

**The Living Arrangements and
Familial Contacts of
the Elderly in Japan**

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September 1987
WP-87-087

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Preface

Recently IIASA's Population Program has begun to investigate several issues relating to kinship patterns and their consequences. Among these issues are analytic and simulation approaches to modelling the evolution and lifetime trajectory of patterns of living kin, consideration of intrafamily dependencies in fertility and mortality which might influence the size distribution of family trees in the population, and behavioral consequences of kinship patterns. Of particular interest are the consequences of kinship patterns for the behavior of the elderly; the relations between the elderly and their children--as well as other relatives such as siblings--is to some extent conditioned by the number, ages, and other characteristics of those children or other relatives.

In the following paper Kiyosi Hiroshima surveys several aspects of the relations between elders and their children in Japan. Limited comparisons with some other countries are also presented where possible. There is a striking contrast between Japan and other industrialized countries in the patterns of coresidence of older people and other family members. Preferences, expectations, and other attitudinal dimensions are shown to be closely related to residence patterns. Thus, we must be prepared to move beyond economic and demographic variables in explaining international variations in household structure.

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Acknowledgements

This is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the IUSSP Seminar on New Forms of Familial Life in MDC's (Session V: The Three-Generation Family), held in Vaucresson, France, from 6-9 October 1987, and to be published by IUSSP. I would like to express my gratitude to the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) for offering me the opportunity to work there. I am very grateful to Douglas A. Wolf, Miriam King, Alain Belanger, and Sjoerd Kooiker for their valuable contributions to an earlier version of the paper. I appreciate very much the skillful typing by Susan Stock. Thanks are extended to many other people in- and outside of IIASA who supported my stay and work at IIASA.

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The Living Arrangements and Familial Contacts of the Elderly in Japan

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1. Introduction

The aging of the population now in progress in Japan is estimated to be much more rapid than that experienced in other developed countries. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over, which was 10.3 percent in 1985, is estimated to double in only two or three decades to surpass 20 percent in 2010 (Institute of Population Problems, 1987). In absolute terms, the number of elderly will increase from 12 million in 1985 to 27 million by 2010. The projected increase in the demand for care for the elderly implied by these estimates has focused attention on the family and household as the supplier of basic care for the elderly.

It is well known that Japan has a much larger proportion of its elderly living in three-generation family households (about 40 percent in 1985) than have industrialized countries in Europe. Thus scholars and policymakers in Japan, as well as those in other developed countries, have been interested in the reasons why such a traditional family system is still maintained in a highly industrialized country like Japan. One of the recent typical studies in the cross-cultural perspective is made by Palmore and Maeda (1985). Earlier, many scholars believed that the nuclearization of the Japanese family would advance more quickly than has actually been the case (see, for example, Morioka 1973). In our previous work, Morgan and Hiroshima (1983) demonstrated that the extended family system fulfilled some important roles in this industrialized society, making its continued maintenance natural.

At the same time, we observe slow but steady changes in the living arrangements of the Japanese elderly, which seem to be approaching those of Western society. How have these changes been brought about? Have there been changes in

the functions of the family in Japan? Have the roles served by extended residence changed, causing living arrangements to shift in accordance with this functional change?

Familial contacts or the functions of family can be interpreted as a key determinant of living arrangements, along with the demographic determinants. This approach seems to be rather uncommon in demography. For example, a typical review article by Burch (1979) does not mention familial functions among the "determinants of household structure". In this paper, we treat coresidence as a behavior employed to attain the "family environment" (Bongaarts 1983) best adapted to the societal environment.

We first compare living arrangements of the elderly in Japan with those in other countries, and examine changes in residence structure in the post-war period, with special emphasis on the last 10 years. We then discuss familial contacts or the functions of the family contrasting Japan to other countries where the coresidence of the elderly and their children is less common. We also discuss changes taking place in the functions of the family for the elderly in Japan.

By adopting a cross-cultural and historical perspective on living arrangements and their functions for the elderly in Japan, we can clarify the relationship between living arrangements and familial contacts. The Japanese case may be helpful in understanding the situation in other developed countries, particularly those having some degree of extended family systems such as Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia.

2. Living Arrangements of the Elderly

Table 1 shows the frequency with which the elderly coreside with various family members in five countries, surveyed in 1986. Coresidence with a married son is far more common in Japan (40 percent) than in the other countries. Coresidence with children—including daughters as well as sons—is most widespread in Thailand. These differences in the frequency of coresidence with children by the elderly derive mainly from the differences in residence choices, and not from differences in the demographic availability of children (although the precise contribution of the two factors has not been measured). Accordingly, residence differences will be examined from the behavioral perspective in the next section.

The high proportion of elderly coresiding with grandchildren (38 percent) in Japan is the result of coresidence with children, and is equal to the proportion living in three-generation family households.

Table 1. Percentage of the elderly* coresiding with various family members; selected countries, 1986.

Family members	Japan	Thailand	USA	Denmark	Italy
Spouse	70	49	49	51	57
Married son	40	23	1	1	11
Married daughter	10	38	2	1	11
Child's spouse	35	38	1	0	21
Never-married child	16	31	11	5	25
Grandchild	38	69	2	1	17
Living alone	7	5	40	44	19

* Males and females aged 60 and over.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, International Comparative Survey on the Lives and Perceptions of Elders, 1986.

Japanese elderly are more likely to live with a spouse (60 percent) than are the elderly in the other countries. This is presumably due to more universal marriage, lower mortality, and a lower divorce rate in Japan. Although marital status is a determinant of the living arrangements of the elderly, we will not discuss this in much detail because residence with spouses is not the direct subject of this paper. We simply note that their marital status has come to exert considerable influence on whether the elderly coreside with their children in Japan (which will be shown in Table 3).

Table 2 shows the proportion of Japanese elderly in various living arrangements in recent years. Coresidence with children has decreased slightly more than 10 percent over the past 15 years. But still more than 60 percent of the elderly were living with their children in 1985, although the proportion had been more than 80 percent before 1960 (Kosei-sho 1960). The decline in coresidence with children has been matched by increases in "couple" and "one-person" households. We also note the increase in the percentage of elderly accommodated in institutional households. Among those age 85 and older, the percentage institutionalized increased from 5.4 percent in 1975 to 11.7 percent in 1985 according to the census in each year.

Table 2. Percentage of elders in various households types: Japan.

Household type	1970	1975	1980	1985
Population aged 65+ (thousands)	7,393	8,865	10,647	12,468
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Ordinary household*	96.1	96.3	95.8	95.4
Relatives household	90.6	89.5	87.8	86.1
Living with children	73.9	69.8	65.8	61.6
Couple only	11.6	15.1	18.1	20.6
Other relatives household	5.1	4.6	4.0	3.9
Non-relatives household	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
One-person household	5.3	6.6	7.8	9.2
Quasi-households**	3.9	3.7	4.2	4.6

* non-institutional household

** institutional household and collective household

Source: Statistics Bureau, Management and Coordination Agency, Census.

The proportion coresiding with children is shown by age and marital status of the elderly in Table 3, taken from Hiroshima (1987b). The proportion living with their children is higher among the oldest and the non-currently-married elderly. The higher proportion of married females than married males coresiding with children reflect the old ages of their husbands, due to the age gap between spouses.

The decrease in coresidence during the 10 years is particularly marked among married males and females, amounting to more than a 10 percentage point decline for almost all age groups. Among the widowed or divorced, the decrease is larger among males than females, and among the young-old than the old-old. These facts indicate that the elderly have become less likely to live with their offspring while they are married.

These changes in the proportion coresiding with children in Japan can be attributed to changes in residence choices by the elderly and their children and not to changes in the availability of children. The availability of children has been almost constant over the past 10 or 20 years (Hiroshima 1984), in contrast to the dramatic change in the availability of parents from the perspective of children. Thus the change in the elderly's living arrangements—or specifically coresidence with children—should be mainly examined from a behavioral perspective, as in the next section.

Another dimension of living arrangements is the geographical distance between parents and children. Living close to a child rather than coresiding is chosen to a considerable extent: in Table 4, we see that over 13 percent of elderly

Table 3. Percentage of elders coresiding with children by age, sex, and marital status of elders: Japan.

Age	Total		Married		Widowed/Divorced	
	1975	1985	1975	1985	1975	1985
<i>Male</i>						
65-69	67	54	67	54	74	60
70-74	69	55	68	54	78	69
75-79	72	58	67	55	84	73
80-84	76	69	70	65	86	79
85+	82	71	76	60	87	82
<i>Female</i>						
65-69	71	59	67	54	75	67
70-74	77	65	71	57	80	72
75-79	81	73	73	64	83	78
80-84	86	79	82	68	87	82
85+	86	85	85	71	88	87

Note:

1. "Coresiding with children" does not include coresidence with only children-in-law, which amounts to 2-3% at most (for females aged 80 and over).
2. The denominator of the percentage is the population excluding institutionalized population.

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, Basic Survey for Health and Welfare Administration, 1975, 1985 (Hirosima 1987b).

household heads are within 10 minutes of their married child. These data are from respondents who are all household heads and are mostly young-old. The distribution by distance is known to be greatly influenced by the age and the marital status of elders (Hirosima 1982). In general, the older the parents, the shorter is the distance from their children. Not surprisingly, the desired future living arrangements of these respondents incorporate shifts closer to their children, as Table 4 shows. This implies migration to obtain closer living arrangements for the elderly as they age. Indeed, a recent rise in the migration rate of the elderly was reported by Otomo (1981). It is noteworthy that such migration can be numerically significant only when separate living arrangements are fairly common for middle-aged parents.

Housing quality is another element of living arrangements. Table 5 shows the dwelling density for two- and three-generation households, enabling us to compare parent-child coresident and non-coresident households at nearly the same point in the life cycle. We can see that the coresident households (H2 + H3) are more favored in housing standards in terms of tatami mats per capita (8.4 - 8.9 mats)

Table 4. Living arrangements of elderly household heads who have a married child (in percent): Japan, 1983.

Living arrangements	Present arrangements	Desired future arrangements
	9,849 thousand	
Total	100.0	100.0
Coresiding	27.2	45.2
Another house in the same building	0.8	1.1
Another house in the same lot	3.7	9.3
Less than 10 minutes away	8.6	9.0
In the same city, ward, town	19.9	5.5
Other place	39.7	13.8
Do not know	—	13.2
No answer	0.0	2.8

Source: Construction Ministry, Survey on Household Demand, 1983.

than are non-coresident households (H1: a couple and children with 7.8 mats) for Japan nationally, and for most urbanized areas like Tokyo and Osaka prefectures.¹ We can say almost the same thing regarding the number of persons per room for Japan nationally, Tokyo, and Osaka. By contrast, in local prefectures like Yamagata and Shimane the relation is nearly reversed, i.e. the coresident households are less favored (H2: 8.9 – 8.2 mats) than non-coresident households (H1: 9.9 – 8.5 mats). These two prefectures in northern Japan are known as the areas where coresidence is most frequent within Japan (Tokei-kyoku 1984). Thus we can infer that the traditional ideology of an extended family is still most strongly preserved in these areas. This tradition may encourage younger couples to endure the poorer housing accompanying coresidence with two parents, thus explaining the reverse relationship noted.

Home ownership and headship rates of the elderly, which are sometimes included under the topic of living arrangements, will be examined in the discussion of familial relations in the next section.

¹In general one tatami mat is 0.9m by 1.8m = 1.62m², but the exact size varies by region or the date of building, etc.

Table 5. Dwelling density by household type: Japan and selected prefectures, 1985.

Household type	Total				
	Japan	Tokyo	Osaka	Yamagata	Shimane
<i>Number of tatami mats per capita (mats)</i>					
H1: a couple + children	7.8	6.7	6.8	9.9	8.5
H2: a couple + children + two parents	8.4	6.8	7.5	8.9	8.2
H3: a couple + children + one parent	8.9	7.3	7.4	10.2	9.1
<i>Number of persons per room (persons)</i>					
H1: a couple + children	0.80	0.92	0.86	0.67	0.71
H2: a couple + children + two parents	0.82	0.96	0.84	0.81	0.78
H3: a couple + children + one parent	0.75	0.88	0.82	0.69	0.69

Note:

H1-3: household types. "Parents" means the couple's parents.

Source: Statistics Bureau, Management and Coordination Agency, Census, 1985.

3. Familial Contacts

Why do elders in Japan coreside with their children? What function does coresidence serve in familial life? The answers to these questions should provide the key to the high frequency of coresident living arrangements in Japan.

For the elderly, the family satisfies many needs—psychological, physical, and economic. Table 6 shows the reasons for coresidence given by children. These reasons show the various functions of the family. Though responses may be affected by the norms of the society and may not always accurately express the real extent of the various functions of coresidence, we can see the functions of shared housing through these subjective perceptions. Coresidence with parents is most often considered an obligation or a duty for children. But regional differences in the prevalence of this response are quite remarkable. Coresidence is less frequently considered an obligation in the metropolitan areas than in rural areas (town, village). The passive reason expressing a readiness to satisfy parents' desire but not expressing a consciousness of obligation ("parents want") and rational reasons implying calculus ("economically convenient" or convenient for everything") are more notable in the metropolitan areas. This convenience includes, for example, care of grandchildren by the parents of a younger couple, particularly when the younger wife is employed. These regional differences may suggest the direction of change in coresidence for Japan in recent years. Responses from rural areas exemplify traditional attitudes toward coresidence;

responses from metropolitan areas show the new attitudes emerging and dominating in this country.

Table 6. Married children's reason for coresidence with parents (in percent): Japan.

Reasons	Total**		Metropolitan		Town, village	
	1974	1983	1974	1983	1974	1983
Obligation for children	71	69	56	58	77	76
Parents want	4	9	10	12	3	7
Economically convenient	4	4	5	5	5	2
Sickness of parents	2	2	2	3	2	2
Natural love	12	10	17	12	9	9
Convenient for everything	4	3	6	5	2	2
Other	3	3	4	5	2	2
No answer	1	—	1	—	1	—
Total (N)	100 (1671)	100 (864)	100 (256)	100 (151)	100 (608)	100 (317)

* Married males and females aged 35 to 45.

** Total includes other areas. "Metropolitan" areas are Tokyo and Osaka.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, "Survey on Supports for Elderly Parents by Middle Aged", 1974, 1983.

We can also examine the psychological or emotional function of familial contacts. Table 7 shows the desired extent of contacts with children for elderly in several countries. The elderly in Japan and Thailand predominantly prefer "to always live together", but this response was rarely chosen by elderly in the United States and Denmark; Italy falls in between. In European countries, "to have dinner and talk often" is the most preferred form of contact. The preference for deeper contacts with children in Japan and Thailand corresponds with the predominance of coresidence with children in those countries, as shown above. Table 8 shows the actual intensity of contacts in three-generation family households in Japan. Conversation and dinner occurs "often" or "very often" in the great majority of three-generation households; therefore relations among family members in three-generation family households can be described as substantial.

Table 9 shows another aspect of the psychological relations between family members in some countries, namely the choice of persons with whom to discuss problems. By this criterion, too, the relations between parents and children are stronger in Japan. It is notable that the relationship between mother and son ap-

Table 7. Elders'* desired contacts with children; selected countries and years (in percent).

Contacts desired	Japan		Thailand		USA		Denmark	Italy
	1981	1986	1981	1986	1981	1986	1986	1986
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
To always live together	59	58	59	66	7	3	4	34
To have dinner and talk often	30	34	15	10	66	65	75	55
To talk sometimes	7	6	17	22	25	31	18	10
To have no contacts	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	1
No answer	2	1	7	2	3	2	4	0

* Males and females aged 60 and over.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, International Comparative Survey on the Lives and Perceptions of Elders.

Table 8. Frequency of contacts of elders* with family members (in percent): Japan, 1983.

Type of contact	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Not at all
Conversation with children and their spouses	61	25	13	2
Conversation with grandchildren	52	23	17	8
Conversation with three generations	45	24	22	9
Dinner with three generations	77	11	8	4

* Males and females aged 60-75 within three-generation households (N = 2,819).

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, Survey on Elders' Status and Role in Family Life, 1983.

pears stronger than that between mother and daughter in Japan, which is not found in other countries. The high percentage of females mentioning "son" rather than "spouse" in the Western countries is apparently affected by the lower availability of spouses there than in Japan (see Table 1).

Nevertheless the proportion, especially of males, responding "spouse" did increase between 1981 and 1986 in Japan. This change seems to be correlated with the recent shift toward a more spouse-oriented household in Japan (as shown in Table 3).

These psychological functions may continue to change slowly, in line with changes in the culture of Japan, and living arrangements may show similar shifts.

Table 9. Persons with whom problems are discussed* (in percent).

Person	Japan** 1981		Japan 1986		Thailand 1986		USA 1986		Denmark 1986		Italy 1986	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Someone	85	88	95	95	100	100	86	89	86	87	96	91
Spouse	58	30	78	39	46	19	65	23	62	32	75	30
Sons	42	44	50	48	42	45	27	29	26	34	39	30
Daughters	21	35	31	45	43	52	24	41	21	38	30	46
No one	5	5	3	4	0	0	8	8	5	5	4	10

* (M) Males and (F) females aged 60 and over.

** Thailand and USA 1981 are omitted because of limited space, but the 1981 figures are similar to 1986.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, International Comparative Survey on the Lives and Perceptions of Elders, 1986.

Another important role of the family is providing physical care when it is needed, and offering the psychological assurance that such care will be forthcoming if necessary. Table 10 shows this psychological aspect of the elderly's physical care. The difference in the extent of anxiety about future disability by household type reflects differences in the availability or assurance of care supplied by family members. This is apparently another reason for coresidence with children in Japan.

Table 10. Elders'* fear of becoming bedridden or senile (in percent): Japan, 1982.

Sex Household type	N	Very anxious	Sometimes anxious	Rarely anxious	N.A.
Total	2953	17	38	43	0
Male	1368	13	37	50	0
Female	1585	21	41	38	0
One-person household	232	34	43	23	0
Couple household	600	19	39	42	0
Two-generation family household	578	17	41	42	0
Three-generation family household	1422	14	38	48	1

* Males and females aged 60 and over.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, Survey on the Psychological Aspects of Elderly Life, 1982.

Table 11 shows the elders' desired or expected supplier of care in the five countries studied here. The extent to which care is expected from family and kin is much larger in Japan and Thailand than in the other countries. Among the sub-group selecting "family and kin", males in Japan more frequently expect care from a spouse than do their counterparts in other countries (Table 12). In this sense, Japan is already a spouse-oriented country, especially compared with Thailand, where children are more preferred as caregivers. Another striking feature of the Japanese responses is that females more frequently choose daughters-in-law than is the case in other countries. This provides further evidence of the strong ties between mothers and sons in this country.

Table 11. Desired supplier of care when disabled* (in percent): 1986.

Desired supplier of care	Japan	Thailand	USA	Denmark	Italy
Family and kin	95	96	69	20	88
Neighbours or friends	3	6	18	1	7
Volunteers of private groups	5	1	15	2	9
Publicly supplied service	15	9	9	30	14
Privately supplied service	5	1	41	39	6

* Males and females aged 60 and over.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, International Comparative Survey on the Lives and Perceptions of Elders, 1986.

This caregiving function of the family may be based upon cultural tradition, but it can be taken over by unrelated caregivers to a larger extent if the social welfare system for the elderly's care is expanded. This situation has been gradually taking place with the increase in the employment rate of middle-aged women, the group which normally serves as caregivers. The employment rate of women aged 40-54 years increased from 19.2 percent in 1965 to 41.6 percent in 1985 (Ministry of Labour, Labour Force Survey).

Another function of the family is economic support. This consists of economic aid to children from parents and economic aid from children when elders come to have insufficient income. These two opposite flows of aid tend to occur consecutively, as the parental generation ages. Table 13 shows the perceived economic situation of the elderly by household type; figures on the objective economic situation are not available. This table shows that the economic situation of three-

generation family households is the most favorable for elderly among all household types, apparently due to the mutual economic aid in the household.

Table 12. Preferred caregivers among family and kin (in percent): Japan, 1986.

Sex	Japan	Thailand	USA	Denmark	Italy
Caregiver					
Male					
Spouse	86	32	76	84	77
Sons	5	26	5	4	7
Daughters	5	36	12	7	13
Daughters-in-law	4	0	1	2	1
Female					
Spouse	24	10	31	30	18
Sons	20	28	13	8	20
Daughters	23	49	39	49	46
Daughters-in-law	29	1	1	3	6

Note:

Respondents are males and females aged 60 and over, answering "family and kin" on the question shown in Table 11.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, International Comparative Survey on the Lives and Perceptions of Elders, 1986.

Table 13. Perception of living standard by household type* (in percent): Japan, 1982.

Type of Household	(N)	Abundant	Rather abundant	Ordinary	Rather low	Low	No answer
Solitary	(232)	7	9	46	30	8	0
Couple	(600)	12	17	51	17	3	0
Two-generation	(578)	8	17	54	19	2	0
Three-generation	(1422)	13	23	51	12	1	0

* Males and females aged 60 and over.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, Survey on the Psychological Aspects of Elderly Life, 1982.

Another implication of this table is that poor elderly are less likely to live in three-generation households, which suggests that the coresidence with children carries some economic cost. Table 14 shows the rate of home-ownership by type of household. These figures indicate that the elderly in three-generation households are the most likely to live in owned houses. Thus if the elderly are dwelling in, or more specifically possess, an owned house, they are more likely to live in three-

generation family households. This means that the elderly must provide themselves with a house large enough to accommodate coresidence, especially if they want to coreside from the earlier stage of their old age. Here we should note that the housing standard of three-generation households is better than that of households composed of children and a couple only (in Table 5). This can be interpreted as follows: if a younger couple with children of their own coreside with their parents, they can dwell in a larger house, or more precisely, they will coreside with parents only if they can live more spaciouly as a result. The elderly, on the other hand, may experience better housing standards if they live alone. Thus the elderly should have prepared housing for coresidence, possibly during middle age, since the young couples with children cannot provide such housing in most cases. These housing factors may closely relate to the differential economic status of the elderly by household type already mentioned.

Table 14. Number of households including elders aged 65+ by housing type: Japan, 1985.

Household types	All households (percent of column total)	Households in owned houses (percent of row total)
Total households	9284* (100.0)	7933 (85.4)
Relatives households	8092 (87.2)	7193 (88.9)
Nuclear family households	2902 (31.3)	2309 (79.6)
Households composed of a couple only	1651 (17.8)	1326 (80.3)
Other relatives households	5190 (55.9)	4884 (94.1)
Three-generation households	3956 (42.6)	3787 (95.7)
Non-relatives households	11 (0.1)	8 (72.1)
Solitary households	1181 (12.7)	732 (62.0)

* In thousands.

Source: Statistics Bureau, Management and Coordination Agency, Census 1985.

Although some researchers have found a positive income effect for the propensity to live alone, and seem to say that people buy privacy (Beresford and Rivlin 1966; Michael et al. 1980), we may say that people buy coresidence instead. This also implies that improvement in housing supply to a certain degree could increase the proportion of coresident households as properly mentioned by Palmore and Maeda (1985, p. 47). We add, however, that the further improvement could allow separate and close living arrangements, making its proportion to decline, since

the majority of the younger generation do want to live close to their parents but do not necessarily want to live in the same household, according to our previous survey in 1978 (Hirosima 1982).

Table 15 shows the desired heirs of parents or the elderly's preferred way of property bequests. The most preferred heirs are children who take care of elders, not the weak or dependent offspring. The fixed assets of elders seem to be practically a deposit for their care by their children. In spite of the expression by most children that coresidence is a responsibility of children, many parents as well as many children unconsciously assume this as give-and-take behavior.

Table 15. Desired way of bequeathing property to children* (in percent): Japan, 1979.

Desired way of bequeathing property	Male	Female
(N)	(2051)	(198)
Total	100	100
To eldest son	45	20
To children weak in health or economically dependent	4	6
Among children equally	11	19
To children who take care of us	34	47
Other	3	4
No answer	2	5

* Males and females aged 60 and over who have fixed assets of their own and are living in their houses.

Source: Office for the Aged, Management and Coordination Agency, Survey on Inheritance, 1979.

We can also analyze the headship rate as an expression of familial contacts. The headship rate may seem to reflect the prevalence of coresidence. Indeed, when the elderly coreside with their children, they are less likely to be household heads. But headship reflects more the relationship between parents and children in the coresident households. The headship rate of parents is not much affected by whether or not they coreside with children when the parents are young-old. The rate declines with advancing age (Hirosima 1987a).

Table 16 shows that the headship rate for male elderly has been rising sharply for married, as well as for widowed or divorced, elderly in this decade. This is caused not only by the decline in proportion coresiding (as shown in Table 3), but also by a rise in the headship rate within coresident households (Hirosima 1987a).

To explain the latter phenomenon, we must look more closely at specific headship rates.

Table 16. Headship rate by age and marital status (male) (in percent): Japan.

Age	Total		Married		Widowed or divorced	
	1975	1985	1975	1985	1975	1985
65-69	85	89	88	90	70	80
70-74	71	83	75	86	55	64
75-79	58	72	65	76	42	55
80-84	46	55	56	60	29	44
85+	34	48	48	59	23	37

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, Basic Survey for Health and Welfare Administration (Hiroshima 1987a).

Table 17 gives the headship rate of sons, rather than that of parents, due to limitations in the available data. The decline in the headship rate of sons shown in this table signifies the rise in the headship rate of parents over the decade. The rise in the headship rate of parents is still notable even if we control for the presence of the father and his marital status (which significantly influences the headship rate within coresident households). This rise in the headship rate of parents means the status of parents has risen relative to that of sons during this period. This implies that coresidence has come to be adopted from early in the parents' life course only when the parents are in a higher status position as represented by the status of household head. We estimate the higher position of parents is derived mainly from their role as providers of housing.

We conclude that the coresidence of parents and children is gradually changing its nature. Coresidence is becoming a strategic behavior based upon a choice and a give-and-take relationship, and is moving away from an obligatory behavior urged by ideology, irrespective of the economic situation.

4. Concluding Remarks

Living arrangements of Japanese elderly in recent years are more child-oriented than in other western countries, in terms of both the proportion coresiding and the geographic closeness to the children. Also we find strongly child-

Table 17. Headship rate of married sons coresiding with parents (in percent): Japan.

Age of married son	Total		Coresiding with married father		Coresiding with unmarried father		Coresiding with other than father*	
	1975	1985	1975	1985	1975	1985	1975	1985
25-29	18	12	4	4	23	**	62	38
30-34	38	27	14	11	38	29	76	58
35-39	54	47	23	22	50	48	86	76
40-44	69	64	40	34	60	51	93	85
45-49	81	76	53	48	67	58	97	91

* Mother, father-in-law, or mother-in-law.

** Fewer than 100 in sample.

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, Basic Survey for Health and Welfare Administration, 1975, 1985 (Hirosima 1987a).

oriented family contacts of the elderly in psychological, physical, and economic terms in Japan. Thus coresidence still plays a very important role in the family life of the elderly in this country. We contend that the observed living arrangements are deeply connected with familial contacts or familial functions.

At the same time, the prevalence of coresidence of the elderly with children in Japan has slowly but steadily declined since World War II. Our evidence indicates that coresidence is becoming a behavior based upon strategic choices for maximizing mutual benefits, and is moving away from behavior based upon traditional obligation ideology. Coresidence is indeed diminishing but also surviving, adapting to the changing societal environment.

In the near future, depending on the change in the social setting, the proportion of elderly coresiding with children may fall from 60 percent to some lower figure—for example, about 50 percent at the beginning of the 21st century, as projected by some authors (Okazaki 1982; Hirosima 1984; Palmore and Maeda 1985). We hardly find any evidence that the fall will stop or slow in the near future, in disagreement with Palmore and Maeda (1985). At the same time, the proportion of elderly coresiding with children will not drop in the near future to the level of western countries, where less than 20 or 10 percent of the elderly live with their children.

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