

Socio-fiscal Policies Research Group

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Before embarking academia, she worked as a broadcaster for TV stations in Japan, including the major national channel NHK based in Tokyo.

Hiroko's research addresses the nexus of family relations, gender and masculinity, and care for young and aged family members. Motivated by gender inequalities, a main focus is on how gender permeates couples' care practices in the family and how men's involvement in care evolves over their life course, from care for children to ageing parents. As the pressures of care for older relatives risk divergent unequal health and care outcomes for family working carers, an important issue is how deploying technologies may reduce such inequalities amongst family carers.



Male Family Careers: Adapting to a New Phenomenon

The world population is ageing for two main reasons. In industrialized countries in particular, increasing longevity and declining fertility rates are rapidly shifting the age distribution of populations toward older age groups. Population ageing has progressed to such an extent that the supply of formal institutionalized care has become insufficient, making home care more and more indispensable. Moreover, the trend towards later parenting often increases the burden on family carers as they can face both child and elderly care at the same time, with such carers referred to as the 'sandwich generation'.

Motivation

Recognizing that research to date has mainly focused on female care givers, the project aims to build knowledge of male family carers.

The objective is to provide a better understanding of men in the sandwich generation, in their 30s through to 50s, specifically of the risks they face in providing care as fathers caring for their children, and at the same time as sons and sons-in-law caring for their aged relatives.

« Demographically speaking, it is impossible that women be the only family care givers anymore. Men are led to contribute now, and so we need a specific analysis of how caregiving impacts them »

A comparative approach

Japan provides an important context in which to understand male family care givers involved with care for aged parents and relatives. For the sandwich generation, however, such pressures for elderly care occur in a family context with also pressures for child care: issues related to care for children and the aged must be recognized as interlinked.

« France's development of family policies, which were an important part of addressing declining fertility »

Drawing lessons from France and Japan

Comparative understanding based on fieldwork in Paris and Tokyo of middle-aged men involved in care for children and aged relatives.

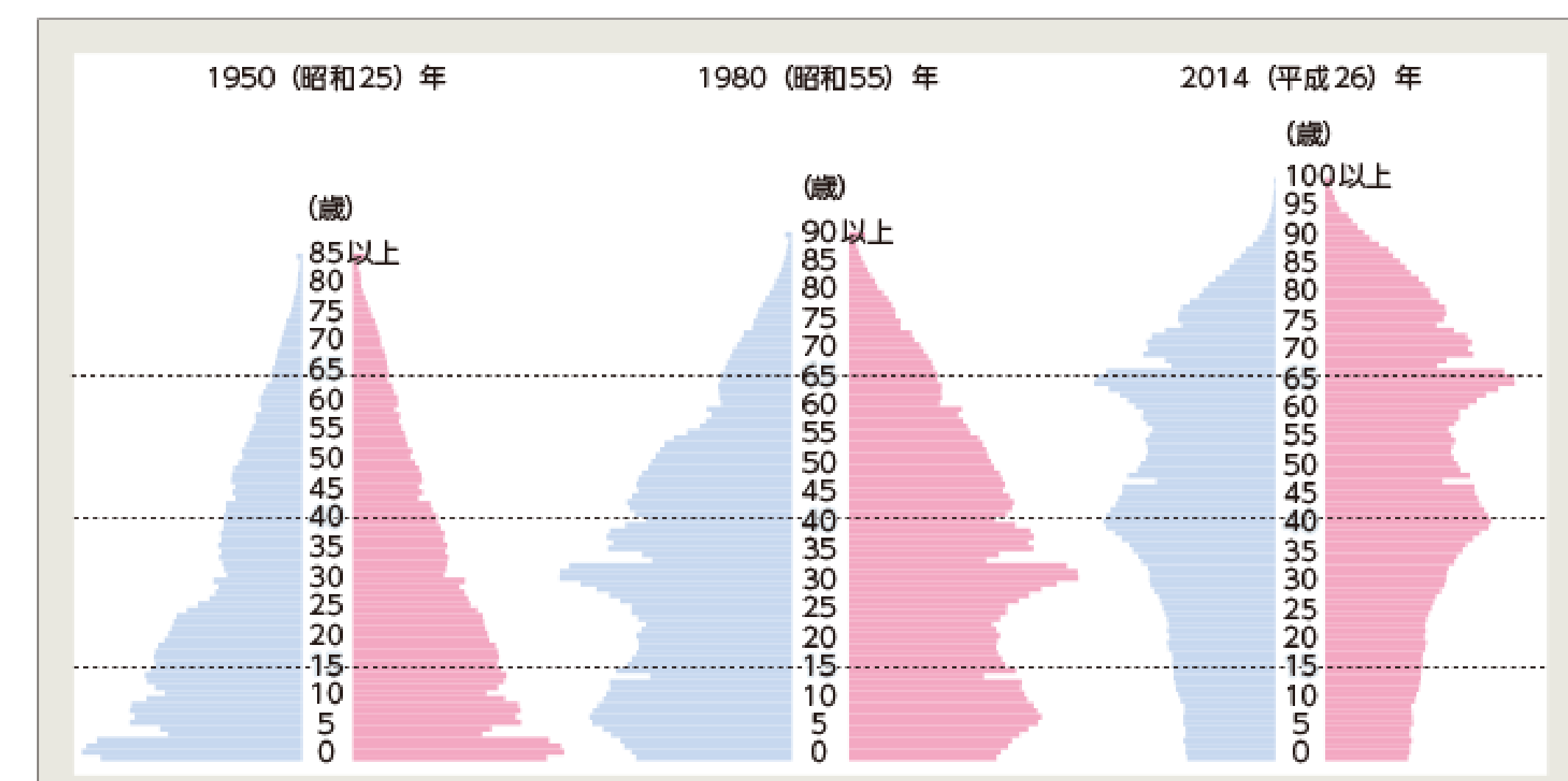
Grounded in an understanding of the relevant social conditions and policies that affect care provision for her informants.

The first phase entails fieldwork in Paris to understand carers' main risks. The second phase focuses on to fieldwork in Tokyo, here again, to surface what risks Japanese male caregivers face and how they address them.

Aim to identify relevant everyday care practices, placing middle-aged men as carers in the context of their familial care relations as sons, fathers and sons-in-law.

« Japan being a super ageing society, in which 31 % of carers are now men, the issue has long come forward. In that sense, the country is a step ahead of Europe »

Demographic Transformation in Japan



Source: Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, Japan 2015

« We need to look at how caregiving impacts men in particular and at how they reconcile what is expected of their work and career and their role as care givers »

France's family policies represent important reference point for other countries. Thus, the research approach is comparative, focused on Japan and France, which while challenging often dichotomised views of East and West contexts aims to lead to a better understanding of men as carers across generations in their families and the concomitant risks they face.

Contribution

By investigating this emerging phenomenon and the risks associated with it, the project contributes to addressing one of today's most pressing issues.

Focusing on influential France and super-aged Japan, the objective is to provide an understanding that can be applied to other industrialised countries.

The findings will help identify ways to prevent risks related to pressing care issues in contemporary societies.