

Session: International perspectives on the effects of the family structure
Session organizer: Professor dr. Kalmijn
Title of the Paper: Living arrangements in the Netherlands and Japan from a life course perspective
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Abstract

This paper investigates the living arrangements of individual women in the Netherlands and Japan. It will be based on data from the Netherlands Fertility and Family Survey 1998 (OG98) and the Japanese National Fertility Survey 1992 (JNFS92). Use is made of the life course approach and multi-state life table techniques. Through defining the state space by making use of three domains of life [(1) living arrangement; (2) partnership; and (3) fertility], an average life course of a synthetic cohort of women will be constructed. Several assumptions and estimations will be made to determine the timing of state transitions. By referring to the study of Second Demographic Transition, we will assess whether the living arrangements of Japanese women are as complex as those of Dutch women and, if not exactly the same, what form future living arrangements are likely to take.

Background

A number of earlier studies have demonstrated the increasing complexity of partnership and family formation behaviour over time (period and cohort) in the Netherlands (de Graaf and Steenhof, 1999; Matsuo and Willekens, 2003). It has already been found in previous analyses that later cohort women are experiencing over the early life course a larger number of state transitions and episodes of shorter duration (Matsuo and Willekens, 2003). One area in which this increased complexity is reflected is that of individuals' living arrangements. Women do not necessarily live with a partner and then get married with that same partner. Rather they repeat cycles of partnership and family formation behaviour with different partners. As a result, the number of single person and single parent households is on the rise (Coleman and Garssen, 2002). In Japan, on the other hand, in addition to the nuclear household, the extended family household is continued, while the proportion of one-person households or households with a partner only (couples only) are increasing (Nishioka, et al, 2000). As far as the partnership status is concerned, women in the later cohort spend more time in the 'never met partner' or 'met the partner' states illustrating the rejection of marriage and motherhood (Matsuo, et al). One reason for this rejection of the partnership career can be found in the increasing proportion of women spending more time in the parental home before deciding to leave it (Yamada, 1999) but also living alone (Yamamoto, 2001). So both the Netherlands and Japan are characterised by increasing diversity and complexity of living arrangements. All of these features reveal the complexity of the life course career. Marriage and fertility are no longer synonymous. Different domains of life such as partnership (marriage), fertility and living arrangement are increasingly disconnected. But there are substantial differences between these two countries. The use of individual data, while imposing some restrictions, is likely to reveal interesting insights in emerging patterns of living arrangements in both countries.

Research questions

(1) How many years are individual women likely to spend living alone, or living only with their partner between age 20 and 32 for Japanese women and age 20 and 38 for Dutch women?

(2) What are some of the similarities and differences between the Netherlands and Japan? Do we expect more women to live alone or live only with a partner in the Netherlands and more women to live with their parents in Japan?

Theoretical focus

Use is made in this paper of the life course approach and its core concepts as defined by Giele and Elder (1998): “location in time and place” and “linked lives”. The intersection between these two concepts and the individual is “timing”: age, period and cohort. In this paper we focus on “linked lives”, which is interpreted in both the broader sense (“cohort members”) and the restricted sense (“individuals sharing the same living arrangement”). The study also makes reference to the study of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1987) and the increasing diversity of households, which Van De Kaa takes as the fourth feature of the transition, namely, the “shift from uniform to pluralistic families and households” (1987, p.9).

Data

The Netherlands Family Formation Survey of 1998 (OG98) and the Japanese National Fertility Survey of 1992 (JNFS92) are used for the data analysis. OG98 contains information on individual biographies of 5,450 sampled women aged 18-52 years, and JNFS92 the same information for 8,844 ever married and 3,990 never married women. As for OG98, the data collects retrospective information on women concerning the occurrence and timing of marriages and cohabitations. As for marriages, up to the third order of formation and up to the second order of dissolution are recorded. As for cohabitation, up to the fifth order of formation and up to the fourth order of dissolution are recorded (Matsuo and Willekens, 2003). As for the JNFS92, number of variables pertaining to the living arrangement can be estimated from the information of variables on the occurrence of living in the parental home or living alone before marriage, occurrence of cohabitation experiences, number of household member at the time of marriage and the time of survey.

Method

A combination of the 3 domains of life produces many possible states and possible combinations between them, but in order to enable a quantitative analysis we need to reduce the number of states we work with. In our model, using OG98, we consider that when an individual cohabits or marries, that means “living with a partner”, if the individual have a child “living with a partner and have a child” and when the individual dissolves the partnership, that means, the individual occupies “living alone with children only”. Assumptions are made in this regard. For instance, a married woman is assumed to live together with her husband. A cohabiting woman lives with a partner. The Living Apart Together (LAT) arrangement is not considered in this case.

Multi-state life table techniques are used in this analysis. Definition of the state space and the state occupancies are the key concept in this method. Transition rates and transition probabilities are estimated by making use of the individual data recorded at the monthly level. The transition rate is obtained by dividing the number of state transitions (events) during an interval by the total duration at risk (exposure). Transition rates are converted into transition probabilities that assume that state transitions (event) occur anytime during the interval with equal probability density, thus, assumes that events are uniformly distributed during the interval. We make use of the computer programme, which calculates the transition rates, probabilities and produce the output of state occupancies, developed by Willekens (2002) after the preparation of the data recording at the monthly level.

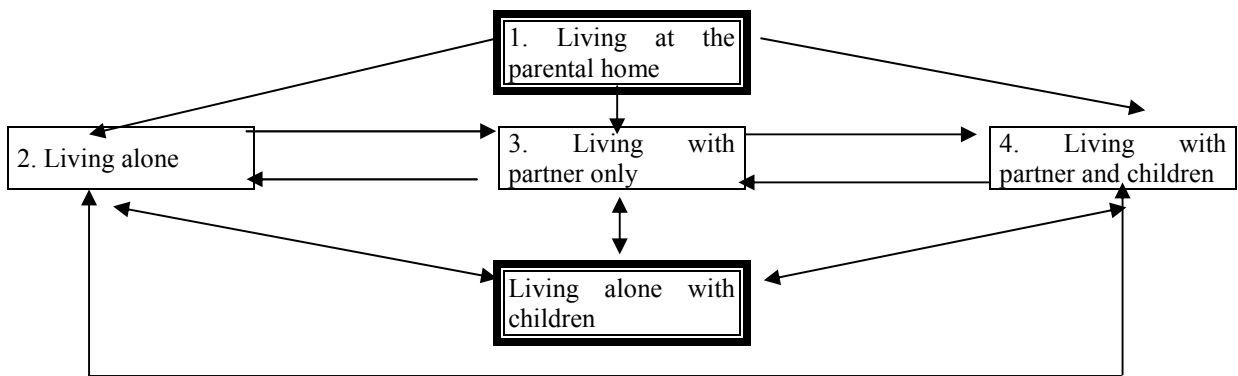
We distinguish 2 cohorts: women who are born before 1960 and born in 1960 and after. Therefore, the observation plan of the younger cohort records up until age 32 and 38 for Japanese and Dutch women respectively.

Proposed state space

The Netherlands:

1. Living at the parental home (origin state)
2. Living alone
3. Living with partner (both cohabiting and married) only
4. Living with partner and children
5. Living alone with child(ren)

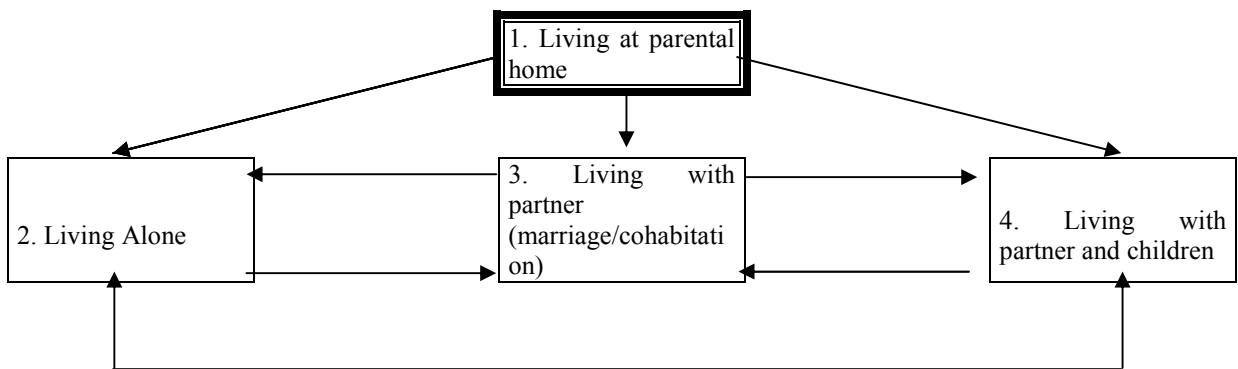
Figure 1: The state space applied to OG98: five-state model



Japan:

1. Living at the parental home (origin state)
2. Living alone
3. Living with partner (cohabiting or and married) only
4. Living with partner and children (nuclear household)

Figure 2: The state space applied to JNFS92: four-state model



Expected results

With reference to the increasing diversification of the life course, we expect Dutch women in the later cohort to live alone, live only with their partner, and live only with children longer (expressed as sojourn years and state occupancies) than Dutch women from the early cohort. As far as Japanese women are concerned, we expect those of the later cohort to spend more time living at the parental home, living alone, and living with the partner only (without children) than those of the early cohort. It is therefore expected that this data analysis will show that living arrangement become more complex and diversified in both countries. Linking this with the theoretical focus, we expect partnership status and living arrangement to become increasingly disconnected (partnership and living arrangement is not synonymous), particularly in the Netherlands, where the “shift from uniform to pluralistic families and households” (Van de Kaa, 1987, p.9) will be confirmed. We also expect the narrow interpretation of our theoretical concept of “linked lives”, namely the “individuals sharing the same living arrangement”, to become more important than its broader interpretation of “cohort membership” in terms of influencing the individual's partnership and family formation behaviour. Comparing the living arrangements of Japanese with those of Dutch women, we expect those of Japanese women not to be as complex as those of Dutch women and still show strong linkages between living arrangement and partnership status. What this finding seems to suggest in the later life course of these women in both countries is still the possibility of living with a partner despite the legal relationship between them in the Netherlands on one hand, but increasingly living alone without any partner in Japan on the other hand.

Conclusion

This paper investigates the living arrangements of individual women in the Netherlands and Japan by making use of the Netherlands Family Fertility Survey (OG98) and the Japanese National Fertility Survey (JNFS92). The increasing complexity of living arrangement in the Netherlands, reflected in the complex partnerships career, are not likely to be followed by the Japanese women. Japanese women, however, are expected to either follow the traditional standardised pattern of living arrangements, by getting married and having children or rejecting this living arrangement, reflected by either living at parental home, living alone or living only with a partner. Because of the Japanese relative lack of social welfare assistance compared to the Netherlands and the increasing downsizing of the state intervention for the elderly population in the future, this rejection of the standard living

arrangement in Japan is then expected to play more influence on the social welfare of the current young women (and man).

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