation was often referred to as Heisei* Financial Panic, the traditional employment system became ineffective, the global pattern in the share of manufacturing industries changed resulting in widespread deindustrialisation, the service industry underwent rapid development; and the fall in birth rate and an ageing society had become undisputable reality (Kikkawa: ibid.).

* The current imperial era. Heisei began in 1989

The notion of the 1990s as a ‘lost decade’ was originally formulated in the fields of politics and economics but it is an appropriate description of the decade in which Japan experienced profound changes in the social system. The consequence of this was the loss of traditional values not only in politics and the economy but also in society as a whole. However, it was not until the 2000s that the actual changes began to be felt. As the lost decade closed, Koizumi became Prime Minister in 2001, implementing a number of political and social reforms toward ‘deregulation’ including privatisation of the post office service. Osawa (2006) argues that these reforms accelerated the practice
of non-regular employment and kept the cost of labour down, with the result that jobs were no longer as well protected as they had been and the gap between the rich and the poor became wider.

Based on the observations above, this paper examines how these political and economic factors in the 1990s have since affected the process of transition to adulthood. It does so by focusing on education, employment, family, and the findings from the cohort study we have been conducting.

II. Changes in social environment and the effects on young people: from a census result

Changes in employment system

One of the most significant steps in the process of transition to adulthood is to find a job in order to become independent.

Changes in the employment system have been one of the most extensively discussed aspects concerning the ‘lost decade’. There are two major issues in the discussion: that the traditional method of transition from school to employment was no longer applicable, and that the employment forms diversified.

Japan has maintained a unique employment system known to the world as the ‘Japanese System’. It must be noted however, that this system applied almost exclusively to large corporations, male professionals and male white-collar workers. The tradition was established during the post-war boom and has three major characteristics: firstly, it is life-long employment; secondly, it is a seniority-based pay system, and thirdly, the job training is exclusively OJT (on-the-job training). These three systems are strongly inter-supportive and inter-effective (Komine: 2006). The typical life-course pattern of men was based on this traditional employment pattern: go straight from school or university into a company and stay there until they reach retirement.

The effect of the destabilised labour market was most seriously felt amongst young people. In general, the unemployment rate stayed around 2% from the economic boom in the 70s up to the early 90s. It began to rise in the mid-90s and then rose sharply in 1997 and 1998, which greatly reduced the rate of job availability (Figure 1a and 1b). The effect was particularly extensive in the younger labour force of 15- to 24-year-olds.
In this age group, the unemployment rate between 1999 and 2003 exceeded 10% for men and 8% for women (Figure 2). Unlike other developed countries where a high unemployment rate was prevalent, Japan seemed to be immune from the problem in general and unemployment of new graduates in particular was practically unknown, until 1997 when a number of major banks went bankrupt one after another. Since then, the employment pattern in Japan has gone through a profound change. Despite the bursting of the bubble, the traditional pattern (i.e. direct transfer from education to employment) still survived up to the mid 1990s, albeit only just. This was because schools continued to function as placement agencies for their pupils, and universities maintained close relationship with companies through their own graduates who acted as go-betweens. In short, the role of employment agency had always been part of education institutions in Japan, which was one of the reasons why the labour market in Japan remained stable for so long.

But even this 25-year-old system in which new graduates and high school-leavers were automatically recruited, could not escape the impact of the ‘lost decade’. Small to medium-sized companies went bankrupt first, followed by major corporate companies. This led to a significant reduction in the annual intake of new recruits, with some opportunities vanishing entirely. In effect, this was the end of the school/university based recruitment system.

In fact, a survey carried out by a major private research company shows that in 1990, the ratio of job availability and the number of new graduates looking for jobs was 1.4, but since 1993, the figure has fallen to less than 1 and in 1999, it further fell to 0.48. The research shows that until 2006 when the figure rose back to 1.06, the ratio stayed below 1 between 1993 and 2005, which indicates that for over ten years companies were extremely restrained in their recruitment of new graduates. The situation was particularly acute in the provinces where the regional labour market had already been badly affected by global deindustrialisation. In some of the worst hit regions, there were

---

1 In the last two years of their undergraduate studies, students are required to take a group tutorial known as zemi (seminar). As the tutor and the members of the group stay the same for the two years, a zemi usually develops a group identity which often extends to the graduates who were the previous members of the same tutor’s zemi, thus the graduates remain in close contact with the university. Personal recommendation through the zemi was one of the most important references for job-seeking student.

2 Works Institute in Tokyo
Fig. 1a  Ratio of Unemployment Rate (seasonally adjusted)

Data: MHLW, "Report on Employment Service"
Note: Shaded areas indicate periods of recession.

Fig. 1b  Ratio of Job Openings to Job Applicants (seasonally adjusted)

Data: MHLW, "Report on Employment Service"
Note: Shaded areas indicate periods of recession.
no jobs available for school leavers and new graduates at all. In addition to this regional
difference, a number of distinct inequalities began to appear amongst young people,
which have now been recognised as serious social issues.
‘Freeters’ and non-regular employment

The influence of the destabilise employment situation can be seen most clearly in how forms of employment have diversified (Figure 3). Traditionally, companies in Japan operate a life-long employment policy in which, once employed, the employees are guaranteed full-time jobs until they reach retirement age: the status referred to as normal or regular employment. Part-time employment (hourly pay and limited hours) was established as a form of employment in the 1980s exclusively for housewives and was regarded insignificant in the mainstream labour market. It is worth noting that the systems of life-long employment and seniority-based promotion/payment, which were established during the 1960s and 1970s, were intended for male school leavers or graduates who went straight into employment from their education. It can be said, therefore, that these systems and the male breadwinner model are two sides of the same coin.

Fig.3  Proportion of Employed by Employment Status

Data: Statistics Bureau, "Report on Labor Force"
Source: MHLW, “White paper on labor Economy 2006”

In the 1990s, the prolonged economic slump forced companies to reduce their intake of new recruitment. As if to compensate for the situation, a number of new employment forms emerged: in addition to the already existing part-time and temporary work, companies now used ‘commissioned’, ‘agency’ or ‘contract’ workers. Whilst some
critics welcome this new diversity as a positive development referring to the situation in Holland, these new statuses are categorised as ‘non-regular’ and discriminated against in many ways in comparison to ‘regular’ employment. One of these non-regular statuses of employment is known as freeters, the term used specifically to describe those who are age between 15 and 34 and in temporary employment.\footnote{Freeter is defined by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare as those who are aged between 15 and 34 and who are (1) in employment but are specified as part-time or temporary and who have been working more than a year but less than five years (men) and those who are unmarried and work regularly (women), (2) not in employment or in education and are not working at home, and who are seeking part-time or temporary work. The definition by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication is those who are aged between 15 and 34 and who are not currently in education (men) and who are currently not in education and unmarried (women) and those: (1) who are carrying out either part-time or temporary work, (2) who are unemployed and seeking work in the form of part-time or temporary jobs, or (3) ‘others’ who are currently not in labour market and seeking work in the form of either part-time or temporary jobs, and who are not working at home, nor in education and are not currently expecting to start a job.}

In the 1980s, in the midst of the bubble economy when there were more jobs than job-seekers and general optimism was prevalent, there emerged a group of people who, in the name of ‘searching for an ideal job’, chose not to become employed but only worked temporary and intermittently. They became known as freeters (free arbeiters). In the 80s, freeters were associated with the idea of freedom: young idealists or dreamers who chose not to become part of corporations but rather keep on searching for their ‘vocation for life’. At about the same time, it became increasingly popular amongst young people to go to vocational training school instead of going straight into employment in order to gain qualifications in preparation for better careers in the future. These phenomena indicate that in the atmosphere of prosperity, ‘purposeful detours’ became acceptable as a way of life for young people.

In the recession in the 1990s, however, jobs became scarce and direct transition from education to employment became increasingly difficult. Meanwhile, the number of freeters was doubled during the ‘lost decade’ reaching 2.17 million, by which time the term became something quite different: it now meant those who were likely to become unemployed as well as those who were already jobless (Figure 4). The pattern of employment amongst school leavers/graduates had also changed: amongst them, the rate of full-time employment fell whereas that of part-time and temporary work rose considerably between 1992 and 2002 (Figure 5). In 1992, 88.6% of new graduates were in full-time employment, which fell to 66.7% in 2002. In contrast, those who were in part-time or temporary employment trebled from 5.7% to 19.4%. The changes were...
even more pronounced amongst school-leavers: 64.8% in 1992 fell to 40.4% in 2002, and part-time/temporary work rose from 8.5% to 25.9%. An additional characteristic in

Fig.4  Trend in The Number of “Freeters”

Unit: ten thousands

Data: Statistics Bureau, "Report on Labor Force"
Source: MHLW, “White paper on labor Economy 2006”

school-leavers was that the unemployment rate (the data may include non-job seekers and those out of work) in 2002 was 32.0% which was almost one third of the entire group.

Unemployment can be divided into two categories: the state in which the person is seeking employment (out of work) and that in which the person is not seeking employment. It is the latter that has become a social issue. This status appeared to be similar to what is known as NEET in Britain, although there are some considerable differences. Kosugi (2005) points out that NEET in Britain is one of the aspects of the country’s extensive vocational education and training policies whereas there have no such policies for young people in Japan. Moreover, the difference in the proportion of children staying on in education after compulsory education is significant between the two countries. On this basis, Kosugi defines the Japanese NEET as ’15-34-year-olds who are not in the labour market (i.e. not in employment and not seeking for work) and who are not in education or working at home’ (ibid:6).
Another aspect of employment that has been drawing attention lately is the fact that increasing number of new recruits are leaving their jobs within three years of starting the job. The tradition of life-long employment means workers are expected to stay in the same company throughout their working life (especially for men): changing jobs is not only ineffective but also positively works against promotion. Yet the number of people who change jobs has been increasing since the 1990s and today, 50% of school-leavers and 30% of new graduates leave their first employment within three years. This suggests that ideas about employment are changing profoundly amongst young people (Figure 6).
Another aspect that may be worth noting is the fact that the diversified or ‘non-regular’ employment such as agent, contract and commissioned work has been spreading rapidly amongst women. Recognising the growing workforce amongst women, the government implemented a policy to increase non-regular employment, in principle, supporting women by offering flexible working conditions. However, since the traditional male breadwinner model remained as the principle employment policy, the new policies effectively narrowed the labour market for regular employment. Moreover, it offered companies the opportunity to take advantage of the newly created ‘throw-away’ labour force. These inadequate policies were one of the major factors behind the explosion of youth problems with which Japan found itself confronted in the early 2000s.

The Ice Age Generation

The young people who looked for jobs between 1992 and 2002 are know as the Ice Age Generation. In the 1990s, companies began to reduce new recruitment in the face of the collapsed bubble economy, which coincided with the time when the second baby-boomers (the cohort born in 1972-1974)\(^4\) graduated and looked for jobs. The

---

\(^4\) The cohort born in 1972-4 is generally thought to have the largest number of the second baby-boomers. However, some researchers argue that the children of the first baby-boomers were actually born until as
result was unprecedented competition in the job market. The severity of the situation was such that a recruitment journal called it the ‘Job-seekers’ Ice Age (Shushoku Journal: November 1992)’. The problem was exacerbated in 1997 when number of major financial institutions collapsed one after another. The situation showed signs of recovery when companies began recruiting again in anticipation of mass retirement in 2007 when the first baby-boomers (the cohort born in 1947-49) would reach retirement age.

The people in the Ice Age Generation are likely to become trapped in jobless state. Although the relationship between school/university and companies has become less dependable, the employers still prefer their new recruits straight from education. This implies that those who do not get on the expected route will find it extremely difficult to find employment later unless they are skilled or specialised. Once a young person becomes a freeter, there is little chance of his/her finding regular employment.

Jobless young people (NEET) began to appear in the 1990s and the number rose significantly in the 2000s. The figure reached 640,000 in 2003 and the rise was particularly sharp in the relatively high age group of 25 to 34. Some of this group are thought to be those who became freeters in the 90s and later turned jobless, while others had never had a job. They are the generation who ‘lost out’ in the changing society, hence the name given to them by the media: the ‘lost generation’. Naming aside, it is generally agreed amongst researchers that the changes begun in the 1990s continued into the 2000s creating widespread poverty amongst young people and polarising them in many aspects. The consequence is that for those who are ‘left behind’, the chance of finding regular employment has become practically non-existent.

**Staying Unmarried**

Another change in the process of transition to adulthood is the fact that more young people are staying unmarried for longer. It can be said that marriage is simply a matter of lifestyle today, and the idea that marriage is an important stepping-stone to adulthood as well as a proof of one’s maturity may be a thing of the past. Nevertheless, marriage or establishing a committed relationship with a partner is still undoubtedly one of the most significant life events. Moreover, the number of children born outside marriage is extremely low in Japan, which indicates that marriage is still regarded as a prerequisite to having children. As the norm is still largely observed, the falling marriage rate means late as 1983.
a fall in birth rate. This in turn will eventually lead to be advanced an increasing ageing society.

As in many countries in the West, the marriage rate has been steadily falling in Japan since the 1980s. This is particularly noticeable in the last 15 years, in the age groups of 25 to 29 in women and 30 to 34 in men (Figure 7). On the one hand, this is a new trend resulting from cultural factors such as changing expectations for and perceptions of marriage, appearance of new role models and individualisation. On the other hand, there are those to whom marriage is not an option due to their poor prospects in finding secure employment and thus enable them to develop good careers. In fact, even today, Japanese women prioritise financial stability and a job with good prospect as the necessary qualities in their prospective husbands. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that men who are freeters or jobless find themselves at the bottom of the marriage market. Women who wish to continue working when they are married also find insecure employment status an obstacle to marriage.

Fig. 7 Trend in The Rate of those who Remain Unmarried by Gender and Age Class (Aged 25-39)

Data: Statistics Bureau, "National Census"
Table 1  Trend in The Proportion of Unmarried Living with Parents by Gender and Age Class(Aged 18-34)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19 years</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19 years</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Very few young Japanese live together without getting married: amongst unmarried men and women, more than 90% have no experience of living with a partner. In contrast, a large number of unmarried people are living with their parents. Whilst some critics argue that living with parents is discouraging young people from getting married, the annual statistics show that, apart from a few minor changes, the number of people living with their parents has not changed in any significant way in the last 25 years. Of those who are aged between 18 and 34 and unmarried, almost 70% of men and 80% of women live with their parents. The figures for women are constantly higher but age seems to have no significant effect (Table 1).

III. Summary of Project Result
The aim of the project is to find out what effects the trend that began in the 1990s and spread nationwide has had on young people in cities. The surveys were carried out in two locations: in a suburb of Tokyo and one of the major regional cities and at two time-points: 1991/1992 and 2001/2002.

Aim and methods
The data used in this paper is based on the findings in Relationship with Parents in Adolescence (re-titled in 2001 as The Lifestyle of Young People and Their Relationship with Their Parents). The research had two subjects groups: those in their 20s and unmarried, and those in their 50s. This was a series of projects first carried out by the Institute for Research on Household Economy in 1991 and 1992, and then supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology for four years from 2001. The overall theme of the research was Post Adolescent and was jointly represented by Mami Iwakami (Professor at the University of Sacred Heart Tokyo) and Michiko
Miyamoto (Professor at the University of the Air).

The original aim of the present project was to find out about young people’s relationships with their parents and financial conditions at the time of transition to adulthood. The result showed that one of the major decisive factors at the time was time-specific in nature, namely the bubble economy. Based on this observation, we decided to carry out a new survey in the same locations and on the same age group ten years after completing the original project. The aim of the second survey was to identify time-specific factors by using the same survey method. There is a unique aspect to the new survey: the subjects in their 20s in the 2001-02 surveys were born in 1972-81, and the subjects in their 50s were born in 1944-1953, which implies that the latter are the parent generation of the former (the former including the ‘lost generation’ and the second baby-boomers). This makes these two cohorts symbolic of the social changes that emerged in Japan in the 1990s.

The two locations selected for the surveys are Fuchu (a town in the suburb of Tokyo) and Matsumoto (a provincial city). They both have the population of approximately 200,000, and both have a predominantly middle-class core population with a diverse but evenly mixed range of social and economic bands. Matsumoto is a prominent and historic city located to the north of Tokyo. The region in which Matsumoto is located (Kita-Kanto) remained relatively unaffected by the recession in the 90s: jobs were still available and the unemployment rate was low.

The survey subjects were randomly selected from the city’s register. Structural questionnaires identical to those used in the 91/92 survey (with a few minor changes) were either delivered by hand or posted to the subjects, and a number of case studies using interviews were carried out after the quantitative survey was completed at each time point.

**From education to employment**

The most salient change at the two time points is that of the status of employment. In 1991 in Fuchu, 82.6% of men and 77.0% of women were in regular employment but in 2002 the figures were 62.1% and 58.1% respectively, whereas non-regular employment i.e. commission, agent and temporary work increased. The rate of those who were not working increased marginally from 2.1% to 4.0% (men and women). The trend is similar in Matsumoto where regular employment was 81.3% for men and 91.0% for
Fig. 8 ‘From Education to Employment’: Time Span by Education Level, Gender and Region

Source: Iwakami, 2005
women in 1991 but fell to 69.0% and 65.3% respectively in 2002, with non-regular employment increasing here too. In Matsumoto in 1992, the rate of those who were out of work was nil (men and women) but in 2002, 5.1% were found to be within this category (4.2% for men and 6.0% for women). This suggests that, despite the fact that Matsumoto was relatively unaffected, the impact of recession was felt more strongly in provincial cities than around the capital.

The survey also looked at the time span between the subjects finishing education and becoming employed. In 2001/02, the gap was somewhat longer than expected in the case of school-leavers, but the transition was smooth for those who left technical or training colleges (Figure 8). This was the same in both locations and the difference between men and women was insignificant. In a society in which going into employment straight from education has been an undisputed norm, the fact that less than 80% are making the expected transition is a clear indication that the tradition is disappearing.

**Financial independence**

The subjects were asked whether they were financially independent. In 2001 in Fuchu, 49.7% of men and 50.4% of women answered ‘Yes’. The figures were slightly higher in Matsumoto: 62.4% of men and 57.4% of women answered ‘Yes’. Back in 1991/92, the Yes answer was 51.1% amongst men and 42.4% amongst women in Fuchu (1991) and 49.4% amongst men and 45.5% amongst women in Matsumoto (1992). The overall figures were lower 10 years ago but roughly half of the subjects in their 20s and unmarried answered that they were financially independent (subjective self-assessment). Although the reason why more people are ‘independent’ in 2001/02 cannot be specified here, it can be speculated that the subjects are more aware of their parents’ financial hardship and are reluctant to admit (self-assessment) that they are dependent.

Table 2 shows how various factors determine the subjects’ consciousness of being independent. The data was analysed using binary logistic (independent = 1, dependent = 0). For both men and women at both time-points, the most salient influence is their employment status: the odds ratio is significantly higher in the subjects who are in regular employment. Living with parents is another determinant: subjects who are living with their parents are less financially independent. Although living with parents is shown in this analysis to be a negative factor in young people’s financial independence, when we consider the high level of house prices, living with parents offers security to
those who are on a low income and enables those who are on a reasonable income to save for the future. From this perspective, living with parents can be seen as a family strategy to help young people manage their transition to independence (Miyamoto: 2004). Living with parents is clearly one of the determinants where financial independence is concerned but its true implications for the pattern of transition to adulthood will have to be left to further studies.

Table 2 Logistic Analysis of Financial Independence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fuchu (Metropolitan Area)</th>
<th>Matsumoto (Provincial City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Exp (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>1.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of brothers and sisters</td>
<td>0.404</td>
<td>1.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Reference: University and graduated school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. high school and high school</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>1.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>1.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. college and advanced technical school</td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td>1.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Status (Reference: Student and out of work)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>3.859</td>
<td>1.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>2.919</td>
<td>18.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>1.803</td>
<td>6.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of Marriage partner (dummy)</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>1.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with parents (dummy)</td>
<td>-1.245</td>
<td>0.288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Condition of parents +</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>1.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with father++</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>0.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with mother++</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>1.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan to Live together with Aging parents+++</td>
<td>0.519</td>
<td>1.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for parent(s)+++</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>1.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Role of The first born son+++</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td>0.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of labor by gender role+++</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>1.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constant</td>
<td>-9.367</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>(271)</th>
<th>(254)</th>
<th>(185)</th>
<th>(172)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$</td>
<td>174.970</td>
<td>178.460</td>
<td>97.681</td>
<td>64.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P &lt;</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$-2$ loglikelihood</td>
<td>199.648</td>
<td>173.265</td>
<td>152.122</td>
<td>171.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox &amp; Snell R$^2$</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.410</td>
<td>0.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R$^2$</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.554</td>
<td>0.421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * P < .05  ** P < .01  *** P < .001
++ the better is the higher score (1 to 5)
++ the worse is the higher score (1 to 4)
+++ the more disagreement is the higher score (1 to 4)

Source: Iwakami, 2005
The norms of parent-child relationships
How the norms and perceptions concerning parent-child relationship changed in the ten years were also analysed (Figure 9). The Figure shows how the relationship is perceived by the subjects in their 20s and in their 50s in the two locations. The graph shows the percentage of ‘Yes’ answers to the following questions: (Do you think) when parents are old, their children should support them financially; when parents become in need of care, the children should look after them; it will be better for parents when they are old to live with one of their married children; once the children are grown up they should leave home irrespective of whether they are married or not (the ‘No’ answers are also shown for this item); the eldest son has a special responsibility, and sons and daughters have different responsibility for the parents.

From the figure, it can be concluded that in the ten years between 1991/92 and 2001/02, the expectations that grown-up children should live with their parents became less influential in both age groups. This suggests that the reason why a large number of unmarried subjects are still living with their parents is not simply because they are observing the norms. Rather, it can be speculated that it was due to the financial support parents were able to offer them during the hardship in 1990s. Their parents belong to the generation who worked in the seniority payment system and since they were reaching the top payment scale, financially supporting children was not necessarily a burden.

It is interesting to note that there is a distinct change in the opinions about caring for elderly parents in those who are in their 50s (far fewer answered ‘Yes’ in 2001/02) whereas the changes in those who are in their 20s in both Fuchu and Matsumoto are negligible. Whilst the opinions about norms in parent-child relationships are changing in similar degrees irrespective of age and location, this particular aspect stands out in clear contrast. It is difficult to determine from this survey whether this sense of responsibility for elderly parents comes from the gratitude for the support they received. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out here that the parent-child relationship is one of the major factors that influence the process of transition to adulthood and life beyond.
Fig. 9  Changes in The Attitudes toward Parent-Child Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fuchu (Metropolitan Area): Twenties</th>
<th>Fuchu (Metropolitan Area): Fifties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Support for the aged parent(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Financial Support for the aged parent(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caring for parent(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Caring for parent(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No need to live alone for adult children</strong></td>
<td><strong>No need to live alone for adult children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living together parent(s) and grown-up child</strong></td>
<td><strong>Living together parent(s) and grown-up child</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special role of the first born son</strong></td>
<td><strong>Special role of the first born son</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility of son and daughter</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responsibility of son and daughter</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matsumoto (Provincial City): Twenties</th>
<th>Matsumoto (Provincial City): Fifties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Support for the aged parent(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Financial Support for the aged parent(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caring for parent(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Caring for parent(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No need to live alone for adult children</strong></td>
<td><strong>No need to live alone for adult children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living together parent(s) and grown-up child</strong></td>
<td><strong>Living together parent(s) and grown-up child</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special role of the first born son</strong></td>
<td><strong>Special role of the first born son</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility of son and daughter</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responsibility of son and daughter</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentage of those with answered ‘I totally agree’ and ‘I rather agree’.
Source: Iwakami, 2005
IV. Summary
In the 1990s, Japan fell into a deep recession as a result of the collapse of the bubble economy it had enjoyed in the 1980s. With the advent of globalisation, the long-established employment tradition became ineffective, yet nothing was done to reform the system. The economy became stagnated and the politics directionless. So much so that the decade became known as the ‘lost decade’.

Using the national census and the data collected from our own surveys, we have drawn a number of conclusions about how the ‘lost decade’ has influenced the pattern of transition to adulthood.

(1) The traditional pattern of ‘from education to employment’ has become largely ineffective and both young people and schools/universities are searching for a new model
In Japanese tradition, there were two distinct systems for recruitment: one for school-leavers and the other for graduates. In the late 90s, both systems began to lose their functions. Jobs became scarce, and school-leavers and new graduates remained unemployed, resulting in the collapse of the traditional assumptions that the end of education was synonymous with the beginning of employment. At the same time, employers began to look for applicants with ready-to-use skills rather than those with potential. This in turn, affected the students’ expectation for university: they now expect a more vocationally relevant education.

(2) Forms of employment have diversified but career development is not yet flexible
During the time of economic hardship, employers reduced the number of new recruits with regular/normal status, and instead, began to implement more ‘diverse’ policies. Consequently, more school-leavers and graduates are now employed in commission, agent and temporary work. However, only full-time workers are considered to be in ‘regular’ employment and the rest are categorised as ‘non-regular’. This is one of the factors behind the polarisation of and inequalities for young people. Furthermore, those who chose to be a ‘freeter’ are now facing the reality that their chances of going into full-time employment are effectively non-existent. Diversified job opportunities do not necessarily lead to flexibility in career development.

The rate of non-regular employment is particularly high amongst women. Part-time
work was established in the 1980s as a form of employment for housewives, but has been increasing rapidly amongst unmarried women since the late 90s.

(3) Correlations are found between financial factors and the delaying of marriage, although this is significant only amongst men.
Young people are staying unmarried for longer due to the fact that the prospects of establishing financial stability and developing a career are extremely poor. Some critics argue that inequality in income leads to inequality in marriage opportunities, thus further polarising young people (Yamada: 2004). In fact, the national census shows a significant correlation between the employment / income status, and whether or not they have steady partners.

(4) Living with parents: could it be a joint strategy between parents and children for dealing with the transition to adulthood in a Japanese way?
Financial independence and living with parents correlate in reverse. In other words, the rate of those who achieve financial independence is lower amongst those who are living with their parents than those who are not. It must be noted however, that grown-up children living with their parents are not regarded as undesirable in the Japanese tradition. Therefore, when they do live together, both parents and children are often fairly satisfied with the arrangement. The implication of this fact is that it may not be from financial reasons alone that so many young people are living with their parents. On the other hand, considering the fact that the norms and expectations of family life, especially parent-child relationship, have become less influential, those who live with their parents cannot simply be observing the norms. There are a number of practical problems that might be preventing young people from leaving home: that the cost of renting or buying a house/flat is very high, there is no tradition of sharing a house/flat or living together, and housing policies are generally inadequate. It has been commented that, due to the problems described above, living with parents is a strategy for dealing with the immediate problems. On the other hand, some critics argue that living with parents delays independence. This aspect clearly needs further study.

V. Conclusion
Japan’s experience in the last fifteen years may be almost identical to that of many other developed countries, but in a unique way, Japan could still rely on the life-long employment tradition that safeguarded both employers and employees up to the end of the 1980s. This system, however, became quickly ineffective in the recession in the 90s,
first in the province and amongst the less well-off and then affecting the entire population. Now the way in which young people become employed is very different from the traditional system both in theory and practice. Globalisation has forced Japan to give up its own unique method and young people are expected to step into the competition in a global scale. It can be said that this is the first time Japan has ever had to face many difficult issues concerning ‘transition’ at the same level as that which the West experienced in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

References


Kosugi, R. (2003), Freeter to iu Iki-kata., Keiso Shobo.


Mondai’ *Shakai kagaku Kenkyu (Social Science Japan Journal)* Vol.55 No.2, 5-28, Tokyo Daigaku Shakai-Kagaku Kenkyusho (Institute of Social Science University of Tokyo)


