

Chapter 2

Familial Exchange and Intergenerational Contact in East Asian Societies

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Abstract This paper has two goals. The first one is to propose a typology of familial exchange between adult children and their parents. The second is to examine whether such exchanges influence frequency of contact with parents in four East Asian societies. By specifying the reciprocation of finance and household chores, we suggest four types of familial exchange: balanced (indicating regular exchange), credited, indebted and self-reliant (indicating infrequent exchange). Drawing data from the East Asian Social Survey, we conduct regression analysis of a subsample who did not live with parents, and provide strong evidence for the effects of spatial distance and intergenerational exchange. Neither family structure nor parental demands exert substantial influence.

Keywords Social exchange • Intergenerational transfer • Familial relationship • Social interaction • Piety values

2.1 Introduction

Changing intergenerational relationships have become a critical issue in family studies in East Asia, as this region has experienced declining fertility, reduced family size, increasing female employment, changing expectations of filial responsibility, and an expanding aged population (Agree et al. 2005; Lin and Yi 2013; Logan et al. 1998). How can East Asian families maintain intimacy and solidarity in the face of these changing demographic and social trends? This issue is important, particularly as cultural values are shifting from collectivism toward one stressing more autonomy and independence for individuals. Indeed, both parents

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and their children increasingly believe separate residence is a better residential arrangement for personal wellbeing (Logan et al. 1998). Parents who do not reside with adult children have increased, and now constitute a substantial group, even though they are not a majority in this region (Chang and Yu 2014).

Ideally, adult children living at a distance from the home can maintain regular contact with parents to sustain close interpersonal relationships and familial solidarity (McChesney and Bengtson 1988), but a number of factors may prevent contact between parents and their nest-leaving children. An individual level factor is that those who lack a feeling of intimacy with parents tend to move out as soon as they grow up and become independent economically. At the family level, the family structure approach proposes to evaluate the composition of siblings, as the number of brothers and sisters may differentially affect contact activities and frequencies. Moreover, parents' own resources and needs additionally influence contact, because the more resources a parent has, the less contact and support he or she requires from children, especially when it comes to functional assistance or services (Logan and Spitze 1996; Mangen 1988). Finally, the literature agrees that physical distance can deter intergenerational contact. Distance continues to have negative impacts on parent-children's associations across different populations and societies (Bian et al. 1998; Bucx et al. 2008; DeWit et al. 1988; Frankel and Dewlt 1989). In the East Asian context, scholars further contend that filial piety can play a significant role in intergenerational ties, although its practices and "degree of influence" have been reshaped and reconstructed across this region (Ikel 2004). Familial values contribute to familial cohesiveness by encouraging contact and associations among family members.

While these approaches have merit in highlighting plausible factors which correlate with intergenerational contact, they fall short in conceiving reciprocal behaviors in a family that do not merely involve exchanges of resources, support, and affect, but also constitute an important mechanism to extend interpersonal interactions and strengthen solidarity with other members. By constructing a typology of intergenerational exchange and examining its potential effects on contact behaviors between parents and their nest-leaving adult children, this study offers a new contribution to understand the current conditions of family solidarity in East Asian society. In empirically assessing the validity of the exchange hypothesis, we simultaneously examine major arguments derived from the literature on family composition, family values and parental needs.

2.2 Intergenerational Ties in Exchange Perspective

Reciprocation between parents and children can be considered an act of exchange, because it involves a series of swaps, although in specific forms. In general, exchange partners enjoy the benefits in a paired event, which constitute a single social entity called transaction (Emerson 1981). In a typical transaction within a family, a mother may financially assist children in opening a business or with

housekeeping, and children may pay her back with luxurious consumer electronics (when the business is successful) or send regards more frequently to show their affect and caring for parents (if the business makes little money). What matters is that such sequences of gives and returns can establish a firm basis on which norms of commitment and obligations are built and the affective ties strengthened (Molm and Cook 1995). These norms and ties often are an emergent outcome, yet they in turn strengthen the interest in future exchanges. It would be insufficient to rely solely on the characteristics of the either parents or children, for instance, their status, resources, or value dispositions, to understand how contact persists and becomes more frequent across generations.

This study focuses on the “restricted” exchange between parents and their adult children. From a network perspective, a transaction between parents and their offspring represents restricted exchange, because the beneficial events involve only two persons, each of whom provides benefits to the other, usually contingent upon benefits from the other. Exchanges as such differ from a *generalized exchange*, which involves more people in the circle of reciprocation. Usually, exchange activities take the form in which A gives to B, B gives to C, and C in the end gives to A (Homans 1962). Exchangers involved in a diffuse network of mutual reciprocations usually build up a support system which is characterized by increased trust and commitment. Satisfaction and solidarity are more likely to happen as a consequence (Ekeh 1974; Uehara 1990). Yet this observation is drawn from exchanges in a large non-kin network. Family members involved in exchanges, in a network which is restricted in terms of size, place less value on gains than on mutual support as an end in itself.

Exchanges can be differentiated alternatively by the contingency of repayment because this contingency factor is decisive in influencing the dynamics and continuity of exchanges. When a contribution (a free gift or altruistic act) initiates a response, it may come with or without an underlying expectation of return transaction. The repayment is thus not a necessity. Exchange as such is termed *reciprocal transaction*. The conditions of the returns are thus noncontingent (Emerson 1981: 33). In contrast, in a *contingent transaction*, the interactions between the dyads negotiate for the best realization of self-interests and therefore exercise rational calculations intensively; a contingent transaction is practiced. It is argued that the outcomes of the contingent transactions tend to be distrustful, emotionally loaded and brittle (Uehara 1990). Arguably, reciprocal exchange can be conceived as an ideal type that entails strong ties built on the basis of constant give-and-takes.

Looking from a power-dependence relations perspective (Emerson 1962), reciprocity over time can enhance stability and solidarity in the system of exchange relations, either in the dyad or a larger network. The issue of equity, although not openly discussed, is not entirely neglected. Interaction between parents and children may still be governed by a fundamental principle in which each attempts to obtain desirable outcomes from exchanges. If exchange follows closely a norm of reciprocity (Mauss 1967; Gouldner 1960), the cost is balanced out by a reward derived from interactions. The exchange relation is characterized by more equity, and more interactions are likely to continue.

Exchanges between parents and offspring belong to the type of restricted exchange; yet at the same time these swaps can be *reciprocal*. In this relationship, a parent initiates an exchange process and offers contributions to a certain child, without knowing when the child will reciprocate, and in some cases without knowing whether repayment will happen in the end. Certain contingencies may be specified as exchanges are carried on overtime. Even in this case, the time frame usually is not specified beforehand (Uehara 1990). As a rule, generosity is expected and respected. As Mauss (1967) described, exchanges of gifts among tribes, clans and families represent an interest in “fraternizing”. Embedded in a “gift economy”, people are required to fulfill the obligations of giving, receiving and repaying. It is through reciprocity as such that family strengthens trust, commitment and solidarity (Molm 2003; Molm et al. 2007).

Moreover, the value or gains from transactions are highly particularized. What is typical in exchanges across generations is financial assistance given by a party, while receiving help with household work or informal advice in return from another party. Exchange asymmetry (that is, unequalness in value) is less an issue than the consequential evolution of a process of reciprocation, stressing the importance of mutual trust, obligations, and commitment (Edwards 1969). Equity, in contrast to a demand of exact equality in material value, is fulfilled in this manner. In short, a repayment as an *act* of giving in return is highly valued over the instrumental benefits obtained therefrom (Molm 2003).

Interactions can be deterred when a party is not rewarded from exchanges (Homans 1974). But within family, an act of giving without expecting anything in return constitutes a gift. This represents a *credited* exchange. Continuous giving which receives no paybacks becomes regarded as generosity “down the drain.” Parents can feel frustrated when their love for their children is not respected or appreciated. Altruism has its limitations in the intergenerational context. Excessive giving by parents cannot be maintained if reciprocation by adult children, even a belatedly delivery, does not happen. Imbalance as such can be termed *indebted* exchange, which may imply a breach of distributive justice, leading to disapproval and dissatisfaction with the exchange relationship.

Parents and adult children may cease to exchange resources on a regular basis, reaching a status of “*self reliance*”. Both children and parents approach a type of “self helper”. In her study of African-American networks, Uehara (1990) depicts “self helpers” as persons who tend to draw on a variety of resources from wider social arenas rather than depend on close kin or friends. Because they have very thin resource-exchange relations within their own networks, the others usually do not incorporate them among their core relations as well. This observation of Uehara’s (1990) is more applicable to exchange activities outside the primary group. Since the family is a prescribed group, rarely does a child (or a parent) withdraw from lineage relations due to increasing “costs” or insufficient returns in the exchanges. Yet defaulting on one’s indebtedness can still happen. Besides bad relationships between parents and children, researchers have particularly focused on adult children’s “distancing” themselves from their parents, and have conceived of this as indicating a movement toward “filial maturity”. That is, they move toward

adulthood and anticipate separateness from their parents, while they might simultaneously develop a peer-like relationship with them, which features more intimacy and equality, but less authority (Nydegger 1991; Birditt et al. 2008). At any rate, self-reliance constitutes a distinct category which delineates a withdrawal from parent-offspring reciprocations as are prescribed by societal norms.

2.3 Hypothesis

This paper argues that exchange is a precondition to group cohesion. From this proposition we derive a hypothesis concerning contact behaviors across generations. We hypothesize that an intensive exchange relation increases contact between parents and their adult children when they are separate in residence. The exchange relation operates not only to sustain a morality that prescribes the obligations of giving after receiving; it also strengthens the legitimacy of diffuse regard for the involved parties in exchange. In consequence, more contact and exchanges are activated.

This study focuses on contact with parents of adult children who lived separately. It tests the influences of different exchange activities on such contacts. Specifically, *balanced exchange* should induce contact with parents more than does *indebted exchange*, in turn producing a higher frequency of contact than does *credited exchange*. We further expect that *self-reliance*, which involves nearly no exchanges with parents, will be associated with the lowest contact frequency. The hypothesis we propose expects that the effect on contact can be ranked as follows: balanced exchange > indebted exchange > credited exchange > self-reliance.

This exchange approach has a number of merits over other approaches to intergenerational relations. First, most researchers tend to observe gives and takes in an empirically independent manner; that is, what children offer to and receive from parents is separately analyzed, despite conceptually recognizing their association (Silverstein et al. 1997; Lin and Yi 2011, 2013; also Silverstein et al. 2002). From a social exchange perspective, this usage of exchange activities as single elements fails to firmly capture the dynamics of mutual reciprocation. What we have proposed in this study is a sharp conceptual tool that can effectively depict social exchanges as two-way phenomena.

Second, previous studies additionally suffer from mixing up exchanges and their consequences in constructing an overall index of intergenerational ties or solidarity. For instance, Silverstein et al. (1997) bracketed single gives and takes, similarity in opinions, geographic distance, contact, etc., in a latent class analysis and produced five intergenerational types. However, the outcomes of their statistical procedures actually resulted in group categories that are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, conceptually. Lying between the two ends represented by the so-called *tight-knit* group and the *detached* group are “the sociable”, “intimate but distant” and “obligatory” groups, whose theoretical positions are difficult to pin down (see also Lin 2012). Compared to this data-driven re-grouping, our typology follows

more closely the theoretical logic in the tradition of social exchange theory when we propose four meaningful clusters in a systematic way.

Third, as this study aims to analyze intergenerational ties, rather than attempt a broad coverage of the outcomes from parent-adult children exchanges, the attention is given to the contact behavior across generations. Adult children's contact with their parents can indicate a strong communal relation when they leave their parents' home for pursuit of a career or their own intimate relationship. Moreover, frequent contact can also reveal care and regards to be exchanged, which enhance the subjective quality of life, particularly for parents (Clark and Mills 2004). Low frequency of contact, on the other hand, usually represents a weak, bland relationship between parents and children.

In testing the exchange hypothesis, we will also examine hypotheses suggested by other major arguments for comparison. Firstly, the family structure approach contends that certain family compositions may generate specific interaction patterns in which parents receive more emotional and instrumental assistance from adult children. In light of this reasoning, two competing models are worth attention (Logan and Spitze 1996). The *additive model* suggests that children as providers of assistance are functionally equivalent and yet independent. The assistance from one child does *not* prevent other children from offering theirs, because what individual children offer to parents is unique and irreplaceable. Thus, the main effect is derived from family size: the more children, the more assistance the parents receive from them. In contrast to this hypothesis is the *substitutional model*, which proposes that the offers from adult children are not necessarily independent. Emotional or material support from one child may fill in where needed, and other children may therefore not be required to offer theirs. An *only child* might have to be responsible for answering all the calls from parents. If there is more than one child, the difference can be noticeable: when the parent has received help from one child, the others are relieved of the burden. Thus, more children do not increase the volume of support, as what one child does for parents substitutes for others' assistance. As Logan and Spitze (1996: 57) summarize for this model, an only child in a small family has to make up for the inadequacy of assistance, while each child in a larger family would be expected to have less responsibility. Following this rationale, this study incorporates the number of siblings in estimation of contact with parents.

Secondly, researchers of East Asian families tend to argue that family norms may weigh more heavily than family structure in influencing intergenerational behaviors. As a general rule, normative expectation prescribes that the eldest son assumes the major responsibility of taking care of parents. Filial piety particularly is a strong value in determining exchanges and contact for adult children required to fulfill their responsibilities to the family (Yeh et al. 2013). In the ideal typical Confucian family, the eldest son is expected to live with his parents, organize family members, and make decisions on collective actions such as rituals, ancestor worship, or the sharing of the inheritance (Hsu 1971). Even when they do not live with parents, on the basis of the patriarchal culture, they are more likely than other children to pay visits to parents or to contact them by other means. The cultural

approach maintains that the role of the eldest son is a critical factor in understanding relations across generations in this region.

The third approach stresses the needs of parents. Contingency theory provides a fundamental rationale for an argument that when the health condition of parents deteriorates, grown children step in and increase support to parents in response to parental needs (Eggebeen and Davey 1998; Fingerman et al. 2004). Contact by adult children thus increases consequently. However, when parents live with other siblings and can obtain the desirable care, those children living separately may feel less burdened and therefore contact them less frequently. It can be hypothesized that other things being equal, parents with better health and living with other family members would receive less contact with children living away from the parents.

Finally, distance is one influencing factor in frequency of contact across generations. Distance limits opportunities for physical contact with parents, as has been shown in numerous studies across cultures (Logan and Bian 1998; Lin and Yi 2011; Logan and Spitze 1996). In testing the reciprocity hypothesis, this study will simultaneously assess the key factors proposed by these competing explanations.

2.4 Data and Method

This study uses data from the East Asian Social Survey (EASS)¹ which was launched in 2006 to collect topical information from national probability samples in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China. The 2006 EASS data used for this study concentrated on the respondents' familial behaviors, values and attitudes. Information about family members was also collected. The surveys were conducted by local teams from social science institutes following scientific protocols. The sampling techniques of the EASS adopted the administrative procedures developed by the General Social Survey in the US (Smith et al. 2006). Two- or three-stage stratified random sampling was applied to select respondents among men and women aged 18 or older (aged 20–89 in Japan). Face-to-face interviews were employed except in Japan, where interviews and self-administered questionnaires were mixed. The response rates varied. In Japan and South Korea, response rates were 60.0 and 65.7%. They were lower in Taiwan (50.6%)² and China (45.5%).

¹For further information about survey topics and data distribution, see the official website of EASS at <http://www.eassda.org>.

²The usage of the sampling frame is responsible for the lower response rate in the Taiwan Social Change Survey. The survey team obtained a sampling frame from a local administrative district which was selected in the last stage of the sampling. However, in the Taiwanese system, the registration of a household at a certain address is mainly for taxation purpose; it does not require this household to live at that residence. Many 'blanks' therefore somewhat reduced the response rates in the TSCS. Additionally, urban residences included a significant number of households living in guarded tall buildings which involved greater difficulty in obtaining consent to interviews from sampled respondents.

Table 2.1 Coresidence patterns in four East Asian samples (%)

	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan	China
<i>Both parents alive</i>				
Coresiding with both parents	20.1	16.1	32.9	14.5
Coresiding with either parent	1.3	1.8	3.3	1.6
Not coresiding with either parent	37.7	45.2	29.8	50.3
<i>Only one parent alive</i>				
Coresiding with parent	9.8	5.6	11.3	7.0
Not coresiding with parent	31.1	31.3	22.7	26.6
N	1195	1140	1444	2092

The original sample sizes varied: 2130 in Japan, 1605 in South Korea, 2102 in Taiwan, and 3208 for China.

Those respondents who did not reside with parents were selected for analysis. To simplify the study goal, the respondents who had only *one* living parent but lived in a separate home were further excluded from the analysis. Most parents in this grouping are mothers. Based on this criterion, in China, adult children currently not living with parents constitute approximately half of the respondents, a percentage higher than in the other three countries (see Table 2.1). In South Korea, this group comprises approximately 45%. Taiwan appears to have the smallest group in this regard, with a percentage of nearly 30%. The difference in this aspect might be due to high mobility from rural to urban areas in China.

2.5 Measurement

Contact with parents. Two sorts of contact with parents are used as the dependent variables. The first is face-to-face contact, which is recoded into “number of times in a month” from the original response categories (ranging from “almost every day” to “less than once a year”). The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.2. In addition, contact which does not require physical presence is measured. This includes contact by letter, phone, email, etc. Each parent was separately measured for their frequency of contact.

Exchange across generations. Exchange involves gives and takes for the persons involved in reciprocation (Ekeh 1974; Emerson 1981; Tsai and Dzorgbo 2012). Any measures that tap merely a “one-way” direction of either give or take necessarily miss the dynamics of the two-way interactions. Measures of intergenerational exchange should also capture such mutually reinforcing forces inherent in the elementary form of exchange relations. Accordingly, this study adopts two pieces of information from the EASS survey: (1) “how frequently have you provided financial support to your parents? in the last 12 months?” (2) “how frequently have

Table 2.2 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan	China
<i>Sex^a</i>				
Male	59.9	58.8	64.4	61.7
Female	40.1	41.2	35.6	38.3
Age	39.38 (9.22)	35.70 (8.08)	38.84 (8.48)	35.17 (8.97)
<i>Marital status^a</i>				
Married	86.5	74.8	83.3	85.8
Single	13.5	25.2	16.7	14.2
<i>Education (completed)^a</i>				
Junior high school or less	3.6	4.5	16.7	52.6
Senior high school	53.2	54.2	35.8	30.0
College and above	43.2	41.3	47.5	17.4
Income (\$US)	55704.3 (31764.0)	47892.0 (45184.6)	33741.1 (38236.4)	3472.5 (4862.4)
Health	3.6 (0.9)	3.8 (1.0)	4.0 (0.9)	4.0 (0.8)
<i>Eldest son^a</i>				
Yes	24.4	24.7	18.8	22.6
No	75.6	75.3	81.2	77.4
Number of siblings	1.6 (0.9)	2.8 (1.6)	3.3 (1.5)	2.5 (1.8)
Father's health	3.3 (1.0)	3.0 (1.2)	3.5 (1.1)	3.7 (0.9)
Mother's health	3.3 (1.0)	2.9 (1.1)	3.4 (1.1)	3.6 (1.0)
Familial piety	— (0.7)	— (0.7)	5.6 (0.7)	5.5 (0.8)
<i>Father currently lives with^a</i>				
Married children	22.3	8.0	36.0	26.5
Unmarried children	12.6	20.0	18.1	4.2
Spouse only	57.9	68.1	37.7	64.7
Living alone	1.8	2.1	3.3	2.9
Others	5.4	1.8	4.9	1.7
<i>Mother currently lives with^a</i>				
Married children	21.6	8.4	37.0	26.5
Unmarried children	13.5	20.3	19.1	4.2
Spouse only	57.7	68.4	37.7	64.5
Living alone	1.6	1.6	1.6	3.1
Others	5.6	1.3	4.6	1.7

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Variable	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan	China
Distance to father's (min)	84.3	108.2	84.4	77.5
	(85.6)	(83.5)	(85.4)	(87.6)
Distance to mother's (min)	83.5	107.1	81.9	77.5
	(85.1)	(83.2)	(83.3)	(87.8)
Face-to-face contact with father (times monthly)	4.0	3.0	7.1	6.4
	(6.9)	(5.0)	(9.4)	(8.5)
Indirect contact with father (times monthly)	4.5	10.5	8.5	7.1
	(6.8)	(8.6)	(8.5)	(7.6)
Face-to-face contact with mother (times monthly)	4.2	3.2	7.2	6.5
	(7.0)	(5.4)	(9.5)	(8.5)
Indirect contact with mother (times monthly)	5.5	11.1	8.8	7.2
	(7.4)	(8.8)	(8.5)	(7.6)

^aDenotes percentages; otherwise are means (s.d.)

you done the household chores for your parents? for the last 12 months?” The advantage of the EASS survey is that it simultaneously solicits both the providing of finances to parents from children and parents doing household chores to help their children. The response categories are all on a five-point scale: “very frequently”, “often”, “sometimes”, “seldom”, and “not at all”. Based on the above discussion, four groupings are constructed. First, those who give financial support to parents (from “very frequently” to “sometimes”) and receive assistance with household chores from parents (using the same coding method as above) are grouped into the type of balanced exchange. Exchanges between parents and their adult children can be unbalanced, in that either one may give more often than they receive, though this does not necessarily lead to a concern of unfairness, as an imbalance can be overridden by the primordial relationship built on blood. Adult children who give financial support frequently but receive housework assistance infrequently from parents (including “seldom” and “not at all”) are placed in the grouping of credited exchange. Those who are in an opposite situation are categorized as indebted exchange. Finally, both exchanges which seldom or never happen between the respondents and their parents are considered as self-reliance, and are expected to produce the least contact.

The balanced exchange as we have operationalized it does not imply parents or children are obligated to give the exact equivalent and demand immediate payback (which would be “symmetrical reciprocity”), since our operationalization focuses on exchanges of different elements, the values of which are hard to price (or should not be priced) within the family context. The concept of “balanced” reciprocity stresses the *disposition* of giving back following the receipt of a favor, to highlight the *sequential* reciprocity rather than interest-based calculation within a designated

period. The four exchanges do not exhaust all possible formats of reciprocation, further exploration of which will be discussed in a later section.

Number of siblings. The family structure perspective suggests examination of the number of siblings to evaluate the potential substitutional effect. This study calculates the number of siblings the respondents have and uses it as a predicting variable. Additionally, those respondents who are the eldest son (or the only son) are coded into a dummy to assess whether they are more likely to contact parents when they leave their parents' home.

Parental characteristics and residential distance. A number of parental characteristics are considered, as contact by children may be conditioned on these factors. Their level of health is measured on a five-point scale (5 = very good, 1 = very bad). Their living arrangement is regrouped into five categories: living with married children, with unmarried children, with spouse only, living alone, and other situations. Those living with the spouse only are used as a reference group in regression estimation, as this group may reveal more need of care, because children are not immediately available. Note that marital status (married or single) is not considered in the analysis, because most respondents' living parents remained in marriage (thus it is a constant variable). Distance of residence between parents and children was measured in minutes of traveling. The Chinese respondents reported an average of 78 min, which is the lowest among the four analyzed samples. In comparison, their counterparts from South Korea indicated the largest distance, which is 108 min for fathers and nearly the same for mothers (107 min). For the respondents from Japan and Taiwan, distance from parents ranged between 82 and 84 min. In general, children in East Asia, even after leaving the parents' home, tend to live close to parents geographically. However, the variation of distance in China is somewhat larger than that in other samples.

Several demographic characteristics of the respondents are included as control variables. Besides gender, age and education level, income and health are both considered, as the respondents with higher income and better health may be in contact with parents more frequently. Income is calculated as a standardized score for each country sample. Health is a self-rated score measured in the same way as for parent's health. In measuring filial piety as an individual's value, we used the responses to four questions: (1) I am grateful to my parents for raising me; (2) No matter how badly my parents treat me, I should still treat them well; (3) One should give up his/her interest or choice of career to fulfill parents' expectation; and (4) I should support my parents to make their life more comfortable. Note that these questions were only on the Taiwan and China surveys. On this seven-point scale, we coded "strongly agree" as 7 and "strongly disagree" as 1. The factor analysis revealed that one main factor is predominant because the items are highly inter-correlated. Respectively for Taiwan and China samples, we calculated a standardized score on the basis of the factor score coefficients and used it as a predicting variable.

2.6 Result and Analysis

A main motivation of this study is to observe whether exchanges between parents and adult children lead to higher frequency of contact. Figure 2.1 displays the patterns of intergenerational exchanges across East Asia. Nearly 28.7% of the respondents from China reported that they frequently offer financial assistance to parents, and their parents often help with the housework. In contrast, balanced exchange was least likely to be seen among Japanese respondents—about 8.5% reported so. The gap with Japanese respondents also is obvious among respondents in South Korea and Taiwan, as approximately 21% and 25% of the samples reported regular exchanges with parents, respectively. Credited exchange stands out as the most often-seen exchange type across generations in South Korea, Taiwan and China. For Taiwanese, a high proportion of 44.0% belong to this group. In contrast, only 7.8% of the Japanese respondents are identified as such. Indebted exchange is also popular among Japanese, with 28.6% of the sample grouped into this category. The other three samples show a relatively small percentage. The sharpest contrast is observed in the type of self-reliance. The Japanese register a high percentage of 53.0%. The Chinese come in second, with a substantial gap of 22.3%. Intergenerational exchanges, as indicated by the sequential reciprocation of adult children's upward financial flow and parents' help with housework, appear to be practiced much less frequently in Japan, in comparison to the other East Asian societies.

Table 2.3 reports the regression outcome of contact with parents among the Japanese respondents. The first panel shows the regression coefficients of the demographic backgrounds. Males are less likely to be in contact with parents in indirect ways,

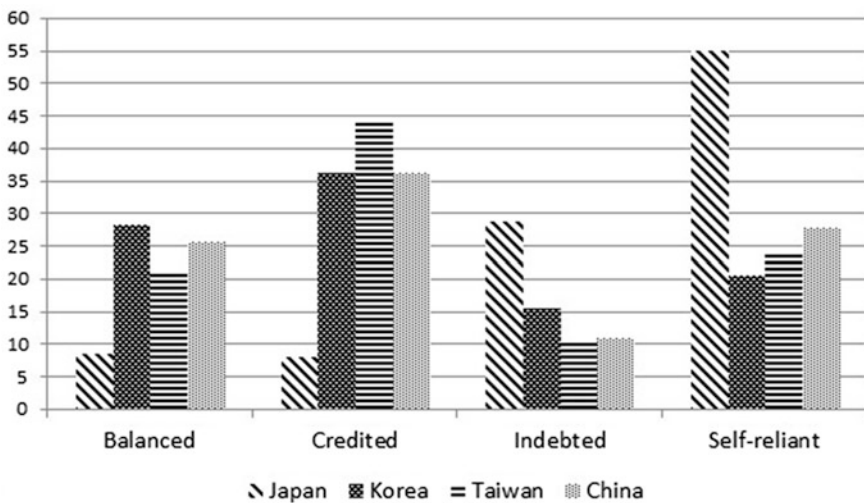


Fig. 2.1 Give money in exchange for housework from parents

Table 2.3 Contact with non-coresiding parents in Japanese families

	Face to face	Other contact	Face to face	Other contact
	With father		With mother	
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>				
Male	-1.205	-2.555**	-1.559	-3.866***
Age	0.164	-0.341	-0.009	-0.470
Age squared	-0.227	0.490	-0.058	0.602
High school (elementary or less = 0)	-0.093	-0.855	-0.770	-1.448
Some college or more	-1.352	-1.941	-1.773	-2.559
Married	-0.441	-0.208	-0.041	0.574
Income (standardized)	-0.724*	-0.319	-0.699	-0.303
Health	-0.561	0.262	-0.557	0.074
<i>Sibling status</i>				
Being eldest son	1.915	1.017	1.803	0.921
N of siblings	-0.316	-0.616	-0.280	-1.088**
<i>Parental characteristics</i>				
Parent's health	-0.016	0.143	-0.093	-0.191
Parent currently lives with (with spouse only = 0)				
with married children	-0.790	-0.807	-0.746	-1.465
with unmarried children	-0.740	2.220*	-1.060	1.739
living alone	-3.762	-3.162	-3.697	-1.509
others	-0.286	0.435	-0.728	0.257
Distance of residence	-0.275***	-0.087*	-0.290***	-0.103*
<i>Intergenerational exchange (Self-reliant = 0)</i>				
Balanced	5.107***	3.824**	5.321***	4.551***
Credited	0.550	3.320**	0.596	3.209*
Indebted	1.670*	2.352**	1.586*	2.570**
constant	6.639	11.273	11.545	18.769
Adj R ²	0.260	0.131	0.266	0.171
n	434	431	433	430

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

yet the male-female difference is statistically not discernible for face-to-face contact. Age, education, and self-rated level of health produce only scant influence. Those with higher income tend to be in contact with their fathers less frequently. However, income does not affect other forms of contact on this table.

The second panel tests the influences of family role and composition. Being the eldest son does not generate more contact, even though this variable carries the correct sign expected from the family lineage perspective. Nor do those with more siblings interact less often with parents, except on the other forms of contact with mothers (one more sibling decreases contact frequency by approximately one

instance per month). This outcome lends limited support to the family structure hypothesis.

Parental characteristics are usually used as proxies to reveal parental needs, which in turn encourage contact with children residing elsewhere. Our finding, however, shows that health of the parent has weak predictive power. Living arrangement is not associated with contact with children, except for non-face-to-face contact when parents live with other unmarried children. That is, being widowed or living alone, which suggests need for more regard and care from children, is not associated with more contact from children in Japanese society. When parents live farther from the children, as was expected, intergenerational interaction decreases substantially.

The last panel provides the result for testing the exchange hypothesis. For those engaging in balanced exchanges, their frequency of contact is significantly higher than the self-reliant group. The gap is slightly more than five times per month in terms of face-to-face contact. As for other forms of contact, the difference is also quite substantial. The credited exchanges similarly lead to more indirect contact (3.3 times per month with the father, and 3.2 times with the mother). When indebted exchange is practiced, contact also happens more frequently (approximately 2.5 times for either parent) in comparison to the self-reliant group. This contact might reflect compensational behaviors, as children offer regards or greetings in return for non-material assistance from their parents.

The estimation results for South Korean respondents are shown in Table 2.4. With regard to the demographic factors, males show more direct contact with either parent, a gendered difference dissimilar to what was observed among Japanese. The males' "other contact" is, however, not more habitual than females'. Age effect, a negative one, is shown only on indirect contact with the mother. Those with a college degree also report higher frequencies of contact of this type. Married respondents, compared to single persons, are in contact with parents more often, especially with the mother indirectly. Income does not play a major role in contact. Health is correlated solely with face-to-face contact with the mother.

Being the eldest son in South Korea, rather than enhancing contact, suppresses the contact frequency by about 1.7 times with both the father and mother per month. There seems to be a detached relationship between an eldest son and his father when living apart. This finding runs contrary to the role expectation of a patrilineage system. The number of siblings is not related to contact frequency across the table, showing weak predicting power of this family structure variable.

Parental characteristics do not perform well in predicting contact. Mothers who reported better health obtained less contact from their children. Health's effect is far from substantial in other equations. Mothers who live with unmarried children are more likely to have more contact with adult children, which might involve assistance with or care for minors. Distance remains a decisive factor: clearly it decreases contact frequencies in all equations.

Table 2.4 Contact with non-coresiding parents in South Korea

	Face to face	Other contact	Face to face	Other contact
	With father		With mother	
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>				
Male	1.500**	−0.702	1.812**	−0.856
Age	−0.036	−0.588	−0.054	−0.891*
Age squared	0.020	0.577	0.009	0.884
High school (elementary or less = 0)	1.430	3.347	1.183	3.685
Some college or more	0.874	5.120*	0.589	5.021*
Married	0.950	1.698	1.197	2.352*
Income (standardized)	0.062	0.293	0.073	0.252
Health	0.417	0.329	0.522*	0.389
<i>Sibling status</i>				
Being eldest son	−1.659*	−1.079	−1.753*	−0.687
N of siblings	−0.091	−0.025	−0.093	−0.050
<i>Parental characteristics</i>				
Parent's health	0.056	0.541	−0.493*	−0.620
Parent currently lives with (with spouse only = 0)				
With married children	0.407	0.429	0.185	1.445
With unmarried children	0.862	0.522	1.199*	0.905
Living alone	−1.563	−3.789	1.538	−0.225
Others	−1.506	−1.274	−0.843	−0.164
Distance of residence	−0.211***	−0.169***	−0.232***	−0.205***
<i>Intergenerational exchange (Self-reliant = 0)</i>				
Balanced	0.343	2.573*	0.708	3.400**
Credited	−1.171*	−0.532	−1.129	−0.232
Indebted	−0.033	−0.261	0.117	1.260
Constant	2.904	17.597	4.971	27.023
Adj R ²	0.206	0.136	0.227	0.171
N	512	512	507	508

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

In the last panel, the positive influence of balanced exchange is notable, particularly on indirect contact. Credited exchange seems to reduce face-to-face contact with the father. But this negative association is not strong in other equations on this table. Indebted exchange has little to do with contact.

The estimation result for the Taiwan sample, which is displayed in Table 2.5, reveals some notable influence of personal backgrounds. Males are more likely to be in contact with parents face-to-face, while their contact through other ways is not

Table 2.5 Contact with non-coresiding parents in Taiwan

	Face to face	Other contact	Face to face	Other contact
	With father		With mother	
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>				
Male	2.983**	−1.281	2.962**	−1.377
Age	0.045	−0.869*	−0.063	−0.674*
Age squared	0.041	1.140**	0.128	0.907*
High school (elementary or less = 0)	−0.238	1.907	−0.218	2.124
Some college or more	−1.878	2.672*	−1.740	3.041*
Married	−0.401	−1.261	0.229	−1.045
Income (standardized)	−0.356	0.061	−0.391	−0.071
Health	0.509	0.948*	0.951*	0.852
Familial piety	0.603	1.174**	0.470	1.070**
<i>Sibling status</i>				
Being eldest son	−1.743	−0.059	−2.154	0.087
N of siblings	−0.513	−0.335	−0.487	−0.338
<i>Parental characteristics</i>				
Parent's health	0.843*	0.571	−0.138	0.494
Parent currently lives with (with spouse only = 0)				
With married children	−1.642	−2.012*	−1.441	−1.638
With unmarried children	1.444	−0.070	1.118	−0.026
Living alone	−0.924	−1.129	−2.216	3.911
Others	−1.176	0.688	−2.146	0.292
Distance of residence	−0.506***	−0.176***	−0.517***	−0.158**
<i>Intergenerational exchange (Self-reliant = 0)</i>				
Balanced	3.697**	3.941**	4.253***	3.950**
Credited	−0.091	−0.512	−0.092	−0.230
Indebted	4.798***	2.705	5.099***	3.134*
constant	5.423	20.526	9.240	16.537
Adj R ²	0.354	0.173	0.346	0.165
N	429	429	430	430

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

less frequent (despite the negative regression coefficients), statistically speaking. Age carries a negative sign while age squared has a positive sign for “other contact”. This curvilinear relation reveals changing patterns over the life course. Respondents with a college degree are also indirectly in contact with parents more often. Health is a useful predictor for indirect contact with father and for direct contact with mother. Respondents with a high score on the piety scale have more indirect contact with parents.

The family structure hypothesis receives scant supportive evidence in Taiwan, as neither the eldest son nor number of siblings is associated with frequency of contact. As for the parental characteristics, the father's health correlates positively with direct face-to-face contact. This relationship seems to reflect the capability, rather than the need, of the fathers when they initiated the interactions with children. When the father lived with a married sibling, the respondents tended to have less contact, compared to when the father lived with his spouse. Other living arrangements do not have substantial influences on both forms of contact. Distance shows a notable influence consistently across the equations. The positive influences of balanced and indebted exchanges replicate what is observed in the Japanese sample. Credited exchange slightly reduces contact frequency, but its magnitude is not significant statistically.

Table 2.6 reports the estimation results from the Chinese sample. Males tend to have more contact with both parents. Respondents with better education were in indirect contact with parents more often. Marital status, income, health and piety value do not have substantial influence. Number of siblings is negatively correlated with indirect contact with both parents, supporting the compensation hypothesis as proposed from the family composition perspective. Being an eldest son, however, does not ensure more frequent contact with parents. Parental characteristics show little influence, except that living with married children decreases indirect contact. Yet, distance clearly reduces the opportunities for intergenerational contact. Both balanced and indebted exchanges once again generate positive effects consistently. Credited exchange is not associated with contact with parents in China.

2.7 Robustness Check

Two robustness checks are performed to ensure validity of the obtained findings. The first concerns the problematic situation of the single equation estimation. The previous regression estimations of various forms of contact were fitted one by one with the least squares techniques. Empirically, contact with each parent is highly correlated. That is, seeing the father and seeing the mother can happen simultaneously. Moreover, direct contact tends to be associated with indirect contact, as they both are parts of a continual interaction between parents and offspring. These correlations indicate that the error terms across different regression equations are highly correlated. This information can be employed to improve the precision of other regression equations under consideration. The seemingly uncorrelated regression (SUR) method can provide better and more efficient estimation in this situation than does the ordinary least squares method (even though the latter's estimation remains unbiased and consistent) (Felmlee and Hargens 1988; Zeller 1962). Following the joint estimation approach, we performed the SUR estimation for the four contact equations simultaneously for each country. The results improve to some extent but there are no major changes for the regression coefficient across tables.

Table 2.6 Contact with non-coresiding parents in china

	Face to face	Other contact	Face to face	Other contact
	With father		With mother	
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>				
Male	2.007**	1.683*	1.938**	1.442*
Age	0.168	−0.162	0.131	−0.156
Age squared	−0.240	0.223	−0.183	0.216
High school (elementary or less = 0)	0.250	1.405**	0.347	1.573**
Some college or more	−0.115	1.592*	−0.053	1.785**
Married	−0.613	0.371	−0.552	−0.007
Income (standardized)	−0.211	0.048	−0.268	−0.042
Health	−0.318	0.062	−0.261	0.055
Familial piety	0.161	0.234	0.103	0.339
<i>Sibling status</i>				
Being eldest son	0.552	−0.240	0.621	−0.214
N of siblings	0.065	−0.442**	0.058	−0.445**
<i>Parental characteristics</i>				
Parent's health	0.202	−0.109	0.211	−0.110
Parent currently lives with (with spouse only = 0)				
With married children	−0.742	−1.165*	−0.825	−1.245*
With unmarried children	2.105	−1.009	1.613	−1.179
Living alone	0.431	−0.299	0.084	0.041
Others	−1.167	−0.952	−1.239	−0.400
Distance of residence	−0.426***	−0.270***	−0.422***	−0.268***
<i>Intergenerational exchange (Self-reliant = 0)</i>				
Balanced	2.059**	2.420***	1.942**	2.505***
Credited	−0.026	0.841	−0.037	0.809
Indebted	3.117***	2.120**	3.125***	2.079*
constant	6.203	10.946	6.458	11.224
Adj. R ²	0.267	0.187	0.267	0.192
N	1017	951	1018	950

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

The second robustness check is an extension of the conceptualization of reciprocity, which is the key element in this study. As noted, the previous analysis concerns one form of exchange and is not exhaustive. Other types of exchange exist and may generate favorable influences as well. For instance, the pooling of familial finances can be seen as a distinct form of exchange, in which children and parents often offer financial help to each other when needs occur. As the EASS provides information for constructing various exchanges, this study additionally analyzes their potential influence on contact. The three dimensions of exchanges are taken into further account: (1) the pooling of finances across generations; (2) children

offer housework assistance in return for financial help from parents; and (3) children and parents assist each other with housework. For each dimension, four groupings were constructed and then entered into regressions as a set of dummies. The results show that in South Korea, the respondents who engaged in indebted exchange with parents in financial pooling reported more indirect contact (not shown to save space). Other exchanges also resulted in similar findings. In Taiwan, the financial pooling does not lead these offspring in indebted exchange to be involved in more frequent contact. Nor does any influence on contact appear in the exchange of children using housework to pay back for parental financial support. In both Japan and China, the other types of exchanges appear to enhance contact, as was observed in the previous regression tables. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the two important robustness checks assure that our findings are reliable against different approaches of estimation and operationalization.

2.8 Conclusions

Regular contact with parents when the offspring establish their own families indicates a robust intergenerational tie. Though contact behavior and frequency as studied in this chapter do not necessarily mean “quality interaction”, from the exchange perspective (Homans 1974), willingness to engage in contact continuously suggests that contact as such can be very rewarding itself. Admittedly, we are not able to directly measure the amount of such rewards. This constitutes one limitation of this study. Second, it is likely that contact breeds motivation to exchange, when intimacy, trust and solidarity are firmly built up as a consequence. Investigation of this causal process requires longitudinal observation. The cross-sectional data we used are not able to explore this possibility. This additional limitation is noted. Finally, as a research issue like ours targets a subsample rather than all the respondents in a survey, that is, our analysis is conducted with a smaller group of informants than ideally desired, statistical estimation might be affected with regard to reliability. With these limitations in mind, we now make our conclusion.

The adults in East Asian societies increasingly choose to establish their own residence rather than live with their parents. The key issue is whether this trend of separate living arrangement may have decreased opportunities for interacting with parents, hollowed out the ideal content of a home, and deprived this place of its emotional attachment and a sense of togetherness. In this study we approach this issue by examining the pattern of contact between adults and their parents, focusing on the subgroup that adopts separate living arrangements in this region. We investigated a number of potential factors which may facilitate such contact, and obtained several important findings. First, in comparing the pattern of living arrangements across this region, the Chinese adults in particular show a high propensity to live separately (nearly 77%). The Taiwanese show the lowest level (52.5%) of this, which nevertheless show a high incidence of independent housing.

Thus, living arrangements in modern East Asia clearly deviate from the orientalist idea of “big family” which presumably accommodates three or even more generations under the same roof. Second, frequency of contact with parents differs among the four analyzed samples, with Taiwanese adults in contact with their parents most regularly. Comparatively, Japanese were least frequently in contact with the parents. Third, in testing the competing factors of contact with parents, this study provides strong evidence for spatial distance and intergenerational exchange theories. Neither family structure nor parental demand exerts substantial influence. Filial piety, a widely discussed Confucian value, increases contact with parents in indirect ways in Taiwan but not in China. It does not play a significant role in influencing direct contact in both Chinese societies.

This study particularly stresses the significance of exchange across generations. It is through mutual reciprocation that adults and their parents can construct an active linkage, which induces further interactions and communications. A key contribution of this paper is specification of a new typology of exchange on the basis of social exchange theory. Among the four types of familial exchange, both balanced and indebted exchange operate to facilitate contact. In contrast, credited exchange produces only a weak effect, and this implies that financial support for parents seems to fulfill a responsibility so that infrequent contact can be justified. Balanced two-way exchange features a favorable consistent effect, suggesting that familial solidarity is not spontaneous and is a by-product of ongoing takes and gives.

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