

## The Emergence of *Keitai* Family:

Inner constructions of today's family from the view point of *Keitai* use.

Kunikazu Amagasa

Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University, Japan

This paper explores the relationship between the sense of “family” and the use of mobile phones (hereafter “*keitai*,” in Japanese) in Japan. The explosive popularization of the *keitai* in Japan dramatically changed our communication modes and strategies among family members. A sense of “family” is socially constructed through external factors such as economic circumstances and media events. Concurrently, a “family” is internally constructed through interactions and communication practices among family members. In such context, *keitai* is playing an important role and thereby modifying the characteristics of Japanese society.

The popularization of *keitai* in Japan may be distinguished from other countries in terms of the strong impact on the usage among adolescent children. For the needs of parents-children communication, especially mothers-children communication, *keitai* is used more often. This fact emphasizes the importance of a research on the *keitai* interactions between mothers and their children. I focused on such interactions and conducted a qualitative research based on a series of ethnographic interviews. The present research illustrates both the reality of families using the *keitai*, and the changes of families' relationship brought by the *keitai*.

Through the analysis, I suggest that in the near future, our understandings of “family” may have two distinctive characteristics at the same time:

(1) “The age of families”: the use of *keitai* contributes to concentrate the personal identity within the families that has been dispersed on different social group over modern era. And it may result in a stronger sense of togetherness among family members.

(2) “The age of absent families”: the use of *keitai* may destroy the sense of togetherness among family members. And the social functions of families may become much smaller.

Keywords: mobile phone (*Keitai*), family, social construction, ethnography.