

## **GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN ORIENTATIONS TO CORESIDENCE IN CHONGJU, SOUTH KOREA**

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This paper explores the connection between coresident housing and attitudes of intergenerational families towards their living arrangements. Specifically, it focuses on generational differences in the assessment of advantages and disadvantages of intergenerational coresidence in Chongju City, South Korea. In recent years, South Korea has undergone a transition through processes of rapid industrialization and urbanization that have created a changing family structure (Choi, 1989). In the past, it was traditional for the elderly to coreside with the eldest son, based on the cultural values of respecting the elderly as embodied in the Confucian doctrine of filial piety (Sung, 1995). Today, the role of the extended family is in a process of transformation (Pak, 1989; Sung, 1995). Tradition does not have the same influence as it did in the past. New values promote daughters sharing filial responsibilities with their brothers (Sung, 1992). The mother of the eldest son and the wife of that son--referred to as mothers and daughters-in-law--may experience the advantages and disadvantages of, and satisfaction with, coresidence differently. If each concludes that the relative advantages and disadvantages of the living arrangement are favorable to coresidence, they are likely to continue with the living arrangement. The assumption is that if mothers and daughters-in-law differ in how advantageous they see coresidence, and they differ in the level of satisfaction with coresidence, we could conclude that filial piety and intergenerational coresidence after the parents' retirement would diminish.

There are two potential interpretations of an intergenerational difference in orientation to coresidence: (1) the difference represents a historical trend or (2) the difference is a life-cycle sequence. The first interpretation assumes that the difference between generations endures and ultimately becomes a societal value. The second assumes that when the younger generation reaches the age of the older generation their orientations will mature and be similar to those of the older generation.

The theoretical orientation of this study comes from exchange theory. It is a theory based on reciprocity that attempts to explain why certain behavioral outcomes occur given a set of structural conditions and interaction potentialities (Markides, Liang, & Jackson, 1990). Filial piety is about reciprocity and altruism. It is assumed that actions and relationships are measured not only on an advantage/disadvantage basis, but also on a traditional value basis. One of the likely reasons that coresidence worked was that high proportions of the population found their wellbeing improved. The arrangement was reciprocal from an emotional, social, and economic standpoint. As a result of transitions in the country, the positive advantage/disadvantage ratio of filial piety has changed. When the advantages/disadvantages to both generations are not at least approximately equal, then filial piety, as traditionally conceptualized, no longer meets the criterion of reciprocity.

Separate interviews of mothers and daughters-in-law, on attitudes towards living in an extended family living arrangement, were conducted in 50 intergenerational households in Chongju, the capital city of Chungbuk province with a 1994 population of 505,089. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the characteristics of the sample in univariate analysis. This logistic regression path analysis examined the relationship between reported advantages and disadvantages on satisfaction with the living arrangement. Two sets of regressions, representing a separate version for the mothers and daughters-in-law, were performed using the SPSS procedure of stepwise elimination.

The description of the sample provided an overview that described quite different groups. The range of age for the mothers was from 59 years to 84 years with a mean of 71 years, compared to a mean of 39 years for the daughters-in-law. Fifty two percent of the daughters-in-law worked outside the home. Eighty-two percent of the mothers reported that living with the son was the living arrangement norm whereas only 34 percent of the daughters-in-law responded that same way. The level of education ranged from a mean of 2.8 years for the mothers to a mean of 11.2 years for the daughters-in-law. Only 30 percent of the mothers reported at least one disadvantage of coresidence compared with 68 percent of the daughters-in-law reporting at least one disadvantage. Mothers reported satisfaction with coresidence 78 percent of the time compared with 40 percent of daughters-in-law reporting satisfaction with coresidence.

The results of the regression analyses for the mothers' satisfaction were not significant. The conclusion is that the level of satisfaction does not respond to whether the living arrangement is seen to be advantageous or disadvantageous but rather is a pattern that is consistent with tradition.

The results of the regression analyses for the daughters-in-laws' satisfaction are significant. Those who see advantages are more likely to be satisfied with coresidence and those who see disadvantages are less likely to be satisfied. This is the situation one would expect to find if a sample had abandoned tradition as a guide. The difference between generations may suggest further decline in intergenerational coresidence.

The younger generation is increasingly resisting the government's attempt to continue making them solely responsible for their elders. The concern for policy makers is that family care for the elderly is on the decline while public demands for formal support are increasing. For this reason, the role of the family as an informal caregiving institution has implications for housing policy in South Korea and elsewhere. The challenge for housing policy is to assist the elderly who live alone without introducing incentives that encourage the decline of intergenerational living arrangements.

## References

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