Social Indicators Research Series 47

Kalyani K. Mehta
Leng Leng Thang *Editors*

Experiencing Grandparenthood

An Asian Perspective

Experiencing Grandparenthood

Social Indicators Research Series

Volume 47

General Editor:

ALEX C. MICHALOS
University of Northern British Columbia,
Prince George, Canada

Editors:

ED DIENER
University of Illinois, Champaign, U.S.A.

WOLFGANG GLATZER
J.W. Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

TORBJORN MOUM
University of Oslo, Norway

MIRJAM A.G. SPRANGERS
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

JOACHIM VOGEL
Central Bureau of Statistics, Stockholm, Sweden

RUUT VEENHOVEN
Erasmus University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

This new series aims to provide a public forum for single treatises and collections of papers on social indicators research that are too long to be published in our journal Social Indicators Research. Like the journal, the book series deals with statistical assessments of the quality of life from a broad perspective. It welcomes the research on a wide variety of substantive areas, including health, crime, housing, education, family life, leisure activities, transportation, mobility, economic s, work, religion and environmental issues. These areas of research will focus on the impact of key issues such as health on the overall quality of life and vice versa. An international review board, consisting of Ruut Veenhoven, Joachim Vogel, Ed Diener, Torbjorn Moum, Mirjam A.G. Sprangers and Wolfgang Glatzer, will ensure the high quality of the series as a whole.

For further volumes:
http://www.springer.com/series/6548

Kalyani K. Mehta • Leng Leng Thang
Editors

Experiencing Grandparenthood

An Asian Perspective

Editors
Kalyani K. Mehta
Gerontology Programme
School of Human Development and Social Services
University of SIM
461 Clementi Road
Singapore 599491
kalyani@unisim.edu.sg

Leng Leng Thang
Department of Japanese Studies
National University of Singapore
9 Arts Link
Block AS4
Singapore 117570
Singapore
lengthang@nus.edu.sg

ISSN 1387-6570
ISBN 978-94-007-2302-3 e-ISBN 978-94-007-2303-0
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011939187

© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012
No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording or otherwise, without written permission from the Publisher, with the exception of any material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

The Editors

Associate Professor Kalyani K. Mehta

Kalyani K. Mehta is Head of the Gerontology Programme at University of SIM, Singapore. Her research interests are ageing-related policies and services, family caregivers, cross-cultural studies, grandparenthood, intergenerational ties and their impact on the well-being of older people. Her rich experience in the field of social gerontology spans the past 20 years. Dr. Mehta's PhD thesis on "The Dynamics of Adjustment of the Very Old in Singapore" started the passion for this specialisation. Although most of her research is conducted in Singapore, she has extensive knowledge of the Asia Pacific region. Her numerous publications include two co-authored books "*Understanding and Counselling Older Persons*" and "*Ageing in Singapore: Service Needs and the State*", six edited books, and more than 40 papers in international journals on social gerontology and social work. Dr. Mehta was Member of Singapore Parliament (2007–2009) by nomination, and during her term she spoke on ageing policies and services.

She is President of the Singapore Association of Social Workers and council member of the Singapore Gerontological Society. She is associate editor of the Singaporean journal "*Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*" and serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work and Asian Journal of Gerontology*. Internationally, Dr. Mehta has served as consultant to United Nations, Asian Development Research Forum and is currently advisor to the Asia Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong.

Associate Professor Leng Leng Thang

Leng Leng Thang is a socio-cultural anthropologist with research interest in ageing, intergenerational programming, intergenerational relationships and gender. She graduated with PhD in Anthropology from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is currently Associate Professor at the Department of Japanese Studies and member of steering committee of the health research cluster at Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore.

She writes extensively on ageing and intergenerational issues focusing mainly on Asia (especially Japan and Singapore), and is the author of "*Generations in Touch: Linking the Old and Young in a Tokyo Neighbourhood*" (Cornell University Press 2001) and co-author of "*Ageing in Singapore: Service Needs and the State*" (Routledge 2006). She is active in promoting intergenerational interaction and is vice chair of the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programs. She is also associate editor of *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* (Taylor & Francis). She provides consultancy on intergenerational programmes and ageing-related issues for various government and social service agencies in Singapore and is currently president of Singapore Fei Yue Family Service Centre.

Preface

Asia in the twenty-first century has experienced rapid socio-cultural, economic and family transformations as a result of modernisation, urbanisation and demographic ageing. Hailed as the next major challenge for Asia, the ageing of Asia is characterised by a record speed of ageing in many countries in Asia, much faster than what the Western nations have historically experienced. Asia will have an unprecedented number and proportion of grandparents amongst its population. For children in Asia who are shrinking in number with lower birth rate, it is becoming a norm to have living grandparents, great-grandparents and even great-great-grandparents in the family. With the feminisation of ageing, their living grandparents are also likely to be grandmothers.

What are the experiences of these grandparents living in such *exciting times*? It is with this enquiry that we offer this volume based on grandparents in five Asian countries to enhance the current state of literature on the growing segment of our world population – grandparents from an Asian perspective. Based primarily on an original qualitative research project of grandparenting in five Asian countries carried out by a multidisciplinary team of researchers from Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Hong Kong, the local grounded knowledge of the researchers offer unique observations in individual societies which contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic interplay between changing socioeconomic conditions and cultural saliency in affecting the intergenerational relations between the grandparents and the grandchildren. In addition to the above five countries, a chapter on China has been included to expand the comprehensiveness of the book.

Social changes bring to surface paradoxes that serve at once to define and redefine the nature of grandparenting and meanings of grandparenthood to the three generations within a family. In filling a gap in the current stock of knowledge on the study of grandparents in Asia, the volume seeks to answer the following questions: What is the state of grandparenting in the Asian context today? How do the roles and functions of grandparents differ depending on living arrangement, gender, age, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relations and changing health of the grandparents? What stresses are there with grandparenting and strategies adopted to manage intergenerational conflicts? What are the cultural, religious and social principles

that buttress the value of multigenerational ties? From the social linguistic perspective, how does an analysis of ageing discourse in different cultural contexts promote our understanding of intergenerational relationships?

The grandparents in the study, by and large, represent the range of families in these Asian societies. They are the witnesses to the economic and social developments that have swept across Asia affecting the cultural and social norms they used to hold. Whilst they grow up with respect for grandparents who usually have legitimate roles in the family, expecting to be cared for at home in old age and symbolising family authority and standing at the centre of family relations, the changing expectations of care and intergenerational living arrangements have left some of them at the margin of a nuclear family focus. Whilst some grandparents may still regard themselves as playing significant roles in the upbringing of their grandchildren, others have only little contacts with their teenage grandchildren. The grandparents in the study revealed their joys and dilemmas as grandparents, and implicated the coping strategies they deployed to negotiate and balance their desires with that of their adult children's and grandchildren's. As link parents, the middle generation showed appreciation to their older parents, but exposed the paradox of wishing for an appropriate distance in grandparent–grandchildren engagements. The grandchildren observed the mix of affection and tension between their parents and grandparents, and are mostly glad to have the grandparents around as providers of various sources of support. The volume's strength lies precisely in its rich body of qualitative three-generational data spanning five Asian countries. Such an intergenerational perspective on the study of grandparenthood, which includes in its analysis the views of three generations (grandparents, link parents and grandchildren), contributes to a new dimension of advancing our understanding of grandparenthood in the familial context.

The book is targeted for social researchers, academics, gerontologists, social workers, family therapists, community workers, policy makers, anthropologists, scholars of regional studies and grandparents themselves.

As you read this book, we hope that you will grasp the authentic voices of the Asian grandparents, who are different because of their different cultures and nationalities, yet similar due to their value and belief systems.

As co-editors, we would like to thank the contributors who have been patient and dedicated in their efforts to complete the project. We have gained much both personally and as scholars of gerontology through the process of completing this volume. As we walk life's journey as grandparents, link parents and grandchildren, and as we experience the stresses, frustrations, joy and satisfaction that comes with the different life stages, may we always remember to cherish those around us who have made our existence meaningful.

Kalyani K. Mehta
Leng Leng Thang

Acknowledgments

Our deepest gratitude goes to all the respondents – the grandparents, link parents and grandchildren – from families in the five countries. Without their voices, this book would not have been possible. We would also like to thank all the research assistants and interviewers from the different countries who have supported us in the project.

We are grateful for the funding support from the 3-year research grant provided by National University of Singapore (R-107-000-040-112), the supplementary grant from Waseda University, Japan (R-134-000-040-593) and for the Hong Kong study, the Direct Grant from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Project ID: 2020824). The Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore has funded the research conference for this project in October 2005 which contributed to the formulation of this volume.

Finally, we are indebted to our families and friends who have encouraged us at every stage to publish this book.

Contents

1 **Introduction: Grandparenthood in Asia** 1
Kalyani K. Mehta and Leng Leng Thang

2 **Changing Social and Demographic Characteristics in Asia** 21
Tsuneo Usui and Mari Tsuruwaka

3 **Grandparenting Roles and Functions** 47
Vivian W.Q. Lou and Iris Chi

4 **Meanings of Being a Grandparent** 61
Leng Leng Thang

5 **Stress and Conflict Management Strategies in Grandparenthood** 77
Kalyani K. Mehta

6 **The Socio-psychological Well-Being of Grandparents** 95
Peerasit Kamnuansilpa and Leng Leng Thang

7 **Custodial Grandparents and Intergenerational Support in Rural China** 109
Zhen Cong and Merril Silverstein

8 **Empowering Self-disclosure: The Active Post-retiree Life Accounts of Malaysian and Singaporean Senior Citizens** 129
Maya Khemlani David and Kuang Ching Hei

9 **Conclusion: Change and Continuity of Grandparenting in Contemporary Asia** 145
Leng Leng Thang and Kalyani K. Mehta

Index 159

Contributors

Iris Chi University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 90089-0411, CA, USA, ichi@usc.edu

Zhen Cong Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Texas Tech University, Box 41230, Lubbock, TX 79409, USA, zhen.cong@ttu.edu

Maya Khemlani David Member of the International Advisory Board of Linguapax, Head of Section for Co-Curricular Activities, Elective Courses by Other Faculties and TITAS (SKET), Staff of Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Languages & Linguistics, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, mayadavid@yahoo.com

Kuang Ching Hei English Language Department, Faculty of Languages & Linguistics, University of Malaya, 50603 Lembah Pantai, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, kuangch@um.edu.my

Peerasit Kamnuansilpa College of Local Administration, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand, peerasit@kku.ac.th

Vivian W.Q. Lou Department of Social Work & Social Administration, Sau Po Centre on Ageing, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, People's Republic of China, wlou@hku.hk

Kalyani K. Mehta Gerontology Programme, School of Human Development and Social Services, University of SIM, 461 Clementi Road, Clementi 599491, Singapore, kalyani@unisim.edu.sg

Merril Silverstein Davis School of Gerontology and Department of Sociology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0191, USA, merrils@usc.edu

Leng Leng Thang Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore, Blk AS 4 # 03-32, 9 Arts Link, Singapore 117570, Singapore, lengthang@nus.edu.sg

Mari Tsuruwaka St Luke's College of Nursing, 10-1 Akashi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0044, Japan, tsuruwaka@slcn.ac.jp

Tsuneo Usui School of Human Sciences, Waseda University, 2-579-15 Mikajima, Tokorozawa Saitama 359-1192, Japan, tusui@waseda.jp

Chapter 1
Introduction: Grandparenthood in Asia

Kalyani K. Mehta and Leng Leng Thang

Have you ever wondered why the word grandparent has the 'parent' component in it? Is it because grandparent is one's parent's parent OR is it because a grandparent has the love and compassion of a parent? As this book focuses on the Asian grandparent, let us take a quick look at the terminology to gain some insights. In Mandarin language, the paternal grandfather is *Ye Ye*, and the grandmother is *Nainai*. The maternal grandfather is *Waigong*, and the grandmother is *Waipo*. Respectively, in Thai, the paternal grandfather is *Pu*, and the grandmother is *Ya*; the maternal grandfather is *Dta*, and the grandmother is *Yai*. In the Malay language, the corollary is *Datuk* and *Nenek*. No distinction is made between maternal and paternal lineage. Similarly, in Japanese language, the grandfather is *Ojiisan*, and the grandmother is *Obaasan*. The most interesting, in our opinion, is the term in Gujarati for paternal grandmother, *Baa*, and for the grandfather, *Dada*. The term for maternal grandmother is *Nani*, and the grandfather is *Nana*. They are simple words, easy for a young toddler to remember and to vocalise. This examination of linguistic terms of address reveals that, in some cultures, lineage is extremely important as in Chinese and Gujarati; thus, different words are used for maternal and paternal lineages.

K.K. Mehta (✉)
Gerontology Programme, School of Human Development and Social Services,
University of SIM, 461 Clementi Road, Clementi 599491, Singapore
e-mail: kalyani@unisim.edu.sg

L.L. Thang
Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore,
Blk AS 4 # 03-32, 9 Arts Link, Singapore 117570, Singapore
e-mail: lengthang@nus.edu.sg

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_1,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

In some languages, the word for 'grandfather' is similar to 'father', and this is echoed for grandmother and mother. Did our ancestors prescribe that one's parent's parent is meant to be as close as the parent? An Asian Indian saying goes: 'More valuable than one's investment is the interest we gain from the investment' (here, investment refers to children, and interest refers to grandchildren). Many a time, we hear older generations saying that they did not have ample time to play with their children, unlike the unlimited time they have for their grandchildren!

1 The Attention on Grandparenthood

Scholarly interest in grandparent–grandchild relationships has grown dramatically since the mid-1980s, with global trends in demographic and family transformations. Amongst the discourses on grandparenthood is the general recognition of the diversity and complexity in understanding what entails being a grandparent (Bengtson and Robertson 1985; Giarrusso et al. 1995; Silverstein and Bengtson 1997; Silverstein et al. 2003). As Vern Bengtson mentions in one of the early influential works on grandparenthood: 'the growing body of empirical research points to the heterogeneity among grandparents, to the dangers in stereotyping and overgeneralizing, and to the likelihood of increasing differentiation in grandparents' roles in the future' (Bengtson and Robertson 1985: 11). This is reinforced by Silverstein et al. (2003) in their review of the role of grandparents in the family system. Whilst commenting that 'the contribution of grandparents is an important but often overlooked resource in promoting optimal family functioning' (2003: 77), they note that, despite an unprecedented increase in the number of grandparents across societies with longer life expectancy, there are 'few explicit expectations concerning the responsibilities and proscribed behaviour of grandparents, the act of grandparenting is often fraught with uncertainty over the appropriate type and level of involvement grandparents ought to have with grandchildren' (Silverstein et al. 2003: 78).

Nonetheless, despite the heterogeneity of what determines the roles and behaviours of grandparents, we see in the development of the literature on grandparenthood a greater research interest in the significance and contributions of grandparenthood to roles in the family. From the classical family sociological model of the older generations being peripheral to family life (Goode 1964), there is now an increasing awareness on the significant roles played by grandparents in ensuring the stability of families and the well-being of younger generations (Copen and Silverstein 2007; Hagestad and Uhlenberg 2006; Uhlenberg and Cheuk 2010).

The symbolic significance of grandparents in promoting family stability has been one of the most acknowledged contributions, although Bengtson reminds us of the equally varied dimensions of such a role (Bengtson and Robertson 1985: 21). The symbolic dimensions of the grandparent's role are identified as ranging from the sheer presence of grandparent as a symbol of family continuity, as being a family historian, mentor, role model, nurturer, 'national guard' (Hagestad 1985) and 'family watchdog' (Troll 1983), as transmitters of values, and as arbitrators for the parent

and grandchild, to, more conceptually, their central place in the social construction of one's biography. In summary, grandparents play a significant role by 'being there', because as links to the past, present and future, they give meaning to what generations within a family are about (Bengtson and Robertson 1985).

In recent years, much attention has been given to grandparents' contribution in terms of their caregiving support to the young. In the United States, the discussions on grandparents as caregivers are most commonly situated within the sphere of skipped-generation households, which have arisen largely from the awareness of the plight facing 'grandparents raising grandchildren', a term that has come to refer mainly to grandparents who have custodial care of their grandchildren because of marital breakdown, drug abuse, AIDS, child abuse, incarceration of the adult child or parents' migration to work in the cities and overseas (Fuller-Thomson et al. 1997; Minkler and Fuller-Thomson 2005; Goodman and Silverstein 2001; Hayslip and Kaminski 2005). Whilst studies on custodial grandparenting, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, have focused mostly on the African-American community in the United States (Burton 1992; Burton and Bengtson 1985), more recently, as children living in grandparent-headed families have increased substantially – from 3.2% of children in 1970 to more than 5% in 1997 (Fuller-Thomson and Minkler 2001: 201) – custodial grandparents have been more duly recognised as an equally diverse group with differences in gender, age, culture and ethnicity (see Hayslip and Patrick 2006; Goodman 2007). However, whilst acknowledging the important role of grandparents in ensuring the well-being of grandchildren, especially from at-risk families, Uhlenburg and Cheuk (2010) caution against exaggeration on the extent to which grandchildren are cared for by their grandparents, stating that more than half of the children living in a grandparent's home have their parents living in the same household; thus, the actual proportion of grandchildren in skipped-generation households headed by grandparents should be only about 2%. Moreover, the current proportion of grandchildren in skipped-generation households could not be considered high if compared historically (Pebley and Rudkin 1999).

The recent two decades of scholarly and popular attention on grandparents as caregivers in skipped-generation households in the United States indeed highlight the social norm of little expectation for grandparents to care for their grandchildren. Such a norm is generally more prevalent in developed countries, where nuclear family arrangements and the preference for individual autonomy and generational independence dominate. In a comparative study of American and Mexican grandparents in the United States, Hayslip et al. (2006a) found that American grandparents, whether traditional or custodial, equally perceive a clear distinction between being a grandparent and a parent; as traditional grandparents cherish the lack of responsibility in caring and disciplining their grandchildren, custodial grandparents lament about having to forgo the traditional grandparent role now that they have to assume an authoritative parental role towards their grandchildren. In contrast with the Mexican-born custodian grandparents, the American custodial grandparents tend to emphasise the negative impact of caregiving.

However, despite the perception that an ideal grandparent should be one who has the freedom to enjoy the grandchildren without the responsibility of caring for and

disciplining them, developments in the grandparenthood discourse, particularly on Western societies, seem to suggest a diversion from the 'traditional' carefree norm in grandparenthood. For instance, studies on childcare arrangements in the United States have shown that grandparents do play a significant role in childcare, especially in families where mothers are employed, as well as assisting in caring for grandchildren who have special needs. Quite often, grandparents are the reliable source of help when parents require childcare after school, during the weekends or holidays (see Uhlenberg and Cheuk 2010). The trend is also observed in Europe, as data from 10 European countries in the 2004 Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement reveal that half of the grandparents (with grandchildren under age 15) were reported to have provided some care to a grandchild in the past year (Hank and Buber 2009). In 2010, a special issue on grandparenting in Europe featured in the Journal of Intergenerational Relationships further reveals the awareness and wide influence of grandparents in the context of changing intergenerational relationships in contemporary Europe (Harper et al. 2010).

In Australia, grandparents form part of the regular childcare support for more than one-fifth of children below school age (Goodfellow and Laverty 2003). A Grandcaring study project in Australia, which aimed to understand grandparents as informal caregivers, has classified the carers into four types: 'avid carers', 'flexible family carers', 'selective carers' and 'hesitant carers' (Goodfellow and Laverty 2003). The difference in caring types reflects variations amongst grandparents as caregivers, which will be better reflected through a continuum in grandparents' care commitments and their personal sense of autonomy and independence. Whilst 'avid carers' at one extreme are those who are fully committed to their grandchildren, 'hesitant carers' at the other end are those who desire balance in their lives; hence, they are only willing to play a small part in grandchild care, if any. The study identifies overseas-born grandparents to be more inclined to be 'avid carers', suggesting a potentially stronger commitment to family care and contribution, alongside their roles in transmitting cultural and family traditions to the younger generations.

2 The Traditional Grandparent: An Asian Perspective

Contrary to the Western perspective of what constitutes a 'traditional' grandparent and the motivations for becoming one, in Asian societies, older persons are traditionally said to look forward to achieving the status of grandparent because it defines their contributions, value and central position within the family. Guided by Confucius' teachings of status accorded through seniority in age, and of the cultural norm of filial piety especially emphasised in East Asian cultures, the older generation is venerated and enjoys a high status in the traditional family. The popular image of extended family living arrangements in Asian societies further facilitates intergenerational interaction, where grandparents are expected to transmit to their grandchildren traditions, cultures and values, and where the young, who have learnt the proscribed rules, social rituals and proper behaviours within the family and society, are expected to pass these on in turn to the next generation. The teaching

and care of grandchildren are thus expected responsibilities of a traditional grandparent; they play specific roles in ensuring family stability and cultural continuity.

The most common role expected of grandparents in Asian families seems to be as provider of care to their grandchildren. This is not only common in co-residential households (Hermalin et al. 1998), but occur even if they are not living with their grandchildren, such as caring for their grandchildren who live with them during the week, and only return to their own working parents during the weekends, or caring for them during the day until their parents return from work in the evening. With higher educational attainment amongst women, economic demands for dual-working households and market and state desirability for women to enter the workforce to counter workforce attrition due to population ageing, more women are likely to enter and stay in work. This means that grandparents will continue to play important roles as caregivers for their grandchildren, especially in financially struggling families where grandparents will inevitably be regarded as the most economical resource for childcare arrangements.

Although caregiving in intact families forms the basis for most studies on grandparents caring for grandchildren in the Asian context (Goh 2007; Vo-Thanh-Xuan and Liamputtong 2003; Teo et al. 2006; Strom et al. 1996), it does not preclude the existence of similar phenomena of skipped-generation households, which have dominated the ‘grandparent as caregiver’ discourse in the Western context. Whilst on the one hand those grandparent-headed families which exist as a result of HIV-AIDS or migration from rural to urban cities and sojourning overseas for work face similar challenges in poverty and health problems amongst the ageing grandparents (Knodel et al. 2002; Kamnuansilpa and Wongthanavasu 2005), on the other hand, as shown in a study of older persons as custodial caregivers in the rural Anhui province in China, custodial parents tend to have better health and great wealth compared to their non-custodial counterparts as their caregiving roles allow their adult children the freedom to migrate for better jobs and provide remittances (see Chap. 7 in this volume and Silverstein 2005).

The dominance of grandparents’ roles as care providers for their grandchildren has encouraged research on grandparenthood in Asian families to focus on the challenges facing grandparents as caregivers. Whilst these studies reveal the grandparents’ sense of cultural and social expectations to provide care, they also express ambivalence in grandparenting experiences (e.g. Teo et al. 2006; Goh 2007; Chun and Lee 2006), suggesting the coexistence of solidarity and conflict in intergenerational ties (Connidis 2001).

3 Does the Traditional Grandparent Still Exist?

Across Asia, whilst the image of a happy grandparent surrounded by a crowd of grandchildren in a multigenerational household is still widely idealised, in reality the sweeping social changes that are increasingly felt within individual families and society are giving rise to a shift in expectation of the role and function of grandparents that will further affect one’s experience in grandparenthood. How do grandparents

view themselves in terms of their contributions to the family, and how do they and others in the family perceive the meaning of grandparenthood in the midst of such sweeping currents?

The focus on the Asian perspective is timely. Asia in the twenty-first century has experienced rapid sociocultural, economic and family transformations as a result of modernisation, urbanisation and demographic ageing. The interaction of these forces has led to dramatic consequences and is 'redefining what it means to grow old in Asia' (Ling 2007, 2009; Yoon and Hendricks 2006: 2). Similarly, they are also redefining what it means to be a grandparent in a changing Asia. As Usui and Tsuruwaka's discussion of the demographic and sociocultural characteristics of the region in Chap. 2 shows, with lower birth rate and ageing trends, there will be more living grandparents but a shrinking number of grandchildren in the family. Whilst the trend towards the 'beanpole family' (Bengtson et al. 1990) appears inevitable, the vertical extension of family structure does not necessarily imply close links amongst and between the generations within the extended family structure. As Usui and Tsuruwaka (Chap. 2) and Lou and Chi (Chap. 3) emphasise, the changes in family and living arrangements, especially the trend towards nuclear households and the rise of elderly only households in Asian societies, are pertinent in modifying intergenerational exchanges and transfers, and in turn affecting the experience of grandparenthood.

Compared to the rapid transformations underway, research on the current state of grandparenthood in Asia is still relatively scant. In filling a gap in the current stock of knowledge on the study of grandparents in Asia, this volume seeks to contribute to an understanding on the state of grandparenting in the Asian context today. How do the roles and functions of grandparents differ depending on gender, age, the relationship with daughters and daughters-in-law and the changing health of the grandparents? What are the perceptions regarding grandparenting held by different generations – parents and children – and does it change with different roles, such as father–son and mother–daughter? What stresses accompany grandparenting, and what strategies are applied to manage/resolve intergenerational conflicts? What are the cultural, religious and social principles that buttress the value of multigenerational ties? From the sociolinguistic perspective, how does an analysis of ageing discourse in different cultural contexts promote our understanding of intergenerational relationships?

What new configurations can the study suggest from the present cohort of grandparents in Asian societies? Will they be remarkably different from the image of a traditional grandparent?

4 Some Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives on Grandparenting

4.1 Intergenerational Relations

A review of literature on intergenerational relations in Asia shows the predominance of situating the intergenerational relations in the familial realm (Thang 2010). The focus on the familial arena by researchers of the past is logical, as the intergenerational

relationships of older people are primarily parent–child and grandparent–grandchild connections. This is particularly the case amongst the current cohorts of Asian elders in their 70s and 80s. Many have sacrificed most of their middle age to raise their children and circumscribed their social lives to the extended family relations. For the lower-income groups, their limited financial income would have been spent on their children; in particular, many ladies would have focused on nurturing their children and later on grandchildren. For the less mobile, it is natural that the physical, social and emotional aspects of their daily lives revolve around the family axis.

Researchers in the past have documented the critical part played by positive social interactions with other generations in the family towards the satisfaction of the elders with their lives. In fact, conversations and shared activities with grandchildren contribute in a great way towards staving off depression and loneliness amongst older persons. Whilst instrumental support or practical assistance meets the physiological needs of the older generation, and financial security acts like a buffer for illnesses, not enough has been researched on the socio-emotional aspects of intergenerational ties.

4.2 Living Arrangements

Much has been discussed about the importance of living arrangements in determining the extent and nature of social support received and provided by older persons (Mehta et al. 1995; Mehta 1999; Knodel and Debavalya 1997; Chan 1997). Older peoples' most common living arrangement in Asia even today is co-residence with their adult children. Whilst recent trends reveal that the rate of co-residence is dropping in some countries including Korea, Japan and Taiwan, in countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong, the changes are not as drastic (see Chap. 2). Apart from changing social norms, it is possible that soaring housing prices and rentals may have some part to play in discouraging adult children from moving out. Deliberate government policies such as concessions for adult children to live in proximity to their aged parents also illustrate 'social engineering' strategies to encourage co-residence or living in proximity.

4.3 Filial Responsibility and Filial Piety

It is not possible to talk about intergenerational ties without reference to the concepts of filial responsibility and filial piety. The traditional contract (Bengtson and Allen 1993; Conception and Perez 2006) is still alive in Asia, and the interdependence between generations for the provision of care propels multigenerational households. Where it is impractical for three generations to live under one roof, alternative arrangements such as living nearby or living in the same compound are made, as conceptualised by Shanas et al. (1968) as 'intimacy at a distance'.

Social exchanges and reciprocity of goods and services of a great variety are transferred easily within a household. However, the downside is that conflicts and differences of opinion between family members of different generations are also likely. The romanticism of filial piety, to some extent, is prevalent in the minds of older generations. Hence, the need arises to revisit these concepts and examine their change in meaning in contemporary society (see Mehta and Ko 2004, for more discussion on this).

4.4 Family Solidarity and Ambivalence

For the current research that forms the backbone of this book (grandparenting in five Asian countries), we started out with the 'family solidarity' model proposed by Bengtson et al. (1976). As our research progressed, from the voices of our respondents through in-depth interviews, we 'heard' signs of ambivalence from all the generations that parallel with the more recent literature on the concept of ambivalence (e.g. Bengtson et al. 2002; Pillemer and Luscher 2004). The former article concludes that 'ambivalence, solidarity and conflict are not competing, antagonistic approaches to family relationships. This is not a clash of paradigms… Rather, each of these concepts can be useful in understanding and explaining intergenerational ties' (p. 575). The latter literary source offers a working definition of ambivalence:

> For the purpose of sociological research (on intergenerational relations), it is useful to speak of ambivalence when polarised simultaneous emotions, thoughts, volitions, actions, social relations, and/or structures that are considered relevant for the constitution of individual or collective identities are (or can be) interpreted as temporarily or even permanently irreconcilable. (Pillemer and Luscher 2004: 36)

For scholarly purposes, when a reasonably acceptable definition is prevalent, researchers can 'speak the same language' and make fair comparisons.

In a more recent publication by Izuhara (2010), the topic of intergenerational relations from a global perspective is examined. The chapter on theoretical perspectives by Katz and Lowenstein is an excellent review of the theoretical development of scholarly work on the subject of solidarity, conflict and ambivalence. An important question asked in their discussion is whether social structural arrangements, by their very existence and operation, promote ambivalence. We can even extend this line of logic and add that not only social structures but also opposing social forces in society promote ambivalence.

How do opposing social forces promote ambivalence amongst family members across generations? Hermalin et al. (1998) report that from their surveys in Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand, co-resident grandparents contribute in a substantial way towards childcare services. In these countries, the percentage of grandparents who made this contribution was 50%, 66% and 60%, respectively. The authors predicted that future grandparents of the baby boomer generation may prefer a more independent lifestyle free from grandparenting responsibilities. This is mirrored in the Singapore context, with grandparents expressing in focus groups the fact that

they 'felt worn down by the commitment of childcare, and many expressed a desire to stop or do less' (Teo et al. 2006: 125). When adult children approach grandparents such as those in the focus groups to help in child-raising tasks, it can be expected that such grandparents would experience ambivalence.

To conclude this discussion, let us refer to Verbrugge and Chan's article (2008) in which the theory of 'time for money' is argued for. In some families in Singapore, where the elders have low level of personal material resources and they depend on their adult children for old-age support, the social exchange consists of childcare for financial support.

4.5 Social Capital

For ageing cohorts, their bounty of social capital is perhaps their greatest strength. Social support, social relations, friendships and associations serve to give them a sense of 'warmth' and belonging in the larger society. The truth is that social capital is built over the life course, and if some older people have not gained adequate amounts of this capital, their quality of life is negatively affected. Prior to the industrial revolution, agricultural economies facilitated the growth of social capital; after the industrial revolution, competition at all levels has increased, and this has caused a breakdown of families, friendships, relationships in the workplace and communities. Whilst professions such as social workers try to build community life (Stepney and Popple 2008) and social policies create mechanisms to build strong communities, there are many threats to the survival of communities, such as urban renewal projects and natural, as well as man-made, disasters.

4.6 Individualisation Theory

The individualisation theory (Beck 1999, 2001; Beck-Gernsheim 2002, and Giddens 1994, cited in Kemp 2004) expands on the argument that with globalisation, traditions and familial relationships have lost their strong role in peoples' lives. As individuals are freed from the constraints of tradition, new possibilities exist for shaping individual lives and relationships (Kemp 2004: 501). Included in this theory is the concept of 'institutionalised individualism' – i.e. that the rights, entitlements and responsibilities in most societies are designed largely for individuals rather than the family. However, in those societies with policies aimed at families as well as individuals, tensions and contradictions are bound to arise. The currents of social forces may affect the younger generations differently from the older generations. Hence, in Asian societies, it is of scholarly interest to find out how the grandparents and the grandchildren negotiate their relationships in the midst of rapidly changing societal conditions.

4.7 Life Course Perspective

In sociological discourse, the life course concept was first introduced by Leonard Cain (1964) in his classic paper ‘Life Course and Social Structure’. Cain discussed age as a feature of both individuals and social structure, thus laying the key foundation for the development of this perspective (Cain 1964 cited in Dannefer and Settersten 2010: 3). Life course analysis lends itself well to the examination of intergenerational relationships and transfers because it embraces the idea of cohort analysis and the impact of social structure on interpersonal ties. The life course perspective implies that the life course transitions and trajectories of individuals are inextricably linked to the transitions and trajectories of significant others (Elder 1994, in Bengtson and Lowenstein 2003).

The application of the life course perspective to grandparenting brings to the fore the importance of the sociocultural context, the historical period and the family as a system of ‘mutually interacting actors’ (Bengtson and Lowenstein 2003: 83).

To help us understand better the two different yet interrelated approaches embedded within the life course perspective, we turn to the personological and institutional paradigms. The personological approach ‘attempts to use key features of early life experience to predict and account for outcomes later in life, either for individuals or for populations’. The institutional paradigm does not focus on individuals. It ‘analyses the life course as a social and political construct, often consisting of more or less explicitly defined age-graded stages that are reinforced in institutions, created by social policy, or legitimated by social and behavioural sciences’ (Dannefer and Phillipson 2010: 7).

Innumerable studies have followed from the 1960s that focused on one or both of these approaches. How does our current research in this volume on three-generational families address the issues raised by the two approaches? When we conducted the in-depth interviews with triads from the same family, we asked questions about their past, present and future. We also tried to ‘unscramble’ and ‘reassemble’ the nuances of interpersonal family relationships. The effort can be best summarised by the statement made by Dennefer and Settersten that ‘The life course perspective sensitises social gerontology to ‘linked lives’ and their expanding significance in the context of global ageing’ (2010: 14).

With reference to the enactment of the grandparent role over the life course, it is interesting to note from other studies that: ‘The findings suggest an ebb and flow to grandparent role performance in which the script governing the role varies according to family life stage’ (Silverstein and Marenco 2001: 518). The role performance is also dependent on proximity/distance and living arrangements. It can be seen that the interaction between grandchildren and the grandparents may also be linked to the closeness between the link generation and the grandparent generation. Lastly, the health of the grandparents and the needs of the link generation and the grandchildren also play an important part in the exchange of transfers and care. The life

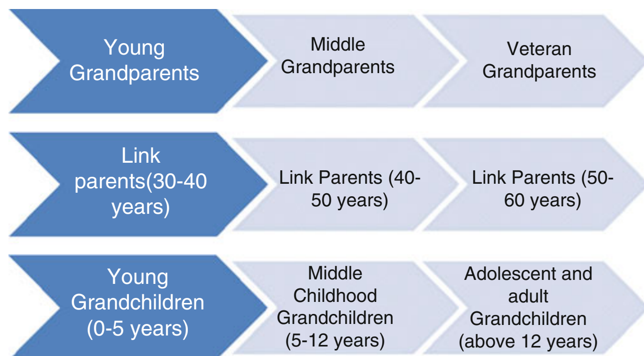

Fig. 1.1 Life course and three generations on the 'Go'

course perspective implies that the life course transitions and trajectories of individuals are inextricably linked to the transitions and trajectories of significant others (Elder 1994, in Bengtson and Lowenstein 2003).

4.8 The Social-Developmental Perspective

This perspective emphasises the changing and evolving relationships that endure over time as the social development process occurs within the people in the different generations. It adds an additional layer of consideration to the analysis of intergenerational ties (Silverstein, Giarrusso & Bengtson, in Bengtson and Lowenstein 2003). The social-developmental perspective has many similarities with the life course perspective in the overlapping sociological lens, but the difference arises with the greater depth in which the social-developmental perspective examines family life cycle stages along with the individual's social stages. The life course perspective tends to concentrate on the cohort in which the individual is located as well as the historical era. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of overlap in the life course and the social-developmental perspectives.

4.9 Conceptual Framework

In 'linked lives', grandparents link parents and grandchildren as 'mutually interacting actors' move parallel across the life cycle of the family (see Fig. 1.1). Solidarity and conflicts can be predicted as they are on the 'go'. There are 'high risk' points and 'low risk' points for interfamilial conflicts across generations with the move.

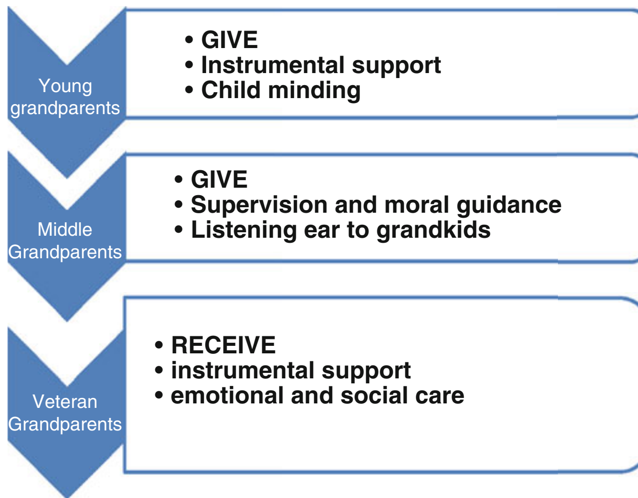

Fig. 1.2 Support and care between alternate generations over time

Which points in the diagram above can we identify as the high risk points when conflict is more likely to occur, and which would be the low risk points? Would these be universal or culture-specific? We hope an examination and analysis of the data from five countries will shed some light.

4.10 Reciprocity

The concept of reciprocity (Antonucci 1985) has been discussed in the literature for decades. Immediate, deferred (across the life course) and generalised (over time and across generations) reciprocity are probably universal terms now. However, in this volume, we wish to address: Under what conditions are the probabilities of an intimate relationship between grandparents and grandchildren likely to be nurtured in the Asian context? What are some obstacles that may prevent the development of a close relationship between the alternate generations? Is the concept of reciprocity enough in explaining the 'giving' and 'receiving'?

The above figure (Fig. 1.2) emphasises the two-way direction of support and care between the 'grand-relations' over time and according to the needs and resources of each generation. Many scholarly works have highlighted the bidirectional nature of exchange of goods and services between the adult generation and the elder parent generation in the context of caregiving. However, less attention has been paid by scholars to the dynamic and evolving nature of exchanges between grandchildren (as they grow up) and grandparents (as they grow older). Whilst the roles of the grandparents (grandmothers in particular) in childminding are becoming more visible and even expected, as more women in the link generation are entering the

labour force in dramatic numbers, fuelled by the rise in educational levels of women as well as the rise in cost of living, how will it juxtapose with the contrary expectations of the more 'individualised' grandparents desiring for their own time and space? Teo et al. (2006: 128) observed from a study of older persons in Singapore 'that the earlier generations of self-sacrificial grandparents who see care of grandchildren as expected responsibility is giving way to modern-day grandparents who stress their own freedom and space'. This study hopes to go into depth as to the perceptions, aspirations and realities of grandparents.

4.11 The Methodology

This volume is conceived primarily from an original qualitative study of grandparenting in five Asian countries – namely Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Hong Kong – carried out between 2003 and 2006 by a multidisciplinary team of researchers. The project began as a result of concerns on the dearth of literature on grandparenting in Asia whilst at the same time realising the emerging significance of the need for knowledge in this area with population ageing and sociocultural transformations. Through grounded observations in individual societies from the researchers based in each country, this volume hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic interplay between changing socioeconomic conditions and cultural saliency in affecting the intergenerational relations between grandparents and grandchildren.

The qualitative design consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each generation in a three-generation family. All interviews were conducted by qualified interviewers using a standardised set of interview guidelines. All interviews are transcribed and translated to English where necessary. The main areas of enquiry in the qualitative study include an understanding of the meaning of grandparenting from the viewpoint of three generations, the level of satisfaction with relationships with other members of the household, the roles and functions of the grandparent and activities that grandparents and grandchildren participate in. Families for the study were identified mainly through personal contacts and invited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. It was more difficult than expected to obtain families where all three generations were willing or available to be interviewed. For example, in Thailand, where most interviews were conducted in the northeast, there was greater difficulty in obtaining interviews with link parents because of the phenomenon of skipped-generation households, where link parents work in the cities and contribute to the finances of extended families in the form of remittances. Most of the interviews were held in the homes of the families, and the average time taken for all three interviews was 3–5 hours.

There are in total 71 families and 217 individuals from 5 countries involved in the study, consisting of 74 grandparents, 71 parents and 71 grandchildren. The age range is wide amongst the respondents, ranging from 61 to 93 years (median of 74.5) for grandparents, 32–63 years (median of 45) for parents and 11–28 years (median of 15.5) for

Table 1.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Grandparents	Parents	Grandchildren
Country			
Hong Kong	23 (30.7)	23 (32.4)	23 (32.4)
Japan	11 (14.7)	11 (15.5)	11 (15.5)
Malaysia	10 (13.3)	10 (14.1)	10 (14.1)
Singapore	16 (21.3)	15 (21.1)	15 (21.1)
Thailand[a]	15 (20.0)	12 (16.9)	12 (16.9)
Gender			
Male	21 (31.8)	21 (34.4)	26 (40.6)
Female	45 (68.2)	40 (65.6)	38 (59.4)
Age			
≤14			29 (45.3)
15–19			19 (29.7)
20–24			15 (23.4)
25–29			1 (1.6)
30–39		12 (19.7)	
40–49		36 (59.0)	
50–59		11 (18.0)	
60 or older		2 (3.3)	
64 or younger	6 (9.1)		
65–74	27 (40.9)		
75–84	26 (39.4)		
85 or older	7 (10.6)		

Note: [a]In Thailand, there were 12 families interviewed, but in three families, BOTH grandparents were interviewed, thus explaining the 15 grandparents

grandchildren (see Table 1.1 for the demographic characteristics of the respondents). The age gap provides a perspective to understand the impact of differences in age on the expectations and perceptions of grandparenthood. It has been noted that the age of grandchildren and grandparents affects the closeness and the role that grandparents play (Bengtson and Robertson 1985); for example, compared to their grandparents, adolescent grandchildren perceive their grandparents as playing a less important role in their lives (Creasey and Koblewski 1991; Van Ranst et al. 1995).

In parallel with changes in living arrangements in Asian societies, although interviews were conducted with three generations in a family, only a total of 26 grandparents indicated that they were living in three-generation households (see Table 1.2). It is important to note that for those who indicated that they were living alone, it is not uncommon for them to be living very close to their children. For example, in the case of Japan, of the three grandparents who were living alone, one lived on the different floor of the same apartment complex, and the other two lived next door to their children's families. The variety of categories created to accommodate the living arrangement patterns of the respondents reflects the inadequacy of the conventional division of whether one is living together or living separately, as the distance from each other could affect the extent of intergenerational exchanges and transfers.

Table 1.2 Living arrangement of respondents (from grandparents' perspective)

Living arrangement	Hong Kong N (%)	Japan N (%)	Singapore N (%)	Thailand N (%)	Malaysia N (%)
All family members living together (in the same household[a])	5 (21.7)	3[a] (27.3)	8 (53.3)	10 (83.3)	9 (90)
Grandparents living separately with another child/*Nisetai jutaku* (2 households within a house[a])	6 (26.1)	3[a] (27.3)	NA	NA	NA
Grandparents living separately with another relative/grandparents living next door[a]	4 (17.4)	1[a] (9.1)	NA	NA	NA
Grandparents living separately with spouse	4 (17.4)	1 (9.1)	NA	NA	NA
Grandparents living alone separately (near children's families or private old folks' home[a])	4 (17.4)	3[a] (27.3)	7 (46.7)	2 (16.7)	1 (10)

[a]Denotes data is applicable to Japan only

In addition, this volume includes a chapter (Chap. 7) focusing on custodial grandparenting in China to expand the comprehensiveness of discussion in changing Asian societies. This second study engages similar qualitative interviews with 11 families and 25 respondents in total (11 grandparents, 7 link parents and 7 grandchildren). Amongst the grandparents, four are living in skipped-generation households, whilst the rest had been living in skipped-generation households but are now either living alone (numbering six in total) or living with another child (as in one case). These changes reflect the shifting nature of living arrangement over the life course of grandparents and grandchildren.

5 Limitations and Features of the Volume

As a study which crosses disciplines, countries, cultures and linguistic variations, data collected in every country may differ slightly in terms of the emphasis given to different topics by the researchers in each country. The varied strategies adopted at interviews, where some countries could be more structured, whilst others were more informal, also means that the data can differ in the depth of content depending on the strategies used. The translations of the transcripts posed a challenge too, and the interview data from Malaysia in Malay was initially left out of the translation because the Malaysian counterparts who specialise in linguistics had difficulty in properly translating the nuances specific to the Malay discourse into English. It should also be noted that as qualitative studies with a small sample, the data serves as an illustration to help understand the impact of existing sociocultural changes and phenomena, where attempts to generalise to grandparents in the whole of Asia should be made with caution.

Nevertheless, the volume is characterised by riding on the strength of the team of multidisciplinary collaborators, where the authors of each chapter are given the freedom to explore the data in their own mode of disciplinary enquiry. Hence, one chapter could focus on data from grandparents and analyse them as excerpts in content analysis from a linguistic perspective, whilst another attempts from a socio-anthropological approach to tease out the meanings as articulated by different generations in different cultural contexts, with long verbatim quotes. Despite the diverse ways in which the same data is handled, each chapter is committed to build towards a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a grandparent in the Asian context.

References

Antonucci, T. C. (1985). Personal characteristics, social support and social behaviour. In R. Binstock & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and social sciences* (3rd ed., pp. 205–226). New York: Academic.

Beck, U. (1999). *World risk society*. Maiden: Blackwell.

Beck, U. (2001). Interview with Ulrich Beck. *Journal of Consumer Culture, 1*(2), 261–277.

Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Reinventing the family: In search of new lifestyles* (P. Camiller, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bengtson, V. L., & Allen, K. R. (1993). The life course perspective applied to families over time. In P. Boss, W. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. Schumm, & S. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 469–498). New York: Plenum.

Bengtson, V., & Lowenstein, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Global aging and challenges to families*. New York: Aldine de Gruyther.

Bengtson, V. L., & Robertson, J. F. (1985). *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Bengtson, V. L., Olander, E. B., & Haddad, A. A. (1976). The "generation gap" and aging family members: Toward a conceptual model. In J. F. Gubrium (Ed.), *Time, roles and the self in old age*. New York: Human Sciences Press.

Bengtson, V. L., Rosenthal, C. J., & Burton, L. M. (1990). Families and aging: Diversity and heterogeneity. In R. H. Binstock & L. K. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Academic.

Bengtson, V., Giarrusso, R., Mabry, J. B., & Silverstein, M. (2002). Solidarity, conflict, and ambivalence: Complementary or competing perspectives on intergenerational relationships? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*, 568–576.

Burton, L. (1992). Black grandmothers rearing children of drug-addicted parents: Stressors, outcomes and social service needs. *The Gerontologist, 32*, 744–751.

Burton, L. M., & Bengtson, V. L. (1985). Black grandmothers: Issues of timing and continuity of roles. In V. L. Bengtson & J. F. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood*. Beverley Hills: Sage.

Cain, L. (1964). Cited in Dennefer, D., & Settersen, R. A. Jr. (2010). The study of the life course: Implications for social gerontology. In Dannefer, D., & Phillipson, C. (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social gerontology* (pp. 3–19). London: Sage.

Chan, A. (1997). An overview of the living arrangements and social support exchanges of older Singaporeans. *Asia Pacific Population Journal, 12*(4), 35–50.

Chun, J., & Lee, J. (2006). Intergenerational solidarity in Korean immigrant families. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 4*(2), 7–21.

Conception, M. B., & Perez, A. E. (2006). Intergenerational support mechanisms for Filipino elderly. In H. Yoon & J. Hendricks (Eds.), *Handbook of Asian aging*. Amityville: Baywood Pub. Co.

Connidis, I. A. (2001). *Family ties and aging*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Copen, C., & Silverstein, M. (2007). The transmission of religious beliefs across generations: Do grandparents matter? *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 38*(4), 497–510.
Creasey, G. L., & Koblewski, P. J. (1991). Adolescent grandchildren's relationships with maternal and paternal grandmothers and grandfathers. *Journal of Adolescence, 14*, 373–387.
Dannefer, D., & Phillipson, C. (Eds.). (2010). *The SAGE handbook of social gerontology*. London: Sage.
Dennefer, D., & Settersen, R. A., Jr. (2010). The study of the life course: Implications for social gerontology. In D. Dannefer & C. Phillipson (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social gerontology* (pp. 3–19). London: Sage.
Elder, G. H. (1994). Time, human aging and social change. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 57*, 4–15.
Fuller-Thomson, E., & Minkler, M. (2001). American grandparents providing extensive child care to their grandchildren: Prevalence and profile. *The Gerontologist, 41*(2), 201–209.
Fuller-Thomson, E., Minkler, M., & Driver, D. (1997). A profile of grandparents raising grandchildren in the United States. *The Gerontologist, 37*(3), 406–411.
Giarrusso, R., Stalling, M., & Bengtson, V. L. (1995). The "intergenerational stake" hypothesis revisited: Parent-child differences in perceptions of relationships 20 years later. In V. L. Bengtson, K. W. Schaie, & L. M. Burton (Eds.), *Adult intergenerational relations: Effects of societal change*. New York: Springer.
Giddens, A. (1994). Living in a post traditional society. In Ulrich Beck et.al. (Eds.), *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
Goh, E. C. L. (2007). Beyond tangible rewards: Grandparents' motivation for providing child care in three-tier families in urban Xiamen, China. *International Conference on Contemporary China Studies*. Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.
Goode, W. J. (Ed.). (1964). *Readings on the family and society*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
Goodfellow, J., & Laverty, J. (2003). Grandparents supporting working families: Satisfaction and choice in the provision of childcare. *Family Matters, 66*, 14–19.
Goodman, C. (2007). Intergenerational triads in skipped-generation Grandfamilies. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 65*(3), 231–258.
Goodman, C. C., & Silverstein, M. (2001). Grandmothers who parent their grandchildren: An exploratory study of close relations across three generations. *Journal of Family Issues, 22*, 557–578.
Hagestad, G. O. (1985). Continuity and connectedness. In V. L. Bengtson & J. F. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
Hagestad, G. O., & Uhlenberg, P. (2006). Should we be concerned about age segregation? Some theoretical and empirical explorations. *Research on Ageing, 28*(6), 638–653.
Hank, K., & Buber, I. (2009). Grandparents caring for their grandchildren. Findings from the 2004 survey of health, ageing and retirement in Europe. *Journal of Family Issues, 30*(1), 53–73.
Harper, S., Smith, K. P., & Hagestad, G. O. (2010). Introduction: Editorial and introduction. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 8*, 207–218.
Hayslip, B., Jr., & Kaminski, P. (2005). Grandparents raising their grandchildren: A review of literature and suggestions for practice. *The Gerontologist, 45*, 262–269.
Hayslip, B., Jr., & Patrick, J. H. (Eds.). (2006). *Custodial grandparenting: Individual, cultural and ethnic diversity*. New York: Springer.
Hayslip, B., Jr., Baird, A. H., Toleda, R., Toleda, C., & Emick, M. (2006). Cross- cultural differences in traditional and custodial grandparenting: A qualitative approach. In B. Hayslip Jr. & J. H. Patrick (Eds.), *Custodial grandparenting: Individual, cultural and ethnic diversity*. New York: Springer.
Hermalin, A. I., Roan, C., & Perez, A. (1998). *The emerging role of grandparents in Asia*. Comparative Study of the Elderly in Asia Research Report No. 98–52. Ann Arbor: Population Studies Center, University of Michigan.

Izuhara, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Ageing and intergenerational relations: Family reciprocity from a global perspective*. Bristol: Policy Press.
Kamnuansilpa, P., & Wongthanavasu, S. (2005). Grandparents' relationships with grandchildren in Thailand. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 3*(1), 49–66.
Kemp, C. L. (2004). "Grand" expectations: The experiences of grandparents and adult grandchildren. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology, 29*(4), 499–525.
Knodel, J., & Debavalya, N. (1997). Living arrangements and support among the elderly in southeast Asia. *Asia Pacific Population Journal, 12*(4), 5–17.
Knodel, J., Im-em, W., Saengtienchai, C., van Landingham, M., & Kespichayawattana, J. (2002). *The impact of an adult child's death due to AIDS on older-aged parents: Results from a direct interview survey*. Bangkok: Mahidol University, Institute for Population and Social Research.
Ling, H. K. (2007). Elderly women's experiences of urbanization. In C. S. Hew (Ed.), *Village mothers, city daughters: Women and urbanization in Sarawak* (pp. 88–103). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Ling, H. K. (2009). Urbanization and the ageing community in Sarawak. In E. N. Arifin & A. Ananta (Eds.), *Older persons in southeast Asia: An emerging asset* (pp. 335–358). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Mehta, K. K. (1999). Intergenerational exchanges: Qualitative evidence from Singapore. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science, 27*(2), 111–122.
Mehta, K., & Ko, H. (2004). Filial piety revisited in the context of modernizing Asian societies. *Geriatrics and Gerontology International, 4*, 77–78.
Mehta, K. K., bin Osman, M. M., & Lee, A. E. Y. (1995). Living arrangements of the elderly in Singapore: Cultural norms in transition. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 10*(1–2), 113–143.
Minkler, M., & Fuller-Thomson, E. (2005). 'African American grandparents raising grandchildren: A national study using the Census 2000 American Community Survey. *Journals of Gerontology: Social Sciences, 60*(2), 82–92.
Pebley, A. R., & Rudkin, L. (1999). Grandparents caring for grandchildren: What do we know? *Journal of Family Issues, 20*(2), 218–242.
Pillemer, K., & Luscher, K. (Eds.). (2004). *Intergenerational ambivalence: New perspectives on parent-child relations in later life*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
Shanas, E., Townsend, P., Wedderburn, D., Friis, H., Milhoj, P., & Stehouwer, J. (1968). *Old people in three industrial societies*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Silverstein, M. (2005). *Beyond the nuclear family: Grandparents as social resources.* Presented at Alternate Generations in the Family: The Asian Perspective. National University of Singapore, Singapore, 20–22 Oct 2005.
Silverstein, M., & Bengtson, V. L. (1997). Intergenerational solidarity and the structure of adult child-parent relationships in American families. *The American Journal of Sociology, 103*, 429–460.
Silverstein, M., & Marenco, A. (2001). How Americans enact the grandparent role across the family life course. *Journal of Family Issues, 22*(4), 493–522.
Silverstein, M., Giarrusso, R., & Bengtson, V. L. (2003). Grandparents and grandchildren in family systems: A social-developmental perspective. In V. L. Bengtson & A. Lowenstein (Eds.), *Global aging and challenges to families*. New York: Adline De Gruyter.
Stepney, P., & Popple, K. (2008). *Social work and the community: A critical context for practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Strom, R., Strom, S., Shen, Y., Li, S., & Sun, H. (1996). Grandparents in Taiwan: A three-generational study. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 42*(1), 1–19.
Teo, P., Mehta, K., Thang, L. L., & Chan, A. (2006). *Ageing in Singapore: Service needs and the state*. London: Routledge.
Thang, L. L. (2010). Intergenerational relations: Asian perspectives. In D. Dannefer & C. Phillipson (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social gerontology* (pp. 202–214). London: Sage.
Troll, L. (1983). Grandparents: The family watchdog. In T. H. Brubaker (Ed.), *Family relationships in later life*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Uhlenberg, P., & Cheuk, M. (2010). The significance of grandparents to grandchildren: An international perspective. In D. Dannefer & C. Philipson (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social gerontology*. London: Sage.

Van Ranst, N., Verschueren, K., & Marcoen, A. (1995). The meaning of grandparents as viewed by adolescent grandchildren: An empirical study in Belgium. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 41*, 311–324.

Verbrugge, L. M., & Chan, A. (2008). Giving help in return: Family reciprocity by older Singaporeans. *Ageing and Society, 28*, 5–34.

Vo-Thanh-Xuan, J., & Rice, P. L. (2000). Vietnamese-Australian grandparenthood: The changing roles and psychological well-being. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 15*, 266–286.

Yoon, H., & Hendricks, J. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook of Asian aging*. Amityville: Baywood Pub. Co.

Chapter 2
Changing Social and Demographic Characteristics in Asia

Tsuneo Usui and Mari Tsuruwaka

In this chapter, we analyse the effects that recent demographic, social and economic changes in East and Southeast Asia exert on the relationship between the grandparents and grandchildren. The six regions of Japan, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are the main subjects of this analysis. These regions, particularly Japan, have seen a rapidly falling birth rate and a rapidly ageing population over recent years. East and Southeast Asia has been characterised by the 'flying-geese' pattern of economic development, in which Japan has been the front-runner, followed by newly industrialising economies and by China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In the demographic area, the birthrate fall and population ageing are also expected to take a flying-geese pattern in which Japan is again the front-runner.

Many Asian countries experienced what is termed 'colonial modernity' before gaining independence after World War II and implemented rapid industrialisation to achieve the high growth that was dubbed the 'Asian miracle' in and after the 1980s. Since the world entered the post-modern era in the 1980s, however, these Asian regions have been described as seeing a simultaneous development of modernity and post-modernity. In this sense, 'compressed modernity' has been an important aspect of many Asian societies (Chang 1999).

The rapid demographic, social and economic changes are expected to dramatically transform traditional roles of grandparents while stimulating the diversification

T. Usui (✉)
School of Human Sciences, Waseda University, 2-579-15 Mikajima,
Tokorozawa Saitama 359-1192, Japan
e-mail: tusui@waseda.jp

M. Tsuruwaka
St Luke's College of Nursing, 10-1 Akashi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0044, Japan
e-mail: tsuruwaka@slcn.ac.jp

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_2,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

and individualisation of families in these regions. Based on this viewpoint, in this chapter, we consider demographic, social and economic factors underlying the grandparent generation's relations with other generations in East and Southeast Asia.

1 The World Population and Asia

The twentieth century was the century of population explosion. World population stood at about 1.6 billion at the beginning of the century and increased swiftly in the second half, reaching 6.1 billion in 2000 and 6.7 billion in 2008. During that century, world population thus quadrupled. According to the 2008 revision to the 'World Population Prospects', updated every 2 years by the United Nations, world population is projected to increase at an annual rate of 1.18% from 2005 to 2010. In the medium variant, world population is predicted to exceed some 9.1 billion in 2050 (Table 2.1).

The UN 'World Population Prospects' divides the world into six regions: Africa, Latin America, North America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Among them, Asia accounted for the largest population with 4,075 million people as of 2008, covering 60% of the world's population. As Asia includes the two most populous countries, China (1.3 billion) and India (1.1 billion), three out of every five people on the Earth live in Asia.

While population has been expanding, however, the rate of expansion has been slowing down over the long term. As indicated by Table 2.2, the annual average increase in world population slowed from 1.76% in the 1980–1985 period to 1.24% in the 2000–2005 period, and is projected to decelerate further to 0.34% in the 2045–2050 period. An extended projection indicates that world population will peak and enter a downward trend by the end of this century. This means that the twenty-first century may turn out to be a period of transition from population explosion to decline.

The deceleration of population growth has been remarkable in Asia as well as the entire world. Asian population growth exceeded world population growth in the twentieth century but will slip below the global growth in this century. Population growth is slowing down at a less rapid pace in Asia than in Europe, which is set to enter a population downturn faster than the other regions, but Asian population growth will become as slow as Latin American population growth. Therefore, Asian countries are predicted to become depopulating societies one after another in the near future.

In particular, East and Southeast Asian countries are expected to post the fastest population declines. Among them, Japan entered a depopulation phase in 2005 (Cabinet Office, Japan 2006), while others, excluding some ASEAN countries, which are expected to see more immigrants from China and Hong Kong, are predicted to soon follow suit. For example, South Korea and Taiwan are projected to enter a depopulation phase around 2025. Furthermore, Singapore, China and Thailand are expected to shift to depopulating societies sometime between 2030

Table 2.1 Total population (thousands)

	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2025	2050
World	4,437,609	5,290,452	6,115,367	6,512,276	6,908,688	8,011,533	9,149,984
Africa	482,236	638,729	819,462	921,073	1,033,043	1,400,184	1,998,466
Latin America	362,655	442,310	521,228	556,512	588,649	669,533	729,184
North America	254,097	282,688	318,654	335,175	351,659	397,522	448,464
Asia	2,622,565	3,178,810	3,698,296	3,936,536	4,166,741	4,772,523	5,231,485
Europe	693,113	720,989	726,568	729,421	732,759	729,264	691,048
Oceania	22,943	26,926	31,160	33,559	35,838	42,507	51,338

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009b)

Table 2.2 Population growth rates (annual percentage change: %)

	1980–1985	1990–1995	2000–2005	2005–2010	2025–2030	2045–2050
World	1.76	1.54	1.24	1.18	0.73	0.34
Africa	2.85	2.57	2.34	2.29	1.70	1.14
Latin America	2.07	1.73	1.31	1.12	0.60	0.10
North America	0.96	1.19	1.01	0.96	0.63	0.37
Asia	1.94	1.63	1.25	1.14	0.60	0.15
Europe	0.40	0.18	0.08	0.09	–0.16	–0.26
Oceania	1.59	1.52	1.48	1.31	0.95	0.59

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009b)

and 2035. Population is projected to continue increasing in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines until 2050, while their total fertility rates are expected to fall to the population replacement level of 2.1 by 2030. While East and Southeast Asian countries are shifting from population explosion to depopulation, their fertility rates have been falling quickly.

2 The Rapidly Declining Birthrate and Ageing Population in Asia

The downward trend of population in East Asia has stemmed mainly from a rapid decline in fertility rates. Table 2.3 indicates total fertility rates in the six regions subject to this study: China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. According to the table, the average total fertility rate (TFR) for Hong Kong between 2000 and 2005 slipped below the Japanese level of 1.29–0.94.

The demographic aspect of social development includes the demographic transition from high birth and mortality rates to low birth and mortality rates. The six regions have all experienced such demographic transition. The lowest-TFR group includes Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, followed by the second group consisting of China and Thailand. Although they have fertility rate gaps, the five regions other than Malaysia have seen their TFRs slipping below the population replacement level of 2.1.

While these regions have similar situations now, differences in the timing of their demographic transitions have caused differences in their population pyramids. Among the six regions, Japan was the first to post a TFR decline. Japan's TFR fell from 4.54 in 1947 to one-third of the level in slightly more than 50 years. Japan saw an unprecedented baby boom just after World War II, from 1947 to 1949, when the annual number of births reached 2.7 million, with the TFR standing at between 4.31 and 4.54. Unlike Western countries that experienced a longer baby boom, Japan's baby boom ended after only 3 years. Japan gradually shifted to a modern low fertility rate. Japan's TFR decline from the 1950s has attracted global attention due to its speed and the fact that it was the first such decline outside Western industrial countries.

Table 2.3 Total fertility rates

	1960–1965	1985–1990	1990–1995	1995–2000	2000–2005	2020–2025
China	5.72	2.46	1.92	1.78	1.70	1.85
Hong Kong	5.31	1.31	1.29	1.08	0.94	1.09
Japan	2.02	1.66	1.49	1.39	1.29	1.35
Malaysia	6.72	4.00	3.47	3.10	2.87	2.01
Singapore	4.93	1.71	1.76	1.57	1.35	1.39
Thailand	6.39	2.27	2.00	1.90	1.83	1.85

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009b)

Table 2.4 Population composition (%)

		1995	2005	2015	2025	2050
China	0–14 years old	27.6	22.0	19.0	18.1	15.3
	15–64 years old	66.4	70.4	71.6	68.5	61.4
	65 years old +	6.0	7.6	9.4	13.4	23.3
	80 years old +	0.7	1.2	1.7	2.2	7.2
Hong Kong	0–14 years old	19.4	14.4	10.6	11.9	11.3
	15–64 years old	70.9	73.4	74.5	66.0	56.1
	65 years old +	9.7	12.2	14.9	22.1	32.6
	80 years old +	1.7	2.9	4.3	4.7	13.7
Japan	0–14 years old	16.0	13.8	12.4	11.0	11.2
	15–64 years old	69.6	66.3	61.3	59.3	51.0
	65 years old +	14.4	19.9	26.3	29.7	37.8
	80 years old +	3.1	4.9	7.8	10.7	15.6
Malaysia	0–14 years old	36.1	31.3	27.2	23.5	18.3
	15–64 years old	60.2	64.3	67.0	67.8	65.4
	65 years old +	3.7	4.4	5.8	8.7	16.3
	80 years old +	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.2	4.0
Singapore	0–14 years old	22.3	19.6	12.9	12.4	11.2
	15–64 years old	71.4	71.9	73.5	64.7	56.2
	65 years old +	6.3	8.5	13.6	22.9	32.6
	80 years old +	1.1	1.5	2.6	4.1	14.6
Thailand	0–14 years old	27.3	22.9	20.7	19.3	17.3
	15–64 years old	67.3	70.0	70.5	70.8	62.5
	65 years old +	5.4	7.1	8.8	12.9	20.2
	80 years old +	0.8	1.0	1.4	1.8	5.3

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009a)

TFRs began to fall in the other five regions in the 1970s and 1980s. Reflecting the differences in the timing of the first TFR decline, these regions' population pyramids are different. In Japan, where the TFR declined first in the 1950s, 14-year-old or younger people's share of the total population in 2005 stood at 13.8%, below 65-year-old or older people's share of 19.9% (Table 2.4). In Hong Kong and Singapore, the

elderly population share was not as high as in Japan. However, the young population share slipped below 20%, standing at 15.1% for Hong Kong and 19.5% for Singapore. The young population share is expected to continue on a downward trend in these regions; in 2025, the share may be below 20% in the five regions other than Malaysia.

In East and Southeast Asia, excluding Japan, the dearth deepened as income levels increased thanks to economic development in and after the 1980s. The first factor behind fertility decline is that an income increase boosts the cost of having children while reducing the advantage of doing so.[1] The cost of child-rearing has risen due to the expansion of job opportunities for women, while at the same time industrialisation and urbanisation have led to a decline in farming and in informal economic sectors where child labour has been important. As a result, the economic advantage of having children has lessened.

The second factor behind fertility decline is a change of family structure. A typical Asian family is historically presumed to be a large family, including grandparents, parents and children. In reality, however, young people have tended to leave their hometowns and form nuclear families in urban regions amidst economic development. As a result, stem families have decreased substantially, and households classified as nuclear families have increased. In Thailand, the average number of household members dropped from 4.4 in 1990 to 3.5 in 2002, and the percentage of single-member households rose from 6.2% in 1990 to 10.1% in 2000 (UN 1995, 2005).

Since the 1990s, family transformations, including increases in double-income families, divorces and remarriages, as seen in Western countries and Japan, have also emerged in East and Southeast Asian regions. For example, Hong Kong's crude divorce rate in 2006 stood at a globally high level of 2.5, higher than 2.0 in Japan and 1.5 in Singapore (UN 2009a, b). The family size decline and the weakened sustainability of families have apparently contributed to the birth dearth.

The third factor behind the birth dearth may be that lifestyles and the value of marriage and fertility have changed following rising economic levels. Changes in marital fertility and the timing of childbirth might have been presumed as a factor behind the birth dearth in East and Southeast Asian countries. Adding to these changes have been the rising rates of people who never marry and the tendency towards late marriage. Here, we would like to look at unmarried rate changes mainly in the lowest-fertility group covering Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, among the six regions subject to this study.

According to Table 2.5, the unmarried rate for the 25–29 age group in Hong Kong rose from 63.5% in 1970 to 75.5% in 2000 for men and from 20.1% to 59.7%

[1] H. Leibenstein, an economist, cited three utilities of bearing and rearing children: (1) utility as 'consumer goods' that give pleasure to parents, (2) utility as 'production goods' that provide economic value as labour and (3) utility as 'old-age security' in which children are expected to care for parents in their later years. Generally, the first utility declines as per capita GDP increases. The need for the third utility decreases as social security systems develop (Leibenstein 1957). G. S. Becker, also an economist, attributes low fertility to the fact that people try to obtain utilities through 'better' children rather than through more children (Becker 1960).

Table 2.5 Proportion of single males and females (%)

		1970		2000	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Hong Kong	25–29 years old	63.5	20.1	75.5	59.7
	30–34 years old	34.5	5.6	44.1	31.2
Japan	25–29 years old	46.5	18.1	69.3	54.0
	30–34 years old	11.7	7.2	42.9	26.6
Singapore	25–29 years old	48.0	22.6	64.2	40.2
	30–34 years old	21.5	9.6	30.7	19.5

Source: Cabinet Office 2006

for women. The unmarried rate for the 30–34 age group also soared conspicuously for both men and women during the same 30 years, with the unmarried rate for women, in particular, rising remarkably. In Japan and Singapore as well, the unmarried rate has soared. In the lowest-fertility group, including Hong Kong, the strengthening tendency towards later and fewer marriages has brought about a fertility rate decline or a birth dearth.

The rising unmarried rate has led to late marriage and childbirth, which apparently have caused a decline in the complete fertility rate. In Japan, the unmarried rate rose from 20.9% in 1975 to 59.9% in 2005 for women in their late 20s and from 7.7% to 32.6% for women in their early 30s. The average first-childbirth age soared by 4.2 from 25.7 to 29.9 during the same 30 years. In Japan and other East Asian countries where illegitimate children from cohabiting couples have accounted for only a small portion of children born, an increase in unmarried people has led directly to a decline in opposite-sex couples. The result has been an extreme decline in the fertility rate.

The fourth factor behind the fertility rate decline may be attributed to birth control policies. In Singapore, for example, campaigns for late marriage and restrictions on childbirth have been implemented towards the goal of achieving zero population growth since the second half of the 1960s. Its birth control policy began to produce expected results, leading the total fertility rate to slip below the population replacement level of 2.1 in 1975. Even though the fertility rate continued to decline, Singapore maintained the policy. The continuation of the birth control policy for 16 years between 1966 and 1982 might have deeply affected people's consciousness and behaviour towards fertility in Singapore.

3 Ageing Population

In East Asia, the population is expected to age rapidly, dovetailing the deepening birth dearth and the extent of average life expectancy. This section focuses on the average life expectancy data in the six regions subject to this study. In Japan, the average life expectancy extended by some 18 years from 63.9 years in the 1950–

Table 2.6 Life expectancy at birth (years old)

		1950–1955	1995–2000	2000–2005	2020–2025
China	Total	40.8	70.4	72.0	75.8
	Male	39.3	69.0	70.5	74.0
	Female	42.3	72.0	73.7	77.8
Hong Kong	Total	61.0	80.0	81.5	83.9
	Male	57.2	77.2	78.6	81.0
	Female	64.9	83.0	84.5	86.9
Japan	Total	63.9	80.5	81.9	84.9
	Male	61.6	77.1	78.3	81.2
	Female	65.5	83.8	85.2	88.4
Malaysia	Total	48.5	71.9	73.0	76.8
	Male	47.0	69.6	70.8	74.5
	Female	50.0	74.5	75.5	79.3
Singapore	Total	60.4	77.2	78.8	82.2
	Male	58.8	75.1	76.8	79.7
	Female	62.1	79.3	80.8	84.6
Thailand	Total	50.8	67.5	68.6	72.4
	Male	49.2	62.8	63.7	69.7
	Female	52.6	72.8	74.0	75.1

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009b)

1955 period to 81.9 years in the 2000–2005 period. During the same period, the average life expectancy extended by 31 years in China, 21 years in Hong Kong, 25 years in Malaysia and 18 years in both Singapore and Thailand. Many regions saw their average life expectancy being prolonged as rapidly as or even more rapidly than Japan did. As a result, the average life expectancy exceeded 70 years in the 2000–2005 period in the five regions, excluding Thailand[2] (Table 2.6).

The median age in Japan was conspicuously high, at 43.1 in 2005, as indicated in Table 2.7. But the median age in Hong Kong or Singapore is projected to rise to a level close to Japan's, namely, 50.6 by 2025. Hong Kong and Singapore populations are thus expected to age rapidly. The six regions are divided by fertility rate into three groups: the first group (Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore) with the lowest fertility, the second (China and Thailand) and the third (Malaysia). Reflecting this fertility rate gap, their populations are also expected to age in that order.

The United Nations classifies societies with an elderly population share (aged 65 or older) of 7% as 'ageing societies' and those with a share greater than 14% as 'aged societies'. The speed of ageing is measured by the number of years it takes to go from an ageing society to an aged society (years taken to double the elderly population share from 7%). Among Western industrial nations, France took 115 years to double the elderly population share, Sweden 85 years and Britain

[2] The extension of the average life expectancy is owed primarily to a decline in the infant mortality rate. In East Asian countries, however, the elderly mortality rate has also decreased.

Table 2.7 Median age (years old)

	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2025
China	22.1	25.0	29.6	32.1	34.2	38.9
Hong Kong	26.0	31.0	36.3	39.3	41.9	47.1
Japan	32.6	37.4	41.4	43.1	44.7	50.6
Malaysia	19.7	21.5	23.6	24.7	26.3	31.5
Singapore	24.5	29.3	34.5	37.5	40.6	47.3
Thailand	19.5	24.6	30.0	31.5	33.2	37.5

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009a)

Table 2.8 Speed of ageing (year)

	Elderly share (7%)	Elderly share (14%)	Transition time
China	2001	2026	25
Hong Kong	1983	2014	31
Japan	1970	1994	24
Malaysia	2019	2043	24
Singapore	2000	2016	16
Thailand	2001	2023	22

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009b)

47 years. The transition to an aged society is thus expected to be very slow. But Japan took only 24 years for the transition, doing so more than four times as quickly as France. Other East and Southeast Asian countries are also predicted to age even faster than Japan. As indicated by Table 2.8, Singapore is projected to take 16 years, Thailand 22 years, Malaysia 24 years and China 25 years.

As well as the ageing speed and timing in Asia, we need to pay attention to the fact that the absolute number of elderly people is expected to increase quickly due to the high fertility rate in the past, the fast drop in the mortality rate and large population sizes in Asia. Therefore, even if the elderly population share is still low, with its rise being slow, the number of elderly people may increase rapidly in populous countries, such as China. Thus, ageing in Asian countries is not only a medium to long-term issue but also an urgent issue that must be addressed immediately.

4 Social and Economic Conditions in Asian Countries

The rapid fertility rate decline in Asia, as explained previously, although serving to accelerate the future ageing of population, has contributed to high economic growth. As fertility rate decline does not immediately trigger the ageing of a population, for a while, a continuous rise in the young population can invigorate the economy. This is known as ‘population bonus’ and has attracted attention for being a new viewpoint in analysing developing regions. Population bonus means that child-rearing cost cuts coincide with the expansion of the labour force as the fertility decline is coupled with children’s growth and their participation in the labour force.

Table 2.9 Periods of population bonus

	Period of population bonus (year)		Per capita GDP
	Start	End	2005 ($)
China	1965–1970	2010–2015	1,728
Hong Kong	1965–1970	2010–2015	25,617
Japan	1930–1935	1990–1995	36,432
Malaysia	1965–1970	2035–2040	5,014
Singapore	1965–1970	2010–2015	26,843
Thailand	1965–1970	2010–2015	2,728

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009b)

Population bonus is a new framework. No views have been fixed about its duration period. Here, we would like to define an upturn in the working population share as the beginning of a population bonus period and a downturn as the end of the period. Based on this definition, population bonus duration periods in the six nations subject to this study are given in Table 2.9.

In the 1930s, Japan became the first Asian country to enter a population bonus period. In other Asian countries, population bonus periods started between 1965 and 1970. The reason why population bonus periods started almost simultaneously in these countries, despite their income differences, is that fertility rates began to decline almost simultaneously irrespective of income levels.

In fact, Asian economic growth has been remarkable since fertility rates began to substantially decline in the 1970s. Asia's average annual economic growth rose to 7% between 1970 and 2000, far higher than the global average of 3%. As a result, per capita gross domestic product in newly industrialising economies has already topped US$10,000.[3] The Newly Industrialised Economy (NIE)'s per capita income converted with the purchasing power parity rate, which indicates effective living standards, is as high as in Japan. The wave of economic development started in East Asia, expanded to NIEs, ASEAN 4 and China, and spilled over to Vietnam and India.

Between 1990 and 1995, Japan became the first Asian country in which the population bonus ended. The bonus is projected to end between 2010 and 2015 in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand, and between 2035 and 2040 in Malaysia. As the fertility rate in China and Thailand began to decline when incomes were low, the population bonus period of the two countries is the same as that for Hong Kong and Singapore. Other than Japan, these nations are currently positioned to benefit from the population bonus. However, we must pay attention to the fact that the period is approaching the end in all of these nations except for Malaysia.

Given that a decline in the fertility rate is a key point of the population bonus, a steep population bonus curve that provides massive benefits within a relatively short period of time may be expected to be followed by greater repercussions. As Western countries have lowered the fertility rate over long periods ranging from several

[3] Per capita GDP exceeded $10,000 in NIEs as of 2006, standing at $18,385 in the Republic of Korea, $16,081 in Taiwan, $31,027 in Singapore and $27,709 in Hong Kong, against $34,238 in Japan.

decades to more than a century, they may have benefited less from the population bonus, and this is also seen as a limited repercussion.

However, a country that has achieved faster economic growth may face a population bonus as a working population decline with a falling fertility rate, combined with an elderly population increase, after a population bonus period. Asian countries that have achieved economic development while benefiting from a population bonus may thus be plagued with such problems in the near future. Based on these points, we would like to outline social and economic conditions in the six Asian regions.

4.1 China

The People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. At present, the country consists of 23 provinces, five autonomous regions and four municipalities under the direct jurisdiction of the central government – Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Chongqing. It is a multi-racial country made up of the Han race and 55 other ethnic minority groups. The Han race is dominant, accounting for 90% of China's total population. Minority groups, though capturing only a small share of the total population, live mainly in remote regions that cover more than 60% of China's total land area. After adopting the socialist regime, China abolished the household responsibility system for agriculture and people's communes and created special economic zones under the reform and opening policy of 1978. It has thus shifted to a socialist market economy.

Upon its founding in 1949, China's population totalled 540 million. In the half century from the founding, its population expanded by more than 700 million, or 2.3-fold. China's population increased from 1.267 billion in 2000 to 1.312 billion in 2005. Although an annual population growth rate has slowed down to about 0.6%, growth still continues.

China's demography has changed dramatically since its founding. Its crude birth rate (CBR) is estimated to have maintained high levels around 37% from 1949 to 1954. After the CBR slipped below 30% in 1972 for the first time, the decline accelerated and the CBR fell below 20 as early as 1976. The CBR stood at 13.2 in 2005, the crude death rate at 6.6 and the rate of natural increase at 6.6. The total fertility rate remained at around 6 after the founding and peaked at 7.5 in 1963. Since the 1970s, the TFR has steadily declined. The population policy for birth control has played a decisive role in sustaining the TFR decline.

In 1979, China launched a family planning policy known as the 'one-child policy', calling for such pillars as late marriage, late childbirth, fewer children, greater spacing between children and eugenics (qualitative improvement of children). Specifically, the policy restricted the number of children a married couple can have to one and left local governments to decide whether to approve the second or later child. Couples adhering to the one-child policy have been given incentive money and housing on a preferential basis. On the other hand, penalties such as wage cuts have been imposed for excess or unplanned births.

The one-child policy worked to lower the TFR in China to less than 2.0 in the 1990s. If the TRF decline is translated into the number of births, China's population can be estimated to have declined by 300 million in the past 30 years. However, the policy has been criticised for causing such problems as increasing abortions; a gender ratio distortion; an increasing number of *heihaizi* children for whom parents have refrained from making birth registrations in order to avoid penalties for excess births; spoilt children called *xiaogongzhu* (little princes) or *xiaohuangdi* (little princesses); and the fast ageing of population.

The TFR fell to 1.7 in 2005 from 2.7 in 1979 when the one-child policy started, showing its accelerated drop over recent years. While the fertility in China has steadily declined since the 1970s due to the birth control policy, fertility levels in rural areas under a more moderate birth control policy than in urban areas have remained above urban levels. In China, therefore, wide fertility gaps have emerged due to factors such as industrialisation, urbanisation, education, ethnic composition and differences in economic and social development.

China also features a sex ratio at birth that has remained high since the 1980s. While the sex ratio at birth is usually 104–107 boys to 100 girls, the ratio in China stood at 117 boys to 100 girls in 2000. The high sex ratio at birth, which is expected to affect future marriages, has been attributed to such factors as the preference for a son and the failure to register births of girls, as seen mainly in rural areas.

Due to the fast fall in the fertility rate and the drop in the mortality rate, China's population is expected to age very rapidly. According to the medium variant of the 2008 revision to the UN's 'World Population Prospects', 65-year-old or older people's share of China's population is projected to reach 13.4% in 2025 and 23.3% in 2050. Because of its large population, the absolute number of elderly people in China will be huge. According to the medium variant, the number of people older than 65 is predicted to reach 167 million in 2020 and 233 million in 2030.

4.2 Hong Kong

Hong Kong, which had been a British colony for more than 150 years since the Opium War, reverted to Chinese rule and became the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in 1997. Under the principle of 'one country, two systems', Hong Kong now has a different political system from mainland China.

It has been an Asian transportation hub since ancient days. Under British colonial rule, Hong Kong developed as an intermediate trade base and a financial centre. When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 after World War II, a massive number of immigrants from mainland China flowed into Hong Kong to escape communist rule. This enabled Hong Kong to develop chemical fibre, electronics, precision machinery and other manufacturing industries using cheap labour and transform itself into a processing trade base.

The Hong Kong economy grew rapidly as the Hong Kong government launched the construction of infrastructure, including housing and subways, from the 1970s.

In the second half of the 1970s, such problems as labour cost hikes and industrial land shortages emerged. In response to China's reform and opening policy, however, traditional manufacturing industries shifted from Hong Kong to the Pearl River Delta including Shenzhen in Guangdong Province in and after the 1980s. Hong Kong has now transformed itself into a hinterland financial centre and logistics terminal for mainland China. Service industries now account for nearly 80% of Hong Kong's GDP.

According to data released by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, the region's population totalled 6,921,700 in June 2007, up by 0.9% from a year earlier. Ethnic Chinese accounted for the largest share – close to 95% – of Hong Kong's population, followed by Filipinos and Indonesians, who are migrant workers, including maids, and by Americans and British.

Hong Kong at present consists of Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula, the Xin-jie New Territories and 235 islands in the surrounding South China Sea. The population is concentrated in the small residential zone in the north of Hong Kong Island and the peninsula. These residential zones total 127 km^2, representing less than 12% of the area of Hong Kong. Half of Hong Kong's population of seven million people lives in these zones. As a result, Hong Kong's average population density is 6,463 people per square kilometre. However, the population density of the Kowloon Peninsula is extremely high – 43,030 people per square kilometre – while that of Hong Kong Island is 15,920 people.

Hong Kong's fertility rate has been falling since before its reversion to China in 1997. Since the reversion, the TFR has remained below the very low level of 1.00. Therefore, its natural population growth over recent years has been close to zero. Unlike other East Asian regions, however, Hong Kong is expected to see no population decline due to immigrations from mainland China. Under this situation, Hong Kong's population policy calls for (1) promoting the acceptance of highly qualified people, (2) giving priority to policies that contribute to improving human capital including education policies and (3) refraining from taking any policy to recover the fertility rate under the principle of leaving childbirth decisions up to individuals. The third matter in particular indicates a unique policy stance, compared with fertility-boosting policies taken by South Korea and Singapore whose fertility rates are higher than the Hong Kong level. In addition to this, Hong Kong has implemented childbirth leave and childcare services. These measures are designed to support families and employment rather than to raise the fertility rate.

4.3 Japan

Located at the eastern tip of the Eurasian continent, Japan consists of four large islands – Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu – and more than 6,800 small islands. After World War II, Japan started post-war restoration and achieved miraculously high economic growth. It was the first Asian country to gain the status of becoming industrialized. Japan has seen a remarkable shift to a post-industrial society

over recent years as information and service industries have increased in weight. Of Japan's total working population, the primary industry accounts for about 6%, the secondary industry for about 33% and the tertiary industry for about 61%. The working population mix of these industries is close to those seen in Western industrial countries.

Japan's population increased by 10%, from 31 million to slightly more than 34 million, in the 150 years between around 1720 in the late Edo period and 1868, the first year of the Meiji period. Given the 150-year time frame, the population growth at this time is viewed as moderate or close to 0. But the situation turned around later. In fewer than 150 years from the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan's population almost quadrupled. The population totalled 83.2 million in 1950, topped 100 million for the first time in 1967 and peaked at 127.9 million in 2004. But the Japanese population has since begun to decline. Since World War II, no other economic power has faced a continuous population decline due to a fertility rate decline and an ageing population. Japan has become the first industrial country in the world to shift to a depopulating society.

Japan now has one of the lowest fertility rates and the most elderly population in the world. According to a forecast given by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in 2006, Japan's population is projected to decline from 127.7 million at present to 95.2 million in 2050. This means that the population may decrease by 32.6 million, or 30%, in the next 44 years (in the medium variant for the TFR at 1.26).

A sign of a population decline in Japan was already seen in the 1970s. The TFR remained at 2.0 until the first half of the 1970s, before a sudden fall to 1.91 in 1975. Since then, the TFR continued a downward trend, hitting a low of 1.25 in 2005. Meanwhile, the average life expectancy has extended. The average life expectancy in Japan has increased from 50–60 years to 80–90 years. As the number of deaths decreased due to the extension of average life expectancy, Japan's population continued increasing even after 1975. In 2005, however, Japan's population began to decline as deaths exceeded births.

In 1950, children aged up to 14 accounted for 35.4%, or more than one-third, of Japan's population. But the share fell to 24.0% in 1970, reflecting a decline in the number of births after the first baby boom between 1947 and 1949. The child population share recovered slightly as the number of births increased during the second baby boom between 1971 and 1974, but the share continued to decline for 29 years in a row from 1975. In 1997, the child population share came to 15.3%, slipping below 15.7% for people aged 65 or more. In 2007, the share dropped to 13.5%. According to population estimates by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the child population share is projected to continue declining in the future and slip below 10% in 2030.

In contrast, the elderly population – those aged 65 or more – hit a record 28.2 million in 2008, accounting for 22.1% of Japan's total population. The elderly population includes 15 million 'young-old' people aged between 65 and 74 and 13.2 million 'old-old' people aged 75 or more. Although the young-old population still exceeds the old-old population, the relationship may be reversed in the near future.

As the number of elderly people increased amidst the overall population fall, the elderly population share is expected to reach 25.2%, or a quarter of the total population, in 2013 and 33.7%, or one-third, in 2035.

4.4 Malaysia

Malaysia is a federal state consisting of Peninsular Malaysia and the two states of Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo Island. The Malay Peninsula and Borneo are separated by the South China Sea. The country gained independence from Britain in 1957 and named itself the Malaya Federation. In 1964, Singapore joined the Malaya Federation, but soon, Singapore split away from the federation in 1965. In the same year, the Federation annexed Sabah and Sarawak, establishing the present state. Malaysia's population totalled 25.63 million in 2005. Some 80% of the total population lives in Peninsular Malaysia. The national land area totals 329,749 km^2. The population density is 69 people per square kilometre, indicating that, for an Asian country, Malaysia has relatively low population density.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, typical among Asian nations where multiple ethnic groups usually coexist. The population is divided into three groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian groups. Malay people, called Bumiputera, and other natives account for 58% of Malaysia's total population, Chinese for 25% and Indians for 7%. The remaining 7% is represented by foreigners. Under British colonial rule, Malaysia accepted Chinese, Indian and other foreign immigrants as workers for tin mines and rubber plantation, and such historical developments have led to the present multi-ethnic country.

Income gaps between multiple ethnic groups have traditionally been wide. Particularly, disputes have been raised frequently between the Chinese, a rich minority group, and the Malays, a majority group with a high poverty ratio. During the establishment of the post-independence political arrangement and the modernisation process, national unification based on ethnic reconciliation has been a significant political challenge. In the process of national unification, the Malays, as the majority group, have established their political advantage, and the Bumiputera policy has been promoted to distribute resources primarily to Malays.

The Bumiputera policy was materialised by the 1970–1990 New Economic Policy, which called for providing preferential treatment to Malays in economic and social terms, eradicating poverty and promoting high economic growth and social reform. The policy was taken over by the 1991–2000 National Development Policy. Under the policy, Malaysia successfully and rapidly transformed its industrial structure. Malaysia achieved an average annual economic growth rate of 6.7% between 1970 and 1990, and it maintained annual growth above 8% before suffering a 7.5% economic contraction due to the currency crisis in 1998. During the modernisation process, the fruits of growth have been provided primarily to Malays, but Chinese and Indians have also been given some share. As a result, the income gap between Chinese and Malays has narrowed.

The 1997 Asian currency crisis inflicted great damage on Malaysia, which had a current account deficit and massive external debts, unlike Singapore. Later, however, Malaysia took advantage of a fixed exchange rate system and foreign currency controls to overcome the currency crisis and boosted economic growth to 5.9% (in 2006). Per capita GDP reached $8,197 in 2008.

In Malaysia, the family planning law was established in 1966 to control births. But labour shortages amidst fast economic growth prompted then Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir in the mid-1980s to transform the birth control policy into his 70-million-people population initiative. The new population policy has been designed to help prevent the fertility rate from declining through the provision of childbirth allowances and tax reforms.

Nevertheless, Malaysia's population has been ageing as the fertility rate has gradually declined and the average life expectancy has increased. The TFR decreased from the 1960–1965 average of 6.72 to the 2000–2005 average of 2.87. Elderly people aged 65 or more accounted for a small share of 4.4% in 2005. But the elderly population share is projected to exceed 7% within 10 years, transforming Malaysia into an ageing society. The share is expected to top 14% within a short period of 24 years.

Ageing in Malaysia leads not only to a quantitative increase in the elderly population share but also a serious social security issue. Nuclear families have increased due to urbanisation, weakening the function of families to support elderly people. In Malaysia, where family support for elderly people is given top priority, universal pension and elderly welfare systems have not been developed sufficiently.

4.5 Singapore

Singapore is a tiny city-state with a territory of only 710 km^2, located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. Singapore seceded from the Malaya Federation and became an independent state in 1965. Since then, it has achieved remarkable economic development, boosting per capita GDP to $53,192 in 2008. In Asia, it is the second most industrialised country after Japan. Before it gained independence, Singapore was a base of intermediate trade or a commercial hub. After independence, however, its weight shifted to manufacturing industries led by foreign companies. Since the 1980s, financial and business services have grown dramatically.

Singapore's population totalled 4.99 million in 2009, more than doubling from 2.07 million in the 40 years since 1970. The population density in 2008 was 6,814 people per square kilometre, which means that Singapore rivals Hong Kong as the most populated region in East and Southeast Asia. Annual population growth was as high as 4.3% in 2007 and 5.5% in 2008. The growth has been attributed primarily to an increase in the number of non-residents, including foreign workers. The number of Singapore residents, including Singaporeans and permanent foreign residents, stood at 3.58 million (78.0% of total population) in 2007 and 3.64 million (75.2%) in 2008. The number increased by 1.6% in 2007 and 1.7% in 2008. Singapore is a

multi-ethnic country. In 2008, Chinese accounted for 74.7% of Singaporeans, Malays for 13.6%, Indians for 8.9% and others for 2.8% (Singapore Department of Statistics 2010).

Singapore was the first Southeast Asian nation to experience a demographic transition. The TFR stood at around 6 in 1950, fell to 4.66 in 1965 and dropped further to 2.07, which is below the population replacement level, in 1975. Since then, the TFR, though recovering temporarily, has remained below the population replacement level, and in 2008, it was 1.28.

In 1966, the Singapore government created the Singapore Family Planning and Population Board to launch a 'stop at two' family planning programme so as to limit the number of children to two per couple. Soon after it became independent of Malaysia, the Singapore government tried to prevent population growth through the positive birth control campaign with its limited resources as a small city-state.

In the mid-1980s, however, Singapore's population policy turned around from the birth control campaign to the birth promotion campaign under the slogan of 'three or more if you can afford it'. One factor behind the turnaround was that the TFR had remained below the population replacement level for nearly 10 years. Another factor was that the 1980 census indicated low fertility for higher-educated women. This led Singaporeans to become concerned about not only the population size but also the population quality. In fact, the complete fertility rate stood at 3.12 for women whose educational records were limited to primary education against 1.29 for female university graduates. In line with the improvement of educational levels and women's growing participation in the labour force, the number of births is expected to decline further along with family sizes.

In response to such a situation, Singapore has implemented the 'Romancing Singapore' campaign since the mid-1980s, encouraging primarily higher-educated women to get married.[4] In a bid to support childcare, it has also lowered the employment tax for foreigners to make it easier for young couples to hire foreign maids. These measures have led to some recovery in the fertility rate. But the long-term downward trend of the fertility rate has made no major change due to the continuation of (1) an increase in unmarried people, (2) the late-marriage tendency and (3) a rise in childbirth ages.

4.6 Thailand

The Kingdom of Thailand is located at the centre of Continental Southeast Asia, with a territory size of 514,000 km^2. Its population totalled 63.38 million at the end of 2008, with a population density at 126 people per square kilometre. The population

[4] The Social Development Unit (SDU) was founded in 1984 to encourage male and female university graduates to get married. It plans dinners, dance parties and other events for unmarried men and women.

is concentrated in the metropolitan regions, which include the capital city of Bangkok and the surrounding provinces. One-sixth of the total population lives in the Bangkok metropolitan region. The Thai race is dominant in Thailand, accounting for 80% of the total population. Chinese account for nearly 10% of the population, while other residents include Indians, Vietnamese and Malays. Buddhists account for 94% of the population and Muslims for about 5%.

As Thailand has historically been an agricultural country, farmers still account for more than 40% of its working population, but their output captured only 12% of GDP in 2008. Through rapid industrialisation since the 1980s, its industrial weight shifted from agriculture to secondary and tertiary industries. Although Thailand achieved a high annual average economic growth rate of 8.1% in the first half of the 1990s, an economic crisis emerged in 1997, with pressure growing on the baht to be devalued upon the burst of the economic bubble. The crisis forced the Thai economy to contract 1.4% in 1997 and 10.5% in 1998.

The Thai government then made economic reconstruction efforts, including the disposal of non-performing loans, while receiving assistance from the international community including the International Monetary Fund. The Thaksin administration, launched in 2001, offered an emphasis on domestic demand and the promotion of farming villages and small to medium enterprises in addition to the traditional priority given to exports. Thanks to the invigoration of private consumption through domestic demand expansion measures, the Thai economy recovered gradually, achieving a growth rate of 5.1% in 2006 and 2.5% in 2008.

Until the 1960s, structural features of Thailand were its high birth and low mortality rates, with the TFR exceeding 6. In the early 1970s, however, the Thai government offered a national population policy to control population. The policy, though without compulsory measures such as China's one-child policy, positively enlightened the people about family planning. As a result, the fertility rate has declined in line with economic growth since the 1970s. The Thai TFR slipped below 2.1 in the second half of the 1980s and sank to 1.83 in 2005.

Knodel et al. (1995) cited the following four factors behind the rapid fertility rate decline in Thailand: (1) Parents have changed their thoughts about children and shifted their priorities from quantity to quality of children as the rapid economic development brought about social changes; (2) Thai culture is based on Buddhism, so it is more tolerant of birth control; (3) there has been potential demand for birth control among couples; and (4) the government's family planning efforts have made citizens more conscious about the need for birth control, and the easy availability of birth control measures has led to an increase in use.

Meanwhile, the urban middle class has expanded its presence to a level that cannot be ignored in Thailand, exerting a great influence in political, social and cultural areas. While various studies have been conducted on the poor class in farming villages and urban slum areas, systematic studies on urban middle-class families have been limited.

In Southeast Asia, including Thailand, women's share of the labour force has been described as high. As female employees from urban middle-class families have increased, it has become difficult to achieve a good balance between childcare

and work. While people move from rural to urban regions to form middle-class families, these families have no close relatives to support childcare. There has been an absolute shortage of housemaids, and, under such a situation, women have no choice but to quit their jobs and serve as housewives.

5 Changes in Family and Living Arrangements

The fertility rate decline and the life expectancy extension in Asia over recent years have greatly affected family structure and living arrangements for parent and children. The cohabitation of multiple generations has been the traditional Asian principle for family formation, although East Asia has given priority to a paternal family system in contrast to the bilateral family system that has been dominant in Southeast Asia.

The populations of these Asian countries, however, have been concentrated in urban areas due to rapid economic growth since the 1970s, causing a remarkable decline in family sizes amidst the increasing proportion of nuclear families and household separations. In addition, the birth dearth caused by the falling fertility rate has worked to reduce family sizes. In Singapore, the average number of household members fell from 4.9 in 1980 to 4.2 in 1990, 3.7 in 2000 and 3.5 in 2009. The decline in family size in Hong Kong was even sharper than that in Singapore, although it was not as rapid as in Japan. The average number of household members in Hong Kong came to 3.0 in 2006 and 2.9 in 2009.

The average number of household members has declined as the proportion of households consisting of fewer members has somewhat increased. Table 2.10 shows data on household types that were collected in four countries and readjusted for comparison. The table indicates that single-member households' share of total households in Japan is an outstandingly high 25.6%, resulting in the world's lowest average number of household members, at 2.7. In contrast, Singapore features a lower share for single-member households and a higher share for nuclear families. This may be because the government's housing policy has made it difficult for single people to secure houses.

Table 2.10 Household type and average size (%)

	Single	Nuclear family	Extended family	Others	Average size (person)
China(1999)	6.3	70.9	22.8	0.01	3.6
Japan(2000)	25.6	60.1	13.9	0.4	2.7
Singapore(2000)	8.2	75.6	12.0	4.1	3.7
Thailand(2002)	11.8	55.5	32.1	0.6	3.8

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China 2000, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (Japan) 2007, Singapore Department of Statistics, *Census of Population* 2000, *Statistical Release 5 Households and Housing*, Thailand, http://www.nso.go.th/eng/indicators

Table 2.11 Household types in Japan (%)

	Single	Couple-only	Couple and unmarried children	Single parent and unmarried children	Three-generation	Others
1985	20.8	13.7	40.0	6.3	19.0	0.2
1990	23.1	15.5	37.3	6.8	17.2	0.2
1995	25.6	17.4	34.2	7.1	15.4	0.3
2000	27.6	18.9	31.9	7.6	12.5	0.4
2005	29.5	19.6	29.9	8.4	12.1	0.5

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2007)

Looking at large households including stem, expanded and step families, we find that Thailand features a high share of 32.1% and a relatively higher average number of household members, at 3.8. The table, though failing to trace historical changes, leads us to suspect that in Japan and other more economically developed countries, the proportion of ‘nuclear and single-member households’ has increased, while that of large-sized households including ‘stem, expanded and step families’ has decreased.

Here, we would like to consider recent trends in more detail, taking the example of Japan, which has seen remarkable family and household changes.

According to the National Census Report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the number of households in Japan has increased persistently. The number stood at about 22.2 million in 1960, exceeded 40 million in 1990 and reached 49.1 million in 2005.

In contrast, the average number of household members has followed a downward trend, falling from 2.66 in 2000 to 2.54 in 2005. In 1953, the average number was 5.00; just 50 years later, the average was half that amount. In this way, Japan has seen a rising number of households and a falling average household size.

The type-by-type breakdown of households in 2005, in Table 2.11, shows that ‘nuclear family households’ (covering a couple-only family, a family of a couple and unmarried children and a family of a single parent and unmarried children) accounted for the largest share – at 28.4 million households (or 57.9%) – of the total number of households, followed by 14.5 million single-member households (29.5%) and 5.9 million three-generation households (12.1%).

The historical changes listed in Table 2.11 indicate that single-member and couple-only family households have increased in number during the past 20 years, while families of couples and unmarried children, and three-generation households have decreased. As the average household size has declined, the number of multi-generation households has decreased, while that of single-generation households has increased.

Such changes apparently indicate that opportunities for contact and exchange between generations – between parents and children and between grandparents and grandchildren – within households have decreased in number.

As multiple-generation families usually include young children, we paid attention to the percentage share for households including young children. In 1975, households

Table 2.12 Types of the households that include the elderly in Japan (%)

	Single	Couple-only	Couple and unmarried children	Three-generation	Others
1986	13.1	18.2	11.1	44.8	12.7
1989	14.8	20.9	11.7	40.7	11.9
1992	15.7	22.8	12.1	36.6	12.8
1995	17.3	24.2	12.9	33.3	12.2
1998	18.4	26.7	13.7	29.7	11.6
2001	19.4	27.8	15.7	25.5	11.6
2005	22.0	29.2	16.2	21.3	11.3
2008	22.0	29.7	18.4	18.5	11.3

Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2005)

including children aged below 18 accounted for 53.0%, or the majority, of total households in Japan. But 30 years later, in 2008, the share was just half that amount: 25.3%. The average number of children in families including children aged below 18 also fell from 1.83 in 1986 to 1.72 in 2008 as the percentage share of households including 'two children' and 'three or more children' decreased.

Of the total number of 'households including young children' in 2008, 'families of couples and unmarried children' accounted for the largest share, at 69.4%, followed by 20.9% for 'three-generation families', 6.8% for 'families of single parents and unmarried children' and 2.6% for 'others'. Compared with 1986, the share increased slightly for 'families of couples and unmarried children' among 'households including young children' but declined from 27.0% to 20.9% for 'three-generation families'. It has become less likely for children to be found living with a grandparent.

We may have to pay attention to a steady increase in the number of 'families of single parents and unmarried children', although their percentage share is still small. Since there are not many illegitimate children in Japan, the increase probably indicates that the number of single-parent families has been increasing due to divorce or the death of a spouse.

Next, we looked at whether mothers in 'households including children aged below 18' have jobs or not. In 2008, working mothers accounted for 61.9% of all mothers in such households, exceeding the number of full-time housewives. Mothers with jobs were more common in households including youngest children at higher ages. The percentage of working mothers with youngest children at the age of zero was limited to 28.9%, in contrast to 78.4% for working mothers with youngest children aged between 15 and 17. But most of these mothers were part-time workers. Regular employees' share was not much higher, even for mothers with youngest children at higher ages.

Next, we examined households from the viewpoint of elderly people. 'Households including elderly persons aged 65 or more' are broken down by type in Table 2.12. In 2008, the number of 'households including elderly persons' stood at 19.8 million (accounting for 41.2% of total households). 'Couple-only households' numbered

Table 2.13 Living arrangements of the elderly in Japan (%)

	Single	Couple-only	Live with married children	Live with unmarried children	Others
1986	10.1	22.0	46.7	17.6	3.5
1989	11.2	25.5	42.2	17.7	3.3
1992	11.7	27.6	38.7	18.4	3.7
1995	12.6	29.4	35.5	18.9	3.7
1998	13.2	32.3	31.2	19.1	4.2
2001	13.8	33.8	27.4	21.0	4.0
2002	14.2	35.1	26.1	20.9	3.7
2003	13.8	34.3	26.5	21.3	4.1
2004	14.7	36.0	23.6	21.9	3.8

Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2005)

5.9 million, accounting for the largest share (29.7%) of the ‘households including elderly persons’, followed by 4.4 million ‘single-member households’ (22.0%) and 3.7 million ‘three-generation households’ (18.5%).

Over the past 20 years, ‘single-member households’ and ‘couple-only households’ rapidly increased in number, while since 1986, the share of ‘three-generation households’ quickly decreased from their dominant level. Multi-generation families have declined, as have all Japanese households including elderly persons, except single-generation families, which have increased in number.

Table 2.13 confirms such developments with regard to elderly people. Among types of households of elderly people, the ‘couple-only household’ accounted for the largest share at 36.0% in 2004, compared with 14.7% for the ‘single-member household’. This indicates that half of all elderly people live alone or with spouses in the same generation.

Elderly people ‘living together with their married children’ in two- or three-generation households accounted for 23.6% in 2004. This percentage was half of the 20-year-earlier level. In contrast, the share of those ‘living together with unmarried children’ slightly increased in the same 20 years. As the percentage of those ‘living together with their married children’ declined sharply, however, the percentage for elderly people ‘living together with children’ fell steeply from 64.3% in 1986 to 45.5% in 2004. If this trend continues, changes in forms of residence for elderly people may work to further limit their contact with younger generations, including their children and grandchildren.

Of households including elderly people, those consisting of elderly people alone may be called ‘elderly household’. In 2004, ‘elderly households’ numbered 7,874,000, accounting for 17.0% of all households in Japan and 44.1% of ‘households including elderly people’. Against 100 for the base year of 1975, the index for ‘elderly households’ was 723 against 141 for ‘all households’ in 2004. This means that ‘elderly households’ increased in number far more quickly than ‘all households’.

Of ‘elderly households’, ‘single-member households’ accounted for 3.37 million (47.5%), close to the 3.9 million ‘couple-only households’ (49.6%) in 2004.

Table 2.14 Single households of the elderly by sex and age group in Japan (%)

	65–69 years old	70–74	75–79	80–84	85 and over
Male	30.5	29.1	21.1	12.2	8.0
Female	21.1	25.7	25.7	17.2	10.3

Source: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2005)

Of 'single-member elderly households', single-woman households have consistently accounted for more than 70%; the majority of 'single-member elderly households' consist of women.

Table 2.14 compares single-male and single-female elderly households broken down by age bracket, based on the data for 2004. Of 'single-male elderly households', 'young-old' people aged between 65 and 74 accounted for 60%. Of 'single-female elderly households', 'old-old' people aged 75 or more accounted for more than 50%. These data also indicate that the majority of 'single-member elderly households' in Japan consist of an elderly woman.

Behind the increase in the number of single-member and couple-only elderly households has been a growing independent consciousness among elderly people over recent years. According to the Cabinet Office's Awareness Survey on Elderly Livelihood in 2006, those wishing to live with their children in their later years accounted for 43.6%, or less than a half, of respondents aged 60 or more. Those who do not wish to live with their children accounted for 35.9% (Cabinet Office, Japan 2007a).

Of respondents aged between 30 and 59, those wanting to live with their children in their later years accounted for only 17.6%. This indicates that aged people's independent consciousness will grow further. In the survey, respondents were asked to cite multiple reasons for not wishing to live with their children in their later years. Positive reasons such as 'lifestyle differences' and 'bothersome mutual attentiveness' were cited more frequently than negative reasons such as 'unwillingness to bother children' and 'children's unwillingness to live together with parents'. These responses indicate that there are more people who wish to live alone or with their spouse in their later years than those who believe that it would be inevitable for them to do so.

In fact, elderly people's willingness to live with children or grandchildren has changed dramatically over the past 25 years. According to the 'International Comparison Survey on Elderly People's Livelihood and Consciousness' that the Cabinet Office has conducted every 5 years since 1980, respondents' willing to always live together with children or grandchildren' accounted for 59.4% of the total respondents in 1980, exceeding the 30.1% share for those 'willing to occasionally meet with children or grandchildren for meals and conversations'. Later, however, the percentage for those wishing to always live with children or grandchildren continued a downward trend, while that for those wanting to occasionally meet them soared. In 2005, the former slipped below the latter. At the same time, the percentage of those wanting to 'occasionally talk with children or grandchildren'

rose sharply from the 5–8% range of the past to 14.7% (Cabinet Office, Japan 2007b). Although it has been said that Japanese are more willing to live with children or grandchildren than Westerners, it is clear that the number of elderly people wanting to do so has declined in Japan.

As reviewed above, the structure of households including elderly people has changed dramatically along with these people's consciousness over recent years. The percentage share of three-generation households is still large but has declined substantially from the past level. Furthermore, details of three-generation households themselves have changed dramatically. In the past, three-generation households had been based on householders' vertical parental relations. But present three-generation households, though taking the form of a nominal stem family, have growingly been characterised as a combination of multiple independent nuclear families. We may be able to conclude that three-generation households are now based on horizontal husband–wife relationships of grandparent, child and grandchild couples.

In the latter section of this chapter, we have analysed primarily the Japanese case in understanding the impact of demographic, social and economic changes on families and intergenerational relationships. Changes in Japanese intergenerational relationships reveal how these relations have become complicated and diversified due to family cycle changes accompanying the extension of life expectancy and the dearth in births. While traditional family disciplines have been shaken, intergenerational relations have grown more varied. The variation developed in living arrangement in Japan provides an example on new adaptations to tradition, where instead of the traditional three-generation living arrangement, some favour a two-generation house accommodating a parent couple and a child couple living together in independent households, and others seek to 'live close to parents' to maintain familiar relations while living separately. As the front-runner in the flying-geese pattern of demographic change, Japan's responses to the social and demographic challenges provide a lead to the possible developments in families and intergenerational relationships for the rest of the Asian countries.

References

Becker, G. S. (1960). An economic analysis of fertility. In A. J. Coale (Ed.), *Demographic and economic change in developed countries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cabinet Office, Japan. (2006). *White Paper on Birthrate-Declining Society 2005.*

Cabinet Office, Japan. (2007a). *Awareness survey on elderly livelihood*.

Cabinet Office, Japan. (2007b). *International comparison survey on elderly people's livelihood and consciousness.*

Chang, K. S. (1999). Compressed modernity and its discontents: South Korean society in transition. *Economy and Society, 28*(1), 30–55.

Knodel, J., et al. (1995). Living arrangements of elderly in Asia. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 10*(1&2), 1–6.

Leibenstein, H. (1957). *Economic backwardness and economic growth*. New York: Wiley.

Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (Japan). (2004). *National Livelihood Survey (annual)*, Tokyo.
Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. (2007). *National Census Report.*
National Bureau of Statistics of China. *2000 Census*.
Singapore Department of Statistics. (2010). *Singapore in figures 2009.*
Singapore Department of Statistics. *Census of population 2000, Statistical Release 5 Households and Housing*.
United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (1995). *Demographic Yearbook*.
United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2005). *Demographic Yearbook*.
United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2009a). *World Marriage Data 2008.*
United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2009b). *World Population Prospects: 2008 Revision.*

Chapter 3
Grandparenting Roles and Functions

Vivian W.Q. Lou and Iris Chi

1 Introduction

The role of the grandparent is a culturally relevant phenomenon, and reviews have called for more studies amongst diverse populations (Thiele and Whelan 2006). Because Western literature is based on a cultural tradition that emphasises individual autonomy and choice, it is interesting to explore grandparenting roles in cultural traditions that accentuate family harmony and collective well-being. Asian societies share a cultural tradition focused on intergenerational exchange, family filial responsibility and the social expectation that grandparents will be involved raising the grandchildren (van Willigen and Lewis 2006). Yet in this era of globalisation, it is important to examine whether and how grandparenting experiences in Asian societies have been influenced. Moreover, sociodemographic changes and the transformation of traditional culture through increased longevity, population ageing and changed family structures set a broader theoretical context for discussing intergenerational relations – and in particular grandparenting roles and functions (Du 2007; Powell and Cook 2009).

V.W.Q. Lou (✉)
Department of Social Work & Social Administration, Sau Po Centre on Ageing,
The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, People's Republic of China
e-mail: wlou@hku.hk

I. Chi
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 90089-0411, CA, USA
e-mail: ichi@usc.edu

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_3,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

2 Grandparenting Roles and Functions

Literature shows that grandparenting roles and functions are diverse and comprise dimensions that reflect underlying processes or meaning. According to the *Collins English Dictionary*, the term *role* refers to a particular position or function in a situation or in society (Sinclair 1995: 1441). Thus, the grandparenting role can be defined as the particular position or function of grandparents in families and society. Roles are socially defined concepts that relate to how society expects certain people to act and function. In this chapter, the terms *role* and *function* are used interchangeably to refer to the behaviours or activities that society expects of grandparents. A classic study by Neugarten and Weinstein (1964) found that grandparents performed various roles that could be categorised into four typical 'styles': fun seeker (who interacted with grandchildren for pleasure), formal carer (who provided help with daily life activities, such as preparing meals or escorting children to school), reservoir of family wisdom (who shared family history and taught family rules to their grandchildren) and surrogate parent (who functioned as a parent when the children's own parents failed in this capacity). Recent studies have expanded these classic roles to include four major grandparent functions: daily life helper, advisor, educator and transmitter of tradition (e.g. Kornhaber 1996; Thiele and Whelan 2006; Sheehan and Petrovic 2008). Daily life helpers are similar to Neugarten and Weinstein's formal carers and reflect an instrumental aspect of grandparenthood. Advisors and educators are extensions of daily carers, but also reflect functions of reservoirs of family wisdom. As their level of education improves and they accumulate rich life experiences, grandparents can serve as advisors and/or educators to younger generations, grandchildren in particular. The support they provide can be instrumental, emotional or social. The role of transmitter of culture is also an extension of reservoir of family wisdom because of its social and symbolic aspects. Grandparents, the oldest members of society, have the ability and responsibility to transmit cultural traditions to younger generations.

Demographic changes and modernisation have challenged normative grandparenting roles in certain cultures (Hermalin et al. 1998; Dunn et al. 2006). According to Western literature on societal change, the impact of modernisation on grandparenting roles has been complex (Bengtson 1998). On the one hand, increased life expectancy has created more opportunities for older adults to become grandparents later in life. On the other hand, fewer grandchildren and reduced family sizes act as barriers, keeping some older adults from taking on a grandparenting role. How these societal changes might affect grandparenting roles in a tradition that emphasises intergenerational links is of great interest to both gerontological researchers and practitioners.

Previous studies have found that grandparenting roles are sensitive to the demographic characteristics of both the old and young. According to the developmental perspective, grandparents' roles change as their grandchildren age (Newman and Smith 1997), and when grandparents themselves become too old, they might not have the opportunity or ability to take on certain roles (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1985; Newman and Smith 1997). Hence, it is important for studies to focus on grandchildren

of a specific age. Because age of grandchildren has implications on developmental abilities and needs that might be directly associated with grandparenting functions, the current study focused on grandparents with adolescent and/or youth grandchildren. Literature seems to suggest that normative expectations on grandparent roles and functions are incongruent between adolescent and/or youth grandchildren and grandparents (Harwood 2001; Wiscott and Kopera-Frye 2000). It has reason to believe that such incongruence could be enlarged under the modernisation process in a culture that emphasises intergenerational hierarchy such as in Asia. In Singapore, older people were reported to have ambivalent feelings towards intergenerational relationships (Thang 2007). However, previous studies usually focused on two generations (e.g. grandparent and grandchildren) and rarely considered views from the middle generation. Taking views from three generations would be able to provide a comprehensive depiction of normative expectations on grandparent roles and functions.

3 An Asian Perspective

Grandparenting roles and functions are culturally relevant phenomena that are shaped by the particular sociocultural context (Hermalin et al. 1998; Szinovacz 1998; van Willigen and Lewis 2006). Social norms and the developmental history of grandparenting influence the kinds of activities that are expected of grandparents and the role dimensions that underlie them. For example, the United States emphasises individual autonomy, and grandparents are normally expected not to have a large influence in grandchildren's lives except in times of crisis (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1985; Bengtson 1998). However, in Asian cultures, grandparents play legitimate roles in the family, symbolising family authority and standing at the centre of family relations (Brian and Logan 2001; Strom et al. 1999; Thang and Mehta 2004). In addition, social norms in Asian societies lead to social-oriented meaning making for grandparents (Ando 2005; Graham et al. 2002; Kamnuansilpa and Wongthanavasu 2005; Lou 2008; Mjelde-Mossey 2007). Hence, an exploration of the function of grandparents in an Asian context would make an important contribution to the cross-cultural literature on grandparenting.

As was discussed in this volume, Asian societies have been experiencing inevitable and irreversible demographic shifts, such as increased life expectancy, the rising median age of the population and rapid population ageing. Yet two other factors could also have a major impact on grandparenting roles in Asian societies: changes in living arrangements and changes in child-rearing practices.

Grandparents traditionally live with their adult children and grandchildren in multigenerational families. Under this kind of arrangement, older adults can be cared for by their adult children and grandchildren whilst simultaneously assuming grandparenting roles. In some cases, grandchildren who live apart from their parents are cared for by their grandparents. The middle generation (i.e. adult children or parents) often relies on grandparents to help provide daily care to young grandchildren and teach them traditions as they grow. This co-residence and social expectations of

Table 3.1 Percentage distribution of population aged 60 years and older by household composition and marital status

	Married older adults			
	Couple only	Child/grandchild	Other relatives	Non-relatives
Africa	13.2	83.9	2.7	0.2
Asia	15.2	82.2	2.2	0.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	20.7	70.9	5.6	2.8
Europe	72.1	23.0	3.2	1.7
United States	81.4	16.0	2.1	0.5
	Unmarried older adults			
	Living alone	Child/grandchild	Other relatives	Non-relatives
Africa	16.9	71.6	9.6	1.9
Asia	10.8	79.2	7.7	2.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	17.6	57.3	18.9	6.2
Europe	59.4	31.7	4.8	4.1
United States	64.5	20.2	8.4	6.8

Source: Constructed based on United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division 2005, Annex table A.IV.6

filial responsibility are two important mechanisms, enabling older people to take on grandparenting roles (Chow 2004; Tang 2009). Hence, intergenerational interdependency in families is established and maintained (Mehta and Thang 2006); grandparents are expected to be actively involved in and contribute to the family's well-being by socialising with grandchildren, helping with household chores and providing financial help (e.g. Brian and Logan 2001; Wong 2004; Wu and Sun 2003). In addition, roles or functions performed both directly for the grandchildren and indirectly through the middle generation are considered significant (Chan et al. 2000; Strom et al. 1999).

However, modernisation has challenged traditional understandings of filial piety and intergenerational living arrangements (Brian and Logan 2001; Du 2007). Yet, despite the fact that Asia as a whole still has the highest proportion of older adults living with their adult children (Table 3.1), more and more parents and grandchildren are living together without their grandparents after rapid economic development and enhanced living conditions.

Moreover, the younger generation has changed in its perceptions of filial responsibility and its expectations for the role grandparents should play in child rearing. A recent study found that, compared with the middle and older generations, the younger generation in Hong Kong agreed least with values of filial piety. Influence from the West may be one of the possible reasons for this change (Kwan et al. 2003). The decreasing fertility rate amongst Asians makes it easier for parents to raise their own children, and in some societies, such as Hong Kong, parents hire domestic helpers to care for their children.

In sum, in light of modernisation and its unintended consequences, Asians are confronted with various forces that can reshape traditional grandparenting roles. Because these roles are socially generated, it would be interesting to see how

different generations (i.e. grandparents, parents and grandchildren) perceive these roles. The literature suggests that different generations would vary on their perceptions of and expectations towards interpersonal relationships, including the grandparent–grandchild relationship (Harwood 2001; Wiscott and Kopera-Frye 2000). Exploring perceptions of grandparenting roles amongst the generations would give researchers a better understanding of the impact of the intergenerational relationship on individual, family and society well-being in a context that emphasises family obligations and intergenerational exchange (Du 2007; Szinovacz 1998; van Willigen and Lewis 2006). The purpose of the present chapter is to explore perceptions of grandparenting functions amongst three generations: grandparents, parents and grandchildren. It aimed to answer the following four research questions: (1) In what way are the generations' views on grandparenting roles and functions the same? (2) In what way are they different? (3) What are the perceived reasons for changes in grandparenting functions over time? (4) What are generations' normative expectations for grandparenting roles?

4 Methodology

As the methodology regarding the project has already been discussed in Chap. 1, this chapter only elaborates on the measures and data analysis strategies which relates to the roles and functions of grandparents.

4.1 Measures

Detailed questions focusing on the roles and functions of the grandparents from the semi-structured interview guidelines included the following:

For grandchildren:

1. What types of activities do you do together with your grandparents now? Have the activities changed over the years?
2. What is your grandparent's contribution to your life (e.g. roles and functions)?
3. What would you expect your grandparent to do in addition to what you have previously mentioned in question 1?

For parents:

1. What is your parent's contribution to your life (e.g. roles and functions)?
2. What do you consider to be the roles of grandparents in the family?

For grandparents:

1. What types of activities do you do together with your grandchildren now? Have the activities changed over the years?

2. What is your main contribution to your grandchildren's lives (e.g. roles and functions)?
3. What would you expect to do in addition to what you have previously mentioned in question 1?

4.2 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to analyse data obtained from in-depth interviews in the four countries/communities including Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Japan. Transcriptions on responses to the above questions were then analysed by identifying patterns that relate to the four research questions. Identified patterns were then combined and catalogued into themes. Analyses of roles and functions along the lines of gender (male versus female), age (younger – less than 75 years old – versus older – 75 years old and above), living arrangement (co-residence of grandparents and grandchildren versus living separately) and ethnicity were further conducted to generate deeper understanding of the identified themes. Finally, valid arguments for choosing the themes as key findings were built by discussing between the two authors.

5 Results

Five themes emerged regarding grandparenting roles and functions in the four Asian countries/communities. First, the three generations shared perceptions of grandparents' roles as daily care helpers and transmitters of culture. Second, the three generations also differed in how they viewed grandparents' roles: Grandparents perceived themselves to be educators and advisors, parents perceived grandparents as fun companions and symbols of family and grandchildren perceived grandparents as 'roleless'. Third, grandparenthood in the Asian context emerged as both an individual and family journey affected by both life-span experiences and the family development process. Fourth, both grandparents and grandchildren were aware that the developmental stage affected changes in grandparenting functions. Finally, grandparents expected to teach the grandchildren more, parents expected that grandparents would serve as bridges and grandchildren had few expectations regarding grandparents.

5.1 Shared Views Across the Generations

Having grandchildren was regarded as a culturally expected and valued event that was appreciated by the interviewees. The three generations shared views on grand-

parents' functions as daily care providers and transmitters of culture, roles that reflect both personal and social meaning (see Chap. 4 for further discussion about the meanings of grandparenthood). Grandparents tended to view these roles as their responsibilities. Four grandparents from Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong and Thailand said:

> Oh yeah, I feel very happy naturally [when my grandson was born]. See, in our Asian mind, it is something to have a male son, a male grandson. I don't believe in it. But it is an Asiatic mind. People think that 'oh I've got a grandson so I am proud'. Naturally I am very happy. At that time my father- in-law was alive, and also my mother-in-law, she's 94. It's her grandson's son… you know Asian society, so in our society we've got very close family relationships. (Singapore, 78-year-old Indian grandfather, SA1)

> … when they [the grandchildren] go abroad, if they do not know about their own culture, they bring shame upon themselves. When foreigners come, they will talk about these. Therefore, for example, while overseas, they will be asked why your are from Japan but do not know about your culture. So if they are going [overseas], I will teach them *ikebana*. Japanese culture is very important. (Japan, 69-year-old grandmother, JF1)

> My parents [the grandparents] have a lot of experiences, they teach us [their children and grandchildren] cultural traditions such as rituals, customs. They also provide us with emotional support in our life. (Hong Kong, 46-year-old mother, HKO2)

> She [my grandmother] tells me stories, fairy tales, ghost stories. She also tells me family history and what should we do during *Songkran*, building a sand pagoda or going to temple during Monk's day … (Thailand, 13-year-old granddaughter, TC3)

In general, grandmothers were more likely to report roles and functions as daily care providers. Whilst the idea of transmitting culture was shared between interviewees with diverse ethnic backgrounds, Thai, Indian and Malay grandparents were keener on teaching religious knowledge to grandchildren as compared to the Chinese and Japanese grandparents.

5.2 *Different Views Across the Generations*

Grandparents perceived themselves as educators and as children's advisers, whereas parents perceived grandparents as fun companions of grandchildren but also as symbols of family. The younger grandparents and those living together with grandchildren were more likely to report their roles and functions as children's advisers as compared to the older grandparents. From the grandchildren's perspectives, grandparents seemed to be losing their roles as educators and advisers although grandchildren from Thailand, Indian families in Malaysia and Singapore and Malay families in Malaysia were more likely to report their grandparents as teachers of religious knowledge.

> I told them [my teenage grandchildren] to start dating only after they finish their studies. But they do not care as they do not understand the importance of studying. (Hong Kong, 73-year-old grandmother, HKN1)

> Usually I did most part. The grandmother is like an entertainer [joke] for them. Taking them for a walk, buying them snacks and answering their questions. [They] do some drawing together. (Thailand, 41-year-old mother, TC2)

> Ultimately it is the sense of 'family.' On weekdays it is usual that we [the parents] are not at home during the daytime. When my children [the grandchildren] were very young, my parents [the grandparents] and the babysitter would be around to take care of them. As we came home late, [it is a good] feeling that there was someone at home [even if the grandparents live there], the meaning of the person at home, I am very conscious of the family, I think. (Japan, 45-year-old father, JE2)

> When I was young, she [my grandmother] used to supervise my activities, homework… [Now] most of time I'm just sitting down doing my work, she'll tell me, 'You must do this, you must do that.' Same with my younger brother, 'You must do this, you must do that. If you don't do that I'll scold you.' … Most of the time it's just [my grandmother] talking … (Singapore, 13-year-old grandson, SH3)

6 Grandparenthood as a Personal Journey: Unique and Diverse Experiences

Each person interviewed had his or her own unique experiences and perspectives on grandparenting roles. Life-span experiences, personal choices and decision making embedded in the social context of gender, cohort, living arrangement and ethnicity, usually determined whether grandparents would assume certain roles and/or why they chose to do so.

One Japanese grandparent expressed that when his children were young, he had a very clear division of labour with his wife: His wife was responsible when their children were in primary school, and he was responsible when they were in secondary school. When it came to his grandchildren, because his children (the middle generation) were child care professionals, the grandfather decided not to intervene in the child rearing.

> Furthermore, 'til primary school, it was my policy, and my wife was in charge of primary school. When they have gone to junior high, I gave advice. The PTA involvement in primary school, my wife was doing everything, and the PTA involvement in junior high and high school, I was doing everything. The father was. Therefore, comparatively, I gave a fair amount of advice in their youthful days, but concerning the grandchildren, I am leaving it to my children. Because, my son and his wife, they are both working in child care. Therefore, concerning child-rearing nowadays, my son and his wife are professionals. Therefore, there is no place for the parents to interfere. (Japan, 80-year-old grandfather, JI1)

One grandparent would stop the parents from punishing the grandchildren. However, another told his son that punishing is love and should be done when the grandchildren do something wrong.

> She [my grandmother] tried to stop them [my parents] when they punished me. (Thailand, 20-year-old granddaughter,TB3)

> My parents told me that if you don't want to spoil your children, you should punish them when they are wrong. I love them [my children] so much; [therefore] I punish them a lot. (Thailand, 45-year-old father, TB2)

6.1 Reasons for Changes in Grandparenting Roles and Functions over Time

The grandparent and grandchildren interviewees were not fully aware of the social environmental factors that contributed to the changes in grandparenting roles. They basically attributed these changes to personal factors amongst both grandparents and grandchildren. Grandchildren associated changing roles with their decreasing need for grandparents as they aged, whereas grandparents associated these changes with personal issues such as deteriorating health.

> Now, if my children/grandchildren need help, a day or a half day can be affordable. But I can not afford for too long, because my body now is not able to take it. (Hong Kong, 71-year-old grandfather, HR1)

> We [the grandfather and granddaughter] don't do much… he's old and he can't walk much. He doesn't want to go out with us often because he cannot see and hear… so now we just chat once in a while. (Singapore, 18-year-old granddaughter, SC3)

Parents seemed very aware of the changes in the social environment and the fact that child-rearing practices were expected to change accordingly. This might be one of the reasons why the parents perceived less of an educator role for grandparents.

> I have to explain to her [the grandmother] that the children these days are different. We have to be strict with them [grandchildren] so that they'll love us… I have to explain to her [the grandmother] or else she will keep nagging that they never stop coming. She doesn't like it. I have to tell her that this is my child not yours and I will tell them what is right or wrong; it's not the time to raise them your way anymore. (Thailand, 40-year-old mother, TE2)

> [My parents] did teach how to take care of baby [grandchildren], but not when the child grew older. Time has changed since my parents' time; their methods are not suitable now. (Hong Kong, 37-year-old mother, HA2)

6.2 Expectations of Grandparenting Roles and Functions

Not surprisingly, many grandparents had expectations to teach grandchildren cultural traditions (see also Chap. 4 in this volume). Parents expected that grandparents would enhance their roles as transmitters of culture or as bridges or 'models' in the family. In contrast, grandchildren seemed to have few expectations of grandparents. They wanted to have an independent life without much interference from their parents and grandparents.

> I would like them to learn tea [ceremonies] and flower [arranging] but there is no time. I think it will be good if they did it but after they enter university, when they have little free time… (Japan, 71-year-old grandmother, JC1)

> They should be able to share their experiences with grandsons. And really act as a bridge between children and parents. So if they are able to instil some positive values in them, and share their own experiences with them, it'll be very beneficial. If they're able to know more about youngster's world nowadays, and know how to deal with them, it'll be helpful to guide the youngsters. (Singapore, 39-year-old mother, SN2)

7 Discussion

The results of the present study reveal both similarities and differences in the perceptions of grandparenting roles and functions amongst three generations of Asian families in the context of gender, cohort, living arrangement and ethnicity. Asian cultural traditions, life courses and changes due to modernisation are likely to be the main contributing factors to these perceptions.

The shared perceptions of the roles of grandparents reported by the interviewees suggest that the respondents were influenced by Asian culture (Du 2007; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division 2005; van Willigen and Lewis 2006). When grandparents care for their grandchildren on a daily basis, this function is regarded as a family obligation and a responsibility. Asian culture emphasises intergenerational exchange along the developmental life cycle of the family: Grandparents take care of grandchildren when the grandchildren are young, and children take care of their grandparents when their grandparents become old and frail (Tang 2009). Gender differences identified in our study support gender-socialisation perspectives in which females are socialised as family caregivers. The role of transmitter of culture is understandable from a generation replacement perspective. According to Asian culture, senior members of the family clan are expected to transmit culture as well as family traditions to the younger generations. This is in line with the literature showing that Chinese grandparents take on roles as family oriented intergenerational brokers (Strom et al. 1999). In particular, older people provided support (instrumental, emotional and financial), advice and shared experiences to parents to facilitate the socialisation of grandchildren. By actively participating in intergenerational interactions, grandparents could obtain life satisfaction as well as contribute to the well-being of the family, which is one of the most significant life goals for Chinese elders (Chan et al. 2000; Lou 2010). Of course, what to transmit in a particular social context is determined by social expectations, which explains why religious knowledge was more likely to be stressed in India, Thailand and Malaysia within which religious affiliations are much more strongly emphasised than in China and Japan.

The present findings also suggest that whereas the grandparents' generation is still strongly influenced by Asian tradition, parents and grandchildren are more likely to have changed their views and expectations as a result of modernisation. It is understandable that grandparents are keen to play the educator role. According to the tradition of filial piety, it is extremely important for younger family members to obey senior family members, parents in particular. Senior family members are in turn responsible for 'teaching' younger family members behavioural norms and

family rules. Such expectations do not change with developmental changes in the younger family members. A very famous Chinese proverb says ‘Parents worry about children even children are 99 years old’ (*Yang er yi bai sui, chang you jiu shi jiu*). Hence, it is traditionally expected that grandparents would be great teachers, which is reflected in grandparents’ own expectations of their role.

However, modernisation seems to have changed understandings of filial responsibility and child-rearing practices. Parents seem to agree less with grandparents playing the role of educator and even challenge grandparents’ authority in taking up this role. Thus, parents have started to break from traditional notions of filial responsibility and now believe that children should be educated in other ways (e.g. through formal education or by the parents themselves) (Kwan et al. 2003). Grandchildren themselves are yearning for autonomy and independence, and may feel that the ways of grandparents are outdated. Therefore, they have very few expectations of grandparents.

Grandparents reported that decreasing health was one of the main barriers to their functioning as a grandparent. It is less feasible for some older persons to perform certain functions as they become less healthy and mobile during the ageing process. Combined with changes in living arrangement, where more grandparents are living alone or with their spouse only, deteriorating health has a definite impact on grandparents’ ability to perform certain roles. Therefore, changes in living arrangements affect not only elders’ social networks and the support they receive but also the grandparenting roles they can play (Lee 2004).

Limitations about the present study have been discussed in Chap. 1. Here we would like to further mention a couple more limitations in this chapter. First, we have excluded the Malaysian data from analysis in this chapter because of the initial translation issues that the researchers in Malaysia had. Second, in this chapter, the information collected from four countries/communities including Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Thailand was grouped together for data analysis. During the analytical process, four countries/communities were regarded as sharing similar culture, in which unique social-cultural characteristics were not highlighted. This strategy is in line with the objective of the book, which aims to generate common experiences of grandparenthood in Asia.

8 Conclusion

The results of the present study suggest that the three generations of Asian families interviewed all share views of grandparents as daily life helpers and transmitters of tradition. However, they seemed to disagree about grandparents’ other roles and functions, a fact that can be explained by the influences of modernisation, social changes and changes in values (Hermalin et al. 1998; Kwan et al. 2003). Whether grandparents opt out of their roles by choice or because of other individual (e.g. gender, cohort), family (e.g. living arrangement) or institutional factors (e.g. ethnicity) needs further exploration. However, the results suggest that Asian

cultural traditions regarding grandparenting roles still remain, particularly from the views of grandparents themselves. Grandparents still wish to contribute to family well-being by acting as socialising agents in the family, helping children and grandchildren both directly and indirectly and helping to take care of grandchildren. Given the changes in family values such as filial piety, there might be a need for grandparents to gain new knowledge and skills in order to more successfully take up their expected roles (Strom et al. 1999; Kwan et al. 2003).

References

Ando, K. (2005). Grandparenthood: Crossroads between gender and aging. *International Journal of Japanese Sociology, 14*(1), 32–51.

Bengtson, V. L. (1998). Beyond the nuclear family: The increasing importance of multigenerational bonds. 1998 Burgess Award Lecture. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63*(1), 1–16.

Brian, J. S., & Logan, J. (2001). Intergenerational relations: A comparison between Chinese and American families. *Journal of Sociology, 2*, 85–95 (in Chinese).

Chan, C. M. A., Phillips, D. R., Chi, I., Ho, S., Cheng, S. T., & Cheung, J. (2000). *The study of the quality of life of elderly residents in the community in Hong Kong*. Report submitted to the Health and Welfare Bureau, Hong Kong Government.

Cherlin, A., & Furstenberg, F. F. (1985). *The new American grandparent: A place in the family, a life apart*. New York: Basic Books.

Chow, N. W. S. (2004). Asian value and aged care. *Geriatrics and Gerontology International, 4*, 21–25.

Du, P. (2007). *Changing environments and older persons in Asia*. Paper presented at the Expert Group Meeting on the Regional preparations for the Global Review of Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, Bangkok.

Dunn, J., Fergusson, E., & Maughan, B. (2006). Grandparents, grandchildren and family change in contemporary Britain. In A. Clarke-Stewart & J. Dunn (Eds.), *Families count: Effects on child and adolescent development* (pp. 299–318). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Graham, E., Teo, P., Yeoh, B. S. A., & Levy, S. (2002). Reproducing the Asian family across the generations: “Tradition”, gender and expectations in Singapore. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal, 17*(2), 61–86.

Harwood, J. (2001). Comparing grandchildren and grandparents’ stake in their relationship. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 53*, 195–210.

Hermalin, A. I., Roan, C., & Perez, A. (1998). *The emerging role of grandparents in Asia. Elderly in Asia Research Report Series No. 98–52*. Ann Arbor: Population Studies Center, University of Michigan.

Kamnuansilpa, P., & Wongthanavasu, S. (2005). Grandparents’ relationships with grandchildren in Thailand. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 3*(1), 49–66.

Kornhaber, A. (1996). *Contemporary grandparenting*. London: Sage.

Kwan, A. Y. H., Cheung, J. C. K., & Ng, S. H. (2003). *Revisit of filial piety concept among the young, the adult, and the old in Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Nanjing, Shanghai, Xia, and Xian*. Hong Kong: Department of Applied Social Studies, City University of Hong Kong.

Lee, W. K. M. (2004). Living arrangements and informal support for the elderly: Alteration to intergenerational relationships in Hong Kong. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 2*, 27–49.

Lou, V. W. Q. (2008). *Gender and grandparent-grandchild relations in Hong Kong*. Paper presented at the Gender & Family in East Asia International Conference 2008, Hong Kong.

Lou, V. W. Q. (2010). Life satisfaction of older adults in Hong Kong: The role of social support from grandchildren. *Social Indicators Research, 95*(3), 377–391.

Mehta, K., & Thang, L. L. (2006). Interdependence in Asian families: The Singapore case. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 4*(1), 117–125.
Mjelde-Mossey, L. (2007). Cultural and demographic changes and their effects upon the traditional grandparent role for Chinese elders. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 16*(3), 107–120.
Neugarten, B. L., & Weinstein, K. K. (1964). The changing American grandparent. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 26*, 199–204.
Newman, S., & Smith, T. B. (1997). Developmental theories as the basis intergenerational programs. In S. Newman, C. R. Ward, T. B. Smith, J. O. Wilson, & J. M. McCrea (Eds.), *Intergenerational programs: Past, present, and future* (pp. 3–19). Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.
Powell, J. L., & Cook, I. G. (Eds.). (2009). *Aging in Asia*. New York: Nava Science Publishers, Inc.
Sheehan, N., & Petrovic, K. (2008). Grandparents and their adult grandchildren: Recurring themes from the literature. *Marriage & Family Review, 44*(1), 99–124.
Sinclair, J. (1995). *Collins English dictionary*. London: HarperCollins.
Strom, R., Strom, S., Wang, C. M., Shen, Y. L., Griswold, D., Chan, H. S., & Yang, C. Y. (1999). Grandparents in the United States and the Republic of China: A comparison of generations and cultures. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 49*, 279–317.
Szinovacz, M. E. (1998). Grandparent research: Past, present and future. In M. E. Szinovacz (Ed.), *Handbook on grandparenthood* (pp. 1–20). Westport/London: Greenwood Press.
Tang, Y. (2009). A literature review of concept "filial piety". *Asian Social Science, 3*(2), 21.
Thang, L. L. (2007). Expectations of intergenerational relationships within the family: ambivalence among older persons in the context of Singapore. In A. Kusano & M. Kaplan (Eds.), *Proceedings: Japan conference to promote intergenerational programs and initiatives* (pp. 30–32). Tokyo, Japan: The Pennsylvania State University & Japan Intergenerational Unity Association.
Thang, L. L., & Mehta, K. (2004). Grandparents, how do I view thee? A study of grandparenting in Singapore. *Indian Journal of Gerontology, Special Issue, 18*(3/4), 375–390.
Thiele, D., & Whelan, T. (2006). The nature and dimensions of the grandparent role. *Marriage & Family Review, 40*(1), 93–108.
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division. (2005). *Living arrangements of older persons around the world*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division.
van Willigen, J., & Lewis, D. C. (2006). Culture as the context of aging. In H. Yoon & J. Hendricks (Eds.), *Handbook of Asian aging* (pp. 117–141). New York: Baywood Publishing Company.
Wiscott, R., & Kopera-Frye, K. (2000). Sharing of culture: Adult grandchildren's perceptions of intergenerational relations. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 51*, 199–215.
Wong, S. X. (2004). Changes of population and birth policy and its impact on intergenerational relations. *Population & Economics, 4*, 9–14 (in Chinese).
Wu, L. L., & Sun, Y. P. (2003). Family intergenerational exchange and its impacts on mental health of the elder adults. *Journal of Chinese Gerontology, 23*, 803–804 (in Chinese).

Chapter 4
Meanings of Being a Grandparent

Leng Leng Thang

What does it mean to be a grandparent?
Despite being a universally recognised social category – a role that an individual will assume when his or her offspring becomes a parent – what constitutes being a grandparent nevertheless encompasses some degree of vagueness, especially when compared with other the familial social roles of parent or child. This perhaps explains why questions relating to 'what it means to be a grandparent' have attracted much attention in the literature of grandparenthood.

Understanding what it means to be a grandparent requires an exploration of the familial significance of assuming this role. The symbolism of being a grandparent in the family has been duly recognised in terms such as 'national guard' (Hagestad 1985), 'family watchdog' (Troll 1985) and 'wardens of culture' (Guttman 1985). Moreover, its sheer presence is appreciated as achieving an interpretive and identity-moulding function, providing cultural and ethnic connections to grandchildren as they construct their own biography, as well as the maintenance of family stability (Bengtson and Robertson 1985; Wiscott and Kopera-Frye 2000; Hagestad 2003). Erikson's concept of 'generativity' (1982) has also been commonly referred to in interpreting the sense of generational continuity and immortality felt amongst grandparents. Together with the behavioural role discussed below, grandparenting shows significance both for the development of grandchildren and for the personal development of grandparents themselves (Bengtson and Robertson 1985: 276).

A grandparent is also widely recognised for his or her behavioural role in supporting the children's parenting. Hagestad (2003) refers to the older parents as a 'reserve army' of support, and their support towards their children's parenting can

L.L. Thang (✉)
Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore,
Blk AS 4 # 03-32, 9 Arts Link, Singapore 117570, Singapore
e-mail: lengthang@nus.edu.sg

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_4,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

be emotional, practical and material. In this respect, Asian grandparents, in general, are certainly a strong 'reserve army', where their support is often forthright and direct, most commonly shown in the form of providing care for their grandchildren. A 'Grandcaring study' project in Australia, where grandparents are found to provide care support for more than one-fifth of children before school age, found that overseas-born grandparents, including a good portion of Asian grandparents classified as 'avid carers', are fully committed to their grandchildren. Avid carers are the most intensive in caring amongst the four typologies, which also include flexible family carers, selective carers and hesitant carers in declining degree of commitment (Goodfellow and Laverty 2003).

Featuring general acknowledgements of the diversity and complexity accompanying the grandparenthood role, there have been various studies focusing on grandparenting styles (see e.g. Neugarten and Wienstein 1964; Cherlin and Furstenberg 1985, 1986; Muller et al. 2002). Expanding upon Neugarten and Wienstein's classification, Cherlin and Furstenberg (1985) divide grandparenting styles into five types, from the lower extreme, detached, through passive, to the active category, classified as supportive, authoritative and influential. They propose a life course approach to understanding grandparenting, and suggest that grandparents adopt the strategy of 'selective investment', allowing them to be simultaneously detached and involved. A grandmother may be a detached figure to grandchildren due to minimal contact, but actively involved with another grandchild living in close proximity, who is extremely personable or in need of help. Muller and Elder (2003) regard the different styles found in one grandparent as evidence of the embedded nature of intergenerational relationships within the matrices of multiple family ties, and highlight the significance of efforts from the link generation in the maintenance of strong grandparent–grandchild ties. The life course approach also implies that the frequency and depth of ties changes over time as grandparents become older and the grandchildren grow up, spending less time at home.

It is with consideration of the embedded nature of intergenerational relationships in family systems that this chapter chooses to explore the meanings of grandparenthood not only from the views of the grandparents themselves but also substantiated from the perspectives of the link parents and grandchildren. The grandparents are equivocal in their wish to be good grandparents. But what do they perceive as 'good'? Does the definition differ depending on the national, social and cultural contexts?

1 The Cultural and Symbolic Significance of Becoming a Grandparent

One is *promoted* to grandparent status with the arrival of the first grandchild. When we asked the respondents how they felt when they became a grandparent for the first time, the question almost seemed redundant, with respondents responding readily 'very happy naturally' and 'of course very glad'.

At one glance, becoming a grandparent during the natural progression of life may seem to be a 'taken for granted' stage, but it nonetheless comes with meanings that are socially and culturally constructed. Through subsequent analysis, two prominent family centric themes emerge: family continuity and advancing up the family hierarchy – whether consciously or unconsciously.

1.1 Family Continuity

Given the emphasis on fertility and the continuation of the family line across lifetimes in Asian culture, it is to be expected for grandparents to see grandparenthood as enabling one to fulfil these cultural pressures. They referred varyingly to the ideas of 'carry on my surname' (Thailand, grandmother, TI1), 'carry on the family line' (Hong Kong, grandmother, HN1) and 'relief to have someone to carry out the responsibility of continuing the bloodline' (Japan, grandfather, JH1).

Some grandparents compared the moment of becoming a first time grandparent with the present when their grandchildren have grown:

> I am happier now, they have grown up and there is no need for me to look after them… they look for their own job and they are independent now. (Malaysian-Chinese grandmother, MA1)

A comment from a Malaysian-Chinese grandmother also reinforces the significance of family continuity through the grandchildren: 'I will be very happy seeing my grandchildren get married' (MC1).

1.2 Preference for the Male in Family Continuity

Although several Asian cultures (such as in India, China and Korea) are known to have a general pattern of 'boy bias', a norm that has given rise to concerns in the trend of female demographic deficit in some countries (Das Gupta et al. 2003), the grandparents in this study all expressed their wholehearted joy and welcomed the arrival of their grandchildren, regardless of their gender or whether it was their daughter's or son's offspring.

A Thai grandmother (TI1), who said that she was particularly glad that her first grandchild was a son, explained that 'being a woman is more difficult than being a man. I didn't want my grandchild to have an uncomfortable life like me'. However, later she added, 'In hindsight, it is the same. It does not matter whether I have a grandson or a granddaughter'.

Nonetheless, some grandparents are aware of the male preference norm and commented on the significance in the patrilineal family system to bear sons to pass down the bloodline. A Singapore-Indian grandfather (SA1) mentioned that 'in our Asian mind, it is something to have a male son, a male grandson' and that 'people say that "oh I've got a grandson so I am proud"'. Although he asserted that he didn't

believe in it, he noted the significance to his 94-year-old mother-in-law for her grandson to have a son.

Such bias is sometimes felt amongst the younger generation as well. Although a Singapore-Chinese grandmother (SJ1) emphasised that her two grandchildren – a girl and a boy – who are co-residing are both precious to her, throughout the interview, her focus was on the grandson, who has become a doctor:

> Sometimes I go downstairs and sit around with the neighbours… they asked 'how's your grandchildren?' I said 'grandson is now a doctor' - they are all very happy for me. 'So smart, your grandson has become a doctor!' they said.

Perhaps she would express the same sense of pride if it were her granddaughter who had become a doctor; but the fact that the grandson is a doctor and she has shown favouritism towards him has caused her granddaughter a sense of discomfort. She herself recalled how her grandmother, who took care of them when they were young, has tended to dote more on her brother since a young age. The experience motivated the granddaughter (SJ3) to say that when she becomes a grandmother in the future, she will not show favouritism to her grandchildren. Similar discussion on the case in Chap. 5 has situated this in terms of the stress that a grandchild could feel.

1.3 Advancing Up the Family Hierarchy

Traditionally, the culture of filial piety in a Chinese context, and similar ideals in Thai, Indian and Malay cultures, where old age symbolises honour and authority, and where one is placed in a higher hierarchical status in the family to be venerated by younger family members, implies that assuming the role of grandparent is an achievement of a higher standing in an age-set system (van Willigen and Lewis 2006). Armstrong's (2003) qualitative study on grandmotherhood in New Zealand also found that New Zealand-Chinese grandmothers place stronger emphasis on the cultural meaning of being old, voicing contentment at being accorded a position of honour in family and Chinese community events.

However, no grandparents in this study explicitly equated the meaning of grandparenthood with one's advancement to a higher familial position demanding respect, lending support to discourses in recent decades on the decline of the status of the elderly in Asian societies (Thang 2010).

As the most industrialised nation amongst the five societies in this study, elders in Japan seem to have faced the most rapid decline in status (as discussed in Chap. 2). A Japanese grandmother (JC1) playfully referred to attaining a more important position in the family in the following manner:

> I was kind of proud that I became more important when I became a grandmother. Because, it meant that now I have a member in my family who is more defenceless than myself, doesn't it?

When she was asked when she became conscious of the fact that she is a grandmother, she reiterated the ritual roles that grandparents are expected to play in Japanese families in recognition of her new role. In Japan, there are various

traditional ceremonies such as celebrating a newborn baby's first visit to the shrine, the girls' and boys' days in March and May and special ceremonies when children turn 3, 5 and 7 years old. During these ceremonial events, grandparents are expected to be involved through contributions in cash or in kind, such as purchasing traditional costumes for their grandchildren's ceremonies.

Nevertheless, as one Japanese grandparent discovered, not all traditional practices involving the grandparents remain. One Japanese grandfather (JK1), who was at a loss to describe the feelings of being a grandparent for the first time and referred to the 'unique cuteness' of the newborn grandchild as '[beyond] comparison', experienced disappointment with her daughter:

> Although I wanted to name my first grandchild, my daughter decided to name the child herself. It was shocking to find out that I don't have a right to name a grandchild anymore. In that sense, I was half glad, half lonely.

In comparison, a Chinese daughter-in-law in Singapore (SO2) talked about accepting her mother-in-law's assertion of naming their children, even when it is no longer a common practice:

> I normally never stop her from doing what she wants to do, because I know it can be very sensitive. So I never interfere. If she says [she] wants to do this, I let her. That's why people were so shocked when they knew she named my children. Because normally when couples get married and have their first child, the couple will name their own children, right? But before my child was even born, my mother-in-law already started giving names for my children. I accepted that and I never fight over it. In fact to me, [the fact that] the old folks wanted to name their grandchild, it was an honour. You should feel very proud of it. I accepted it.

Although grandparents' ability to decide on important matters, such as the naming of the grandchild in this case, could indicate their respected position in the family, insistence from the older generation on naming their first grandchild also implies a perception of the grandchild as symbolising the continuity of the family and the generational legacy. Moreover, this insistence may also imply a desire to have at least some degree of influence over the younger generation's life in today's intergenerational landscape of declining grandparental involvement in nuclear families.

Contrary to the apparent declining influence of elders in Japanese family, a Thai link parent (TC2) observed that the grandchildren obey the grandparents a lot; this resonates with a link parent in a Malay family (MG2), who views the role of grandparents in the family as very important, 'because usually children would listen more to their grandfather or grandmother than their mother or father'. They both suggested that the younger generation gives more respect to their grandparents as elders compared to their parents in the family.

2 Grandparents: The Informal Childcare Providers

It is common for grandparents in the study to have taken care or still be taking care of their grandchildren. Such help is common when parents are dual wage earners, but especially prevalent when they are in difficult situations, such as divorce, bereavement

or sickness. A Thai link parent (TH2) who is currently divorced said that, in terms of her responsibility to her children, especially her eldest daughter, 'I only gave birth to them, my mother raised them', emphasising the fact that her children were all fed on 'canned milk' (milk formula) instead of the common practice of breastfeeding. In another Thai family where the son left his daughter with the grandmother because his wife has left him, the granddaughter came to call the grandmother 'mother' since she is left under her care totally. All the grandmothers in the Thai and Malaysian families had cared for and/or were still caring for their grandchildren; in comparison, about two-thirds of the grandparents in Hong Kong and Singapore, and only about one-third of grandparents in Japan, had provided childcare.

As most grandparents in the study had already passed the stage of providing active care to their grandchildren by bathing, feeding and taking care of their daily needs, this process was sometimes recalled nostalgically with joy and as a period of close interaction. The Thai grandparents are especially notable for the majority in the study, who referred to caring for the grandchildren as a pleasure, and emphasised that it was not a burden at all. The opportunity to prove one's usefulness seems to be a motivation for some grandparents' eagerness to care for the young – as one Thai grandparent (TA1b) commented:

> Having a chance to take care of both my grandchildren and my children made me happy… [if I were not a grandmother] I would feel that something [were] missing, and a lack of confidence in my own usefulness.

This same grandmother's grandchildren have now grown up, and she complained that her children and grandchildren try to stop her doing housework, as she is getting old:

> They are grown up now, they can do the housework themselves. I responded to them by saying that I need to do something so that I can exercise. I don't want to just lie idle all day.

The Thai grandparents in the study seemed overly optimistic. Another study on Thai grandparents has also shown that despite the norm for grandparents to care for their grandchildren, most considered full-time childcare to be a burden 'which they would rather avoid' (Kamnuansipla and Wongthanavasu 2005: 62). Moreover, grandparents' responsibility for childcare could become the source of family tension and conflicts if the link parents disagree with their childrearing practices and consider them outdated. Some grandparents also felt a lack of energy in dealing with the daily care of their grandchildren as they grew older and requested additional assistance such as employing a live-in domestic help, which is quite commonly seen in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Nonetheless, grandparents were usually more willing to take on the role of caring for their grandchild when they were younger and in a better state of health out of love and concern for their own children. Most gave practical reasons, such as needing to do so because the mother and father must work, but also implied that they were the best available caregiver for their own grandchildren. Some grandparents perceived a reciprocal exchange from the link parents in return, as a Hong Kong grandmother (HT1) explained: 'Because I take care

of the grandchildren, my daughter loves me even more'. A Thai grandparent (TD1) who currently cares for great grandchildren expressed the return in financial aspects:

> I am doing this just for the happiness of my children, also [so the] children can share with me some of the family expenses.

2.1 'Non-interference' Behaviour and Caregiving

However, not all grandparents necessarily see raising grandchildren as an essential part of grandparenthood. In parallel with the norm of 'non-interference' more common amongst American grandparents, Japanese grandparents and the more educated Singapore grandparents in this study also demonstrated similar attitudes, explaining their non-interfering roles as a way of respecting the independence of the younger generation.

> You see, I don't interfere in their affairs at all. We love him, but we don't ask him unless he tells anything. So when there's no interference, there cannot be any problems. (SA1)

> Grandparents shouldn't be too interfering or restrictive because young people do not like it. They have to be more open-minded. (SD1)

> Well as far as the children are concerned… They talk to us, we talk to them, although we would have liked it to be a little more, but we do respect their independence, their own thinking. They have their own thinking, we don't want to impose too much of our will on them. (SF1)

Grandparents in Japan are more explicit about refraining from interfering so as to stay out of the way of the link parents, especially the daughters-in-law, for family harmony. In the discussion on conflict management in Chap. 5, they reflect 'non-interference' as a strategy often adopted by the mothers-in-law to avoid conflict, a common problem in co-resident households.

> If I could see my grandchildren, that's enough, because I know if the family is peaceful, [and] I am relieved while I look on. All these years, there was only one moment I thought was disquieting. I was told off by my son, 'Mum please don't say the unnecessary'… men are scary because they hit you on the sore spot. (JA1)

> …. Being useful to son or daughter, in a certain sense, [is an] important role to grandfather [and] grandmother… [but] if you interfere too much, you will be told off by the daughter-in-law… (JJ1)

> Even if it is the grandchildren, if I say things like, 'it is bad to do this', 'Grandma doesn't like this', to my daughter-in-law too, it doesn't seem to be a good influence, it doesn't feel good… Therefore, when one ages, shut one's mouth. [It is] the best [thing]. (JG1)

Such a principle of 'non-interference' is welcomed by link parents:

> It's my own children thus I will bring them up the way I want… There is no such thing especially like "Do this" [from my mother-in-law]. (JC2)

To draw up the boundary of responsibility, especially to refrain from providing daily care of the grandchildren, seemed common amongst these grandparents, although they were still a reliable source of emergency help.

> I made it very clear. The raising is their own responsibilities. I'm here, I'm available for emergencies. I'm a grandmother, I'm old… [but] having said that, all our children know that if there's an emergency, we are available. (SG1)

Sometimes, grandparents must eventually get more involved so as to relieve their children. A link parent (JH2) who lives on level two of a two-generation housing in Japan had been relying on her own parents living downstairs to care for her daughter until she left the job recently.

> Now I am unemployed, but till August last year, I was working full time, so the sending and fetching of my child to and from cram school, the lunchboxes, they are all done by my mother. [For] the lunchbox, and washing too, I relied on my mother. Grandpa is the one who sent her to the station, and when I return from the company, I would fetch her home. Sometimes I will come back first before going to fetch her.

The grandfather (JH1), when interviewed, mentioned his wife as the main care provider of his granddaughter and said that they don't have to refrain much since it is their daughter and not the daughter-in-law that they are dealing with. Although he considered himself as doing little in helping to care for the granddaughter, he expressed satisfaction from the frequent intergenerational interactions made possible by the 'task':

> Since she was in kindergarten, I have sent and fetched her, only until recently [when my daughter stopped working]. I have sent and fetched her to and from cram school, so we talked often, such as [about] school matters; we talked about them in the car, [and] she listened to what I said more than ordinary children.

The unspoken rule of non-interference reduces expectation and leads to appreciation by link parents towards the grandparents' readiness to offer assistance during difficult times:

> At that time when I was really busy, and when the kids fell ill, although my parents had other matters to attend to, they said "that is more serious, so we will look after the child for you, you go to work." They helped us when I was at a great loss [as to] what to do and couldn't find help. They also understand the conditions of my work, and furthermore, lend a helping hand to us emotionally. It was very helpful to us when both of us were working. (JI2)

3 Ensuring a 'Good' Grandchild: Grandparents and Value Transmission

The role of grandparents as transmitters of value and culture is well recognised, where grandparents as 'wardens of culture' are significant in guiding, preserving and passing on knowledge, experiences and skills to the next generation (Guttman 1985). Grandparents in the study agree that they should inculcate proper values and

traditional cultural practices in their grandchildren and see various ways to achieve it. Expectations for such roles have also caused grandparents to become aware of how they should behave, as a Thai grandfather (TF1a) said: ‘I have to improve myself, I have to be more careful [with my behaviour]’.

Indirect or subtle modes of teaching appear most common, especially when grandparents are living with or near to the younger generations. Dinner times, when the whole family sits together for a meal, often offer good opportunities for grandparents to teach value and culture, such as teaching the young the correct way of holding chopsticks, how to behave in an appropriate manner and to show respect to seniors by addressing them before meals in a Chinese family.

A Singapore grandfather (SC1) refers to acquiring the culture as ‘automatic’: ‘…. [they see] my behaviour with others, [and] they catch our culture’. This is also referred to by the younger generations as ‘learning by immersion’ (SF2). Even for a Japanese grandparent (JA1), who asserted that he does not teach about morals or what’s right and wrong to the grandchildren, since this is the parents’ responsibility, he still realised that he does it in a roundabout manner, ‘saying something by chance’. One Japanese grandmother (JB1) expresses a similar idea:

> Although we don’t give advice, isn’t it what is called growing up watching the backs of grandpa and grandma? Even if we don’t put it into words, by staying together, the atmosphere is generated. We teach her in a non-verbal way. I think it reaches her tacitly… she develops common sense through us.

3.1 The Scope of Grandparents’ Teachings

The scope of value transmission in an indirect manner is wide, including religious practices, cultural practices, etiquette, table manners and ethics – in general, socialising grandchildren to help them become acceptable members of the society and culture. Whilst Thai grandparents talked about bringing the grandchildren to Buddhist temples and teaching them how to pray, and Malay grandparents played active roles in imparting Islamic religious knowledge, Singapore grandparents appeared subtler in their transmission of religious knowledge.

A Singapore-Indian grandfather asserted that he had no intention to specially impart religious knowledge to his grandchildren, as he did not want to overteach them and turn them off from religion – whilst his grandson thought otherwise and felt that his grandparents had taught him a lot about religious knowledge since ‘they kept talking about morals and whatever’. Of both his grandparents, the grandson felt that his grandmother (SG3) had taught him more. Since grandmothers tend to provide more direct care of the grandchildren and spend more time with them on a daily basis, it is common for them to both directly and indirectly transmit their beliefs and religious knowledge to their grandchildren.

Some grandparents are more explicit about setting aside time to teach their grandchildren, such as teaching them how to cook traditional food, how to wear traditional dress and about other cultural knowledge and traditional literature and history:

> I do not go to the extent of discipline, but during meals, I do say things like "You, with a single hand"… Teaching about one's national culture, tradition and customs, when they are in junior high school, like 'one hundred poems', or when there is Chushingura on TV, I will say "That person is like this", matters concerning history, I will teach them [what] I know. (JC1)

> Compared with tensions that may arise with grandparents' role in childcare, the link parents expect grandparenting to mean value transmission to the young. As one Singapore link parent (SL2) suggested, "they should be role models in religion, morals and beliefs [especially in the case of grandfather]. They should also instil self-discipline [in the grandchildren]." Some parents felt that the sharing of life experiences by the grandparents with the young would be a valuable learning resource by itself:…So if they are able to instill some positive values in them, and share their own experiences with them, it'll be very beneficial… (SM2)

> I feel that actually the experiences that they have, however minor a role in society, they would actually be contributing as long as they share with the children through the days their hardship, whether be it their difficult times. It actually gives an insight to the children as to how different it is from their days as well, in comparing to our days, because there is a generation gap, especially… my mum speaks dialect and they can only communicate fluently if they speak Mandarin, and they only speak Mandarin to her. (SB2)

Where grandparents are educated, such expectation may also include teaching academic-related knowledge:

> Well, I feel it's a two way thing, like you know in a sense, they will benefit so much from learning from the older generation and… my dad's knowledge in botany and stuff, it could really help the boys, and he's also very good with the Hindu scriptures and stories, and so even when they were very little and he would come over, they always liked him to put them to bed because he has stories to tell… Now they're much older, but my 14-year old son, when my dad comes, he just goes and sits [on] his lap. (SG2)

Similarly, the grandchildren regard the dimension of value transmission as important in grandparenting. When asked about what kind of grandparents they would like to be in the future, the different aspects of teaching, such as teaching grandchildren schoolwork (since they will be educated) and teaching them to distinguish what is right and wrong, were common responses from the grandchildren.

Amongst the grandparents, expectations for their grandchildren differ with different socioeconomic status. For example, amongst the Thai grandparents, whilst those from the lower income families wished that their grandchildren would behave well ('I just want them to do good deeds. Don't be a gangster, study hard, have a good group of friends' (TD1)), a Thai Chinese grandfather of better economic status asserted that he has only one hope for his grandchildren: 'education, I want them to have PhD'.

Education comes across as a dominant theme, suggesting the notion of 'good' grandchildren as those who study hard, and 'good' grandparents as those who are able to support their grandchildren in their educational goals, either by teaching them and/or supporting them financially. The grandparents add to the 'paper-chase' phenomenon especially prominent in Asian societies, where academic qualifications are passionately sought after as symbols of success and tools towards upward mobility.

3.2 A Good Grandparent Stays Away from Disciplining Grandchildren

Although grandparents see their roles in teaching their grandchildren to be good, this does not necessarily involve disciplining them. In fact, grandparents across all societies in the study recognised that disciplining the young is the parent's responsibility; in contrast, the grandparents' responsibilities are to love them, comfort them and be their friends.

> … You see for example we can spoil the grandchildren, we can play with them. But disciplining is the parents' responsibility… Unlike being a parent where sometimes you come across as a disciplinarian… as a grandparent, because you are more supportive, so you are more like a friend to them. Singapore, grandparent, SG1

The grandchildren too have come to realise the role differentiation between parents and grandparents:

> … When I was younger, my dad used to scold me because of my work not [being] good and whatever, [and] my granddad would come in as a mediator telling him to stop, enough, he's learnt his lesson and this and this. If I do something wrong… break something or injure someone in school, usually my dad or mum will come and tell me off, but usually when they're telling me off, my grandparents will come and tell them "enough, he has learnt his lesson and he won't do it"… SE3

A Japanese grandson (JS2) expects little from his grandparents:

> If I have to say [what to expect from them], probably it's good to have them as good friends. I think there is no meaning in expecting too much of them.

The link parents are aware of the differences and complementarities in the relationship:

> …[Grandparents are]…something like a cushion. Because the children are always [being] scolded, because grandfather and grandmother are kind, they never scold them. They give comfort, [this is] the good thing about a family. (JA2)

> … To the children [the grandparent is] ultimately someone whose presence brought happiness to them. She plays with them, and if I coax her she will do as I say, and will buy things for us. To the children, she is very good, I think. (JF2)

In a similar way to the grandparents in Japan, followed by those in Singapore and Hong Kong, who tend to adopt the 'non-interference' approach, grandparents in Malaysia and Thailand also agreed with the role differentiation between the parents and grandparents in discipline matters. However, they tended to be more outspoken with their disagreement over the disciplinary method.

Disciplining by physically punishing a child is common, except for in Japan. There is a Thai proverb – 'love your cow, tie them, love your child, punish them' – implying the need to teach the children by punishing them when they do something wrong. Many adults could recount how they used to be physically punished by their parents as children for their mischief. In Singapore and Malaysia, it is not uncommon for families with children to have canes at home as a tool of punishment. They are long thin stick of bamboos that are sold in provision stores. One possible tension

between parents and grandparents arose often when grandparents tried to stop the link parents from physically punishing the children by hitting or caning them. Although this could be seen as the grandparents' attempt to stop physical abuse by the link parents, link parents however believed that it was an effective method of discipline. A Malaysian-Chinese link parent (MD2) who lived with her mother-in-law argued over ways to discipline the young, in which she insisted on doing it her own way:

> She doesn't believe in [using the] cane in disciplining the children. We told her about the need to discipline the children sometimes, they do need the cane sometimes, you cannot do without it. She'll listen. She doesn't go against us.

A Hong Kong grandmother explicitly mentioned that although she doted on the grandchildren, she would not fend them from punishment by their parents.

In another Malaysian-Chinese family, the grandmother (MC3) sensed that her disapproval of caning the grandchildren as a way of punishment had led to a strained relationship between her and the parents, which had worsened since they moved out to stay far away and seldom come back to visit her.

A Thai grandmother (TC1) was also angry with the link parents for punishing their children:

> I told her [my daughter] not to scold and punish the children too much. If you are angry, just hit yourself… I love my grandson. If he is being scolded, he will come to me and tell me that he was hit. I ask him why? His father has to work and he doesn't know anything, his mother is not here. I told him [my son], why do you have to hit him, I never do that to you. He's grown up now. I won't be talking to you anymore if you are doing that again.

In such cases where grandparents interfere with the link parents' way of disciplining the grandchildren, the grandchildren soon learn to turn to their grandparents for protection from their parents' punishment.

However, grandparents felt uneasy when having to assume the role of parent in disciplining the young. A Thai grandmother (TI1) is a 'replacement' parent to her son's daughter, who called her 'mum' because she had been under her care since birth, since her parents divorced and left the child. Such a situation of absent parents is not particularly uncommon in Thailand, particularly in the rural communities in northeast Thailand where the Thai families in this study are situated (Kamnuansipla and Wongthanavasu 2005). The grandmother played an active role in disciplining the grandchildren at home but felt uneasy doing it: 'Whenever I disciplined my grandchildren, I had to sit and think about it over again; but I didn't when I punished my own children [in the past]'. She revealed an awareness of the differences between caring for grandchildren and her own children although she noted the link.

The uneasiness in grandparents when perceiving their role as a disciplinarian supports early research on the differences between consecutive and alternate generational relationships (Radcliffe-Brown 1952). Whilst the consecutive relationship between parent and child tends to be unequal because of the necessity to discipline and control the young, the alternate relationships between the grandparent and grandchild are friendly and egalitarian and tend to be informal and indulgent. Although it can be argued that the egalitarian and informal relationships found in alternate generations may change if grandparents have to assume a parenting role,

such as in the case of absent link parents, as the Thai grandparent (TI1) shows, there is eventually a difference that grandparents are aware of.

Hence, although some grandparents may still feel the need to play the disciplinarian role alongside their role in transmitting values to the grandchildren, in general there is consensus on who should take charge of discipline. However, grandparents may differ in the degree of their complementary existence, ranging from marginal existence by 'staying in the shadow' and providing support to parents, as a Japanese grandparent (JG1) has described, to a more central role of being a partner with the parents.

A Singapore-Chinese grandparent (SF1) is one of the few who believes in the partnering role of grandparents in giving advice to the young and in acting as the source of family continuity:

> But grandparents, I think, play a very pivotal role in the growing up of the grandchildren, apart from the parents. The parents are the central figures, but equally important in terms of additional support and advice are the grandparents. They should never forget that these grandchildren were there because of you, and if you can, I think if you can enjoy that role, I think that's the best gift in life you can ever expect.

His son, the link parent (SF2), expresses it from the angle of the role of grandparents as providing the balance for the parents:

> … I suppose I'm biased by my own situation. Grandparents are partners, they sort of balance off the parents. So where parents are strict, the grandparents may be less strict. But when the parents are not strict, the grandparents should balance out in the other sense.

4 Conclusion

In parallel with literature identifying the grandparent role as diversified and complex, grandparents in this study showed that varying degrees of diversification and complexity surface amidst the general classification of meanings that define grandparenthood. A sense of meaning derived from achieving one's responsibility of family continuity with the arrival of a grandchild may be affected by whether it is a grandson or a granddaughter. Whilst caring for the grandchildren is commonly perceived as what grandparents should be doing in many Asian societies, it is not necessarily accepted wholeheartedly, and grandparents in some societies are found to prefer to adopt an attitude of 'non-interference', keeping out of the aspects of childcare deemed to be the responsibility of the link parents. Grandparenthood is often highly regarded for its meaning in passing down values and culture to the young. However, this does not entail disciplining the grandchildren, which is seen as crossing the boundary into parenting.

The grandparents show 'selective investment', to use Cherlin and Furstenberg's (1985) term, where they may feel closer to one grandchild who lives with them, but detached from others with whom they have less contact. Even in the same household, the grandparent may favour one grandchild more than the other because he or she has

more needs, such as receiving little concern from their own parents (Thai family, TI). Moreover, in their time as grandparents, they experience different stages of engagement with their grandchildren: usually very close when they were young and grandparents acted as the caregiver, but more distant as they grow up and grow away from home when they become teenagers and spend little time at home. In one instance, a Thai grandparent also cared for the great-grandchild, showing a return cycle of care. However, some roles are more time and energy sensitive than others, and caring for the young might only be possible when grandparents are in relatively good health and have the energy to do so.

In addition, certain roles are more widely acknowledged than others due to attitudinal differences. Japan and to a large extent Singapore and Hong Kong grandparents are shown to adopt the ‘non-interference' principle more explicitly, whilst Thai and Malaysian grandparents are more ready to be involved with their grandchildren.

In general, we see grandparents deriving meaning in terms of how much they can support their children in parenting, which can include instrumental, emotional, social and financial support. It is inevitable that as grandparents play supporting roles, whether from the margin or more centrally as the parents' partner in bringing up the grandchildren, there will be a negotiation of their roles within the matrices of family ties, sometimes giving rise to tension and at other times mediated by cultural norms and expectations.

For the older grandparents in this study, especially those not living with their children and grandchildren, most rarely met their grown-up grandchildren or participated much in activities with them. However, as studies earlier have shown, this does not mean that they will rate the importance of the grandparent role lower than the younger grandparents (Clark and Roberts 2004). A study of 156 Chinese grandparents in Hong Kong found that grandparents who perceive their future time as more limited derived more meaning from grandparenthood – i.e. they perceived grandparenthood as a source of obligation and accomplishment, beneficial gains and that not being a grandparent was a loss of interpersonal warmth (Fung et al. 2005). As a role contingent upon the presence of other generations in the family, the grandparenthood fundamentally relates to one's ability to receive and give love and affection, the satisfaction being derived from the process of giving and receiving, as well as the awareness that by becoming a grandparent, one has played one's part in ensuring the continuity of family, bloodline or family name, as is emphasised by the culture.

References

Armstrong, M. J. (2003). Is being a grandmother being old? Cross-cultural perspectives from New Zealand. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 18*, 185–202.

Bengtson, V. C., & Robertson, J. F. (Eds.). (1985). *Grandparenthood*. Beverley Hills: Sage.

Cherlin, A., & Furstenberg, F. F. (1985). Styles and strategies of grandparenting. In V. L. Bengtson & J. F. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood*. Beverley Hills: Sage.

Cherlin, A., & Furstenberg, F. F. (1986). *The new American grandparent: A place in the family, a life apart*. New York: Basic Books.

Clark, L., & Roberts, C. (2004). The meaning of grandparenthood and its contribution to the quality of life of older people. In A. Walker & C. H. Hennessy (Eds.), *Growing older: Quality of life in old age*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
Das Gupta, M., Jiang, Z., Li, B., Xie, Z., Chung, W., & Bae, H.-O. (2003). Why is son preference so persistent in East and South Asia? A cross-country study of China, India and the Republic of Korea. *The Journal of Development Studies, 40*(2), 153–187.
Erikson, E. (1982). *The life cycle completed: A review*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
Fung, H. H., Siu, C. M. Y., Choy, W. C. W., & McBride-Change, C. (2005). Meaning of grandparenthood: Do concerns about time and mortality matter? *Ageing International, 30*(2), 122–146.
Goodfellow, J., & Laverty, J. (2003). Grandparents supporting working families: Satisfaction and choice in the provision of childcare. *Family Matters, 66*, 14–19. Australia Institute of Family Studies.
Guttman, D. L. (1985). Deculturation and the American grandparent. In V. L. Bengtson & J. F. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
Hagestad, G. O. (1985). Continuity and connectedness. In V. L. Bengtson & J. F. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
Hagestad, G. O. (2003). Interdependent lives and relationships in changing times: A life-course view of families and aging. In R. A. Settersten Jr. (Ed.), *Invitation to the life course: Toward new understandings of later life*. New York: Baywood Publishing Co.
Kamnuansipla, P., & Wongthanavasu, S. (2005). Grandparents' relationships with grandchildren in Thailand. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 3*(1), 49–66.
Muller, M. M., & Elder, G. H., Jr. (2003). Family contingencies across the generations: Grandparent-grandchild relationships in holistic perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 65*(2), 404–417.
Muller, M. M., Wilhelm, B., & Elder, G. H., Jr. (2002). Variations in grandparenting. *Research on Aging, 24*, 360–388.
Neugarten, B. L., & Wienstein, K. K. (1964). The changing American grandparent. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 26*, 199–204.
Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1952). *Structure and function in primitive society*. New York: Free Press.
Thang, L. L. (2010). Intergenerational relationships: Asian perspectives. In D. Dannefer & C. Phillipson (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social gerontology*. London: Sage.
Troll, L. E. (1985). The contingencies of grandparenting. In V. L. Bengtson & J. F. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
Van Willigen, J., & Lewis, D. C. (2006). Culture as the context of aging. In H. Soon & J. Hendricks (Eds.), *Handbook of Asian aging*. New York: Baywood Publishing Co.
Wiscott, R., & Kopera-Frye, K. (2000). Sharing the culture: Adult grandchildren's perception of intergenerational relations. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 51*, 199–215.

Chapter 5
Stress and Conflict Management Strategies in Grandparenthood

Kalyani K. Mehta

Whilst the joys of grandparenthood come to mind almost automatically as we conjure images of smiling cuddly babies in the arms of grandmothers and grandfathers, the stresses that accompany the experience of grandparenting are less well remembered. This chapter will focus on the subsequent tension and conflict with members of the family, not limited to the household, when grandparents assume their roles and functions as the 'alternate generation'.

The distinguishing feature of this book is that it compares data from five Asian countries, which assists us in understanding some of the similarities and differences amongst Asian populations.

1 Understanding the Common Stresses Facing Grandparents

The life course perspective (see Chap. 1) is relevant in our analysis of the stressors of grandparents who are either pre-retirees in their 50s, young retirees in their 60s or senior retirees in their 70s and 80s. Whilst the different stressors experienced by each group have individual characteristics, at the same time they may overlap. For example, pre-retirees and young retirees in most countries did not mention financial constraints when interviewed, but the senior retirees did. This could be due to their savings running dry and/or the rising cost of living.

Parallel to the increasing age of the grandparent would be the increasing age of their grandchildren. At the pre- or young retiree stage, the grandchildren would be very young (below 12 years usually), and the stressors would be related

K.K. Mehta (✉)
Gerontology Programme, School of Human Development and Social Services,
University of SIM, 461 Clementi Road, Clementi 599491, Singapore
e-mail: kalyani@unisim.edu.sg

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_5,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

to babysitting or childminding, arguments related to child-rearing and discipline methods of the adult and the older generations.

> Adult children are busy, have no time to look after their children; I do not wish to let someone else take care, if I can do it I will. *Grandmother, Hong Kong, young retiree, HS1*

> I did not like my mother over-pampering my son when he was still young. *Adult daughter, Hong Kong, HS2*

As the grandchildren grew older, they became more involved in school, peer activities and sports, and hence were less available for interaction with their grandparents. The differences of opinion emerged over the control of grandchildren, of giving adequate supervision and guidance and dating.

> Sometimes we do have disagreements… It's very tiring. They all go different ways. I don't want to say anything now. Not like old times. They watch movies and dress inappropriately. [If I tell them anything] they won't listen. *Grandmother, Thailand, retiree, TB1*

As the grandparents grew older, their grandchildren moved to the next stage in life, joining the workforce, getting married and some even having children themselves. Thus, the grandparents became great-grandparents, at which stage the stressors changed again. There were seven grandparents in the study who were above 85 years, with the oldest being 92. Some complained that they were lonely and even depressed as they felt they were a burden to their family; others had strained relationships with their in-laws whilst a few had financial worries. More grandmothers tended to have financial issues than grandfathers.

Bengston et al. (2000) have developed a typology of intergenerational conflict themes. These consist of family relational style, lifestyle, child-rearing, ideology, work and household labour (p. 128):

> …there can be high solidarity *and* high conflict (what might be termed "enmeshed" or "intense families") between kin members, just as there can be high solidarity and low conflict (the "placids")- or low solidarity and low conflict ("disengaged") and finally low solidarity and high tensions ("conflicted").

As we know, family relationships cannot be understood out of the cultural context. The authors developed their typology based upon the American context. Let us now turn to the Asian context and view the themes that emerged from the cross-national, cross-cultural data.

2 Major Themes

2.1 Living Arrangements and Family Dynamics

One outstanding feature of the ageing populations in Asia is the fact that majority of them live with their families (Hermalin 2002: 168; Kinsella and Wan He 2009: 71). Given this scenario, it can be anticipated that family dynamics would be closely entwined with the structural living arrangements of grandparents.

As mentioned by Mehta et al. (1995: 135): 'Living arrangement is a strong indicator of physical and social supports available to the elderly. But living arrangement in itself does not tell us the degree of availability of this support nor does it inform us of the quality of care obtained'. In the same article, which is based upon the lives of Singaporean elderly, three major themes of friction are mentioned: intergenerational conflict, in-law relationship problems and the strain of caregiving. These three lines of friction were also present in all the five countries' qualitative data, but in a variety of forms and emotional nuances.

Interviewer: Has the relationship with your children improved or worsened because of the role you play as a grandparent?
Respondent: My relationship with my children has been worsened, because they like to cane their children and I don't believe in caning. Now it has been worsened because they are staying far from here and they seldom come back now. My eldest son thinks of me less now since they moved out. It saddens me.
I: Do you feel that your children regard you as more important as a result of your contribution as a grandparent?
R: Yes, my eldest son will ask me not to do so much anymore as I am getting old. I think he is important in my life but I don't think I am important in his life. I think… he seldom thinks of me as much as I think of him.
I: If we see a relationship as 'give and take', what do you receive from your children and your grandchildren in return?
R: I don't receive anything back, from my children and grandchildren. Distance makes them not close and not filial to me anymore. I don't mind giving even though they remember me less now.

Grandmother, Malaysia (non-co-residing) MC1

Interviewer: How about your grandchildren?
Respondent: I love them so much. Even when their parents scold them, I feel angry.
I: Who do you love more, your children or your grandchildren?
R: I love my grandchildren more. Like when T. [my son] scolded F. [my grandchild], F. ran to me and told me his dad hit him. I asked him why he did so. He told me his dad asked him to fill the gas tank for him before he went to work. His dad scolded him and hit him. His mother was not there. I ask T. 'why did you hit him? I never once hit you when I raise you. He is old enough to reason with you. From now on if I ever heard you scold or hit my grandchild again, don't call me your mother anymore'.

Thai grandmother (co-residing with son) TC1

If you talk about little arguments – there will always be little arguments. There's always a different way of doing things. What I would tell my son is to be a little bit more patient with his grandfather because the ways are different. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to listen – one ear in, one ear out. Especially with the smaller details. My dad tends to be very systematic, he tends to want everything in place… you know that sort of thing. I am in-between – I've become a lot more like my father lately, and [my son] just doesn't understand why it should be like that. *Adult son, Singapore (non-co-residing) SA2*

I told them [my grandchildren] only to date after they finish their studies, but they do not care as they do not understand the importance of studying. *Grandmother, Hong Kong (co-residing) HN1*

Sometimes it becomes difficult. Not so for me, because I stay with my parents. But for my wife, yes. It becomes very difficult for my wife to deal with the in-laws. This is a problem

> that's as old as history… I think it occurs in every culture. There are differences. The way that people would treat their own child is different from how they would treat their own daughter-in-law. Son-in-law becomes different because it's usually the other way around. It's the daughter-in-law who lives with the husband's parents. *Link son, Singapore (non-co-residing) SA2*

The large variety of living arrangements is reflective of the Asian situation, where elders may live with relatives (their extended family) and near their adult children. In Japan, there may be 'one house, two households', whereby they may live in an upstairs–downstairs fashion and eat separately, but the main doorway is common. In Thailand, due to land availability, a newly married adult child may build his or her own house in the same compound as the parents, and they may eat one meal together as a family. The diversity of living arrangements makes dualistic classifications such as co-residential and non-co-residential living arrangements very restrictive. The living arrangements of the grandparents are outlined in Table 1.1.

In Asia, there are many types of family systems. They may be patriarchal and thus patrilocal, or egalitarian wherein the newlyweds may choose to live with either the wife's or the husband's parents or matrilineal and thus matrilocal. Generally in our data, the traditional family system in Singapore was patrilineal for the Chinese and Indians, but egalitarian for the Malays. In Thailand, the majority of elders tended to stay with their daughters (see Engelmayer and Izuhara 2010: 118–19 for a discussion on the concept of the 'dutiful daughter' in contemporary Thailand), but a minority chose to live with their sons. In Hong Kong, the Chinese culture predominates – hence, the traditional parents tended to live with their sons. In Japan, the majority tend to adopt the 'one house, two households' system discussed above. This is a creative solution for a fast changing society, where modernisation and urbanisation processes need to be accommodated within an ageing society.

Whilst co-residence or living 'nearby' is conducive to caregiving (adults caring for ageing parents, grandparents caring for young grandchildren), it is also a volatile situation for tension and conflicts to arise. When grandchildren have been brought up from a young age by grandparents, there is a close bond between these two generations. However, it does not guarantee that the cycle of care will be completed, with grandchildren providing either physical or emotional care when their grandparents need it. This will depend on the health and quality of relationship between the link parents and the elder generation.

Here, the conceptual model (see Chap. 1) can be used to understand the family situation in depth. The first model depicts the three generations (or triads) flowing in time. More intergenerational transfers flow from grandparents to grandchildren usually. The second model depicts the interaction between generations with financial, emotional, social and spiritual reciprocal exchanges taking place. In Asia, the value of interdependence is given priority over independence, even in families that are non co-resident. Physical, material and socio-economic support from the younger generations flows to older generations in a greater way, with frailty, dementia and terminal illnesses pervading to a greater extent amongst the very old. This schema does not preclude the idea of a bi-directional flow of care, but it does emphasise that

when grandparents become frail, their contribution to the intergenerational exchange reduces and their need for multidimensional care increases.

> Cyclical, I mean you know there are periods of course when you are a teenager it's the most distant. Then you get closer. Then you get your own family and so you get distant again. Towards middle-age and beyond, I think you get closer again. You know probably they stop interfering, too much into your affairs. So, you don't get this sense that they are invading your privacy. And again, you get closer, you start having different sets of problems as you grow older and you start tapping on their experience because they have faced it, you know? So, it's cyclical… *Link Son, Singapore, SA2*

The above perspective of a Singaporean link son adds light to our understanding of 'intergenerational triads' (Goodman and Silverstein 2001; Goodman 2003) and the dynamics of their relationships over time. Since the interview, the grandmother fell ill and passed away, and the three generations are living together as the grandfather is now an 85-year-old widower. The cyclical nature of care has taken place as he conceptualised it.

2.2 The Multiple Overlapping Roles That Grandparents Play

The stress and tension experienced by the grandparents in the study was closely linked to their multiple overlapping roles in the family. Across all five countries, grandparents who were married comprised 60% of the total number of families. A major role played by the grandparents was that of spousal caregiver, particularly for the retirees and senior retirees. In our study, we interviewed triads in the family – hence, we were able to capture the length of time spent minding grandchildren. By doing this, the presence of 'serial grandchild minding' was highlighted, whereby grandparents had been minding their grandchildren for both co-resident and non-co-resident adult children over a period of 10–15 years. There are times of heightened joy and satisfaction in caring for grandchildren, as stated by one Singaporean grandparent:

> Untold joy, it's sheer joy being with them. I don't mind spending a whole day with the children around here for example. As I have said, they can be noisy, sometimes naughty, but in the end the happiness that would result would outweigh all that… *Grandfather (non-co-residing) SF1*

However, when the same grandparent was asked whether there are any stresses involved in grandparenting, she replied:

> Oh yes, there are a lot of stresses when the children fall ill, sometimes, we are so, so worried, you know. Like recently, the twins had ulcers and [my grandson] Paul had and ulcer in the mouth, and then they developed a sort of a glaze, they had red sort of dots in the palm, we were so worried, and one had a fever… Shirley got cancer – for about 5 years we were under severe stress, but things turned out to be OK, she recovered her lost hair… *Grandfather (non-co-residing) SF1*

Apart from illness, accidents were another source of stress for grandparents. A Hong Kong grandmother said:

> Very stressful. I was afraid that I would not take good care of my grandchildren, afraid that they would fall sick, or have an accident. *Grandmother, HW1*

Underlying these anxieties is perhaps the fear on the part of the grandparents that their own adult children would be disappointed with them or 'scold' them for negligence.

Grandparents doubled up as housekeepers, doing household chores such as laundry, cooking, cleaning the house and washing the dishes. Most of the time the grandmothers did this, but grandfathers also did their share in taking the grandchildren to school and bringing them back. In one family, due to the frail health of the grandmother, it was the grandfather who shouldered the responsibility of household chores.

As described in Chap. 4, teaching values as well as school work, taking the grandchildren to the playground and even to the medical clinics when necessary, was all part and parcel of the grandparent's duty. It is for the reader to conclude how so many tasks could reasonably be juggled by grandparents, especially without the help of any paid employees, as was the case for Malaysia and Thailand. In Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan, there was the option of paid domestic help for the middle and higher income families. In such families, at least the 'heavy', physically exhausting jobs could be taken over by the domestic helpers, leaving grandparents to carry out the 'lighter' tasks of supervision of their grandchildren. Grandparents were sometimes working, for example running their own business in Japan, or tending to the farm and poultry in Thailand. If the working grandparent was married, he or she could depend on the spouse to do most of the grandparenting duties – but in the case of the Japanese grandparent, she was a widow. Being a manager of an apartment house, she had flexible hours so she could juggle both 'roles', but she had to be on her toes all the time.

A grandparent can also be a mediator of family arguments and quarrels. On many occasions, a grandparent is called upon to negotiate between adult children (who are not the parents of the grandchildren being minded), and this can take much of their time, although it is not a frequent occurrence. In a Thai family, the grandparent was 'caught' between two adult children who had relationship problems because one of them was addicted to alcohol. This created legal issues and even a marital break-up for one of them. When such issues arise, emotional stress and heartache follow. It is therefore important for us to understand that grandparenting does not occur in isolation from other family feuds and misunderstandings. The reality is that the experiences of grandparents are complex, combined with other overlapping roles, and emotionally draining. The overlapping roles often lead to role conflict and even role overload, thus causing great distress and accompanying health problems. Hayslip and Goldberg-Glen (2000: 170) also report a worsening of health as self-reported by grandparents since caring for their grandchildren.

2.3 *Altruistic Worries*

The mental and emotional stress that was experienced by many of the grandparents was not concerning their own well-being, but rather that of their family members, and the loss of culture and tradition in the younger generations.

2.3.1 Money Matters

> I didn't raise my kids like this. I didn't pamper them like this. In the old days, as a mother I asked the older kids to take care of the younger ones so that I could go out to work. When I came back in the evening I cooked at home and didn't use a lot of money like today's mothers. I only gave my children 1-baht for school. Now I ask my granddaughter where she got those red bank notes [100-Baht], and she said her mum gave them to her. I told my daughter that she shouldn't give her so much; it would build a bad habit. I didn't want my daughter to spoil her children by allowing them to spend so much money on computer games. I only want my children to have a bicycle, not a motorbike. If one can get a motorbike, another will also want one to. I am really worried about the future of my own grandchildren, particularly for my grandson. How can the boys be the head of their families when they grow up? How can they support their wife and kids? *Thai grandmother (co-residing with daughter) TI1*

2.3.2 Loss of Culture and Traditions

In Chap. 4, the idea of teaching and the transmission of values were discussed at length in order to convey to the reader how meaningful this aspect is for Asian grandparents. In this chapter, the reader will get the sense of stress and latent conflict caused when link parents deny the grandparents the opportunity to carry this out.

The following is the example of the differing perspectives of the grandparent, link parent and grandchild in the same family.

> Interviewer: Would you avoid giving suggestion on how to raise a child to your own children?
>
> Respondent: I'll give some opinions. Then my children will say, "Mama, nowadays things are different already." In the past, when we have our meals, we must sit up straight and hold the chopsticks properly. Nowadays it's different. If I try to correct them a little, they'll become unhappy. I speak a little, but if they don't listen, I let it be, so the harmony within the family will not be disrupted.
>
> *Grandmother, Singapore (co-residing with son) SM1*

> Interviewer: What roles do you think grandparents should play at home?
>
> Respondent: They should be able to share their experiences with their grandsons. And really act as a bridge between children and parents. So if they are able to instill some positive values in them, and share their own experiences with them, it'll be very beneficial. If they're able to know more about the youngsters' world nowadays, and know how to deal with them, it'll be helpful to guide the youngsters.

I: You're a link parent yourself, so how do you feel?
R: It depends. I've told my children many times to be respectful. At least you cannot be rude to granny. I'll keep nagging at them to keep it inside their head. But later I realised it's not a good method because the results are not ideal. They still continue to treat their granny the same way.

Link daughter-in-law, Singapore (co-residing) SM2

Interviewer: Is there anything you dislike about her? Do you have the feeling that old people are kind of 'naggy'?
Respondent: She keeps asking me to eat more.
I: Anything else?
R: She wants me to go bathe, go bathe, go bathe…
I: Does she restrict you in any way? If you talk on the phone or whatever?
R: Usually no, but last time she did. Because she wanted to use [it].
I: Does your Popo [grandmother] at home take care and cook for you all?
R: Yes she helps my maid.
I: Homework? Activities?
R: No
I: Does she help in doing household chores like help to clean the house?
R: The cement floor, entry area of the house.
I: She does marketing?
R: Hmm…
I: Does she teach you any religious knowledge?
R: No
I: Do you consider her a fun company?
R: No
I: Teach good habits?
R: Yeah
I: Does she teach you any moral values?
R: Sometimes. Nag nag nag – like I have to be polite.

Grandson, 13 years old, Singapore (co-residing) SM3

The above three quotes give an idea of the perspectives of three generations and how youngsters may regard the transmission of values as 'nagging', whilst the middle generation feels sandwiched between the two alternate generations. The older generation often faces the dilemma of how far to pursue the 'teaching of values' to a resistant grandchild, as a wrong move may cause disharmony in the family. Daily dilemmas such as these cause a certain amount of tension between generations.

The altruism of a Thai grandmother deserves mention in this section. The family situation may be seen as unique, but may resonate with families in other parts of the world. A Thai grandmother was in charge of raising her granddaughter because her daughter-in-law (the child's mother), who was mentally unstable, abandoned the child and left the family.

Respondent: Being a woman is more difficult than being a man. I didn't want my granddaughter to have an uncomfortable life like me.
Interviewer: Do you think it's much different to raise a kid now compared to the old days?
R: Yes, a lot. In the past only one fish or 2 eggs can feed all of them. Only Arngoon [my daughter] was very choosy. She's different from others, she didn't eat vegetables. She's hard working, taking job while studying also.
I: Did you want to raise [your grandchild] at first?
R: When she was born her father left her and her mom was mad, so I took her.

I: Do you think it's a big responsibility?
R: Yes, I was really worried that without me she would be in trouble.
I: If you could choose again, will you take her? Will you be happy without her?
R: Yes, then I can be free and can go to temple.
I: If not you, who do you think could have raised her?
R: Her dad and her aunt could.
I: If her mother comes back, would you give her back?
R: No.
I: Why not?
R: She has abandoned her child for a long time.

Thai Grandmother, co-residing, TI1

In another family, the Thai grandmother took on the care of the grandchildren after her son passed away. Crucially she said, 'In taking care of my grandchildren, I also take care of my children'.

Interviewer: Since your son pass away, do you think you love the family more?
Respondent: I feel pity for my grandchildren.
I: And the in-law?
R: She told me she won't remarry. I love her and pity her. She went back to do her job.
I: Poor girl. Do you trust her?
R: Yes.
I: Does she [listen to] you?
R: Yes, I pity her. She has to go and sell stuff and come back late.
I: How's your relationship in the family?
R: We don't have anyone to rely on.

Thai grandmother (co-residing with widowed daughter-in-law) TG1

In another family (by using another family, do you mean the family above?), the grandparents were caring for their grandchildren by using their savings as the link parents were unable to give financial support.

To conclude this section, the theme of altruism and love of grandchildren, as well as the family as a whole, was prevalent in about two-thirds of the families across the five countries. The following quote is rich in meaning:

> My love for my grandchildren has come as a substitute to the feelings of love I once felt very strong for my children. *Thai widowed grandmother (co-residing with daughter) THD1*

2.4 Ambivalence over Filial Expectations, Changing Norms and Self Versus Family Demands

As discussed in Chap. 3, the expression of the concept of ambivalence in multigenerational families today is common (Bengston et al. 2002). However, the situations and conditions attendant to the ambivalence expressed in Asian cultures may differ from non-Asian cultures. The structures of the families that largely prevail in Asian contexts, i.e. multigenerational co-residential (stem families), are

often different from other cultural contexts found in European countries such as Denmark. In addition, the senior generation's expectations of the middle and the younger generations (and vice versa) could vary due to cultural differences.

Is ambivalence in any way linked with negative feelings? Bengston et al. (2002) have encouraged researchers to delve more deeply into the differences between ambivalence and negativity. 'We are puzzled by the assertion that structural constraints on individual agency provoke ambivalence rather than frustration, anger and depression. This point of the conception of structured ambivalence requires elaboration' (p. 574). In the Asian context, we have witnessed how structured ambivalence surfaces in the multigenerational family. In this study, we had intergenerational triads within each family, and we had the opportunity to 'listen' to the voices of each generation. Sometimes it was the grandparent who was caught in a structural bind, whereby he or she could not exercise individual agency due to the circumstances of the grandchildren.

There are instances where the grandparents would like to lead their own lives according to their own wishes and on their own terms. However, due to their adult children's needs (especially if they are co-residing in the adult child's home), they are structurally and culturally bound to prioritise their grandchildren's interest and well-being over their own.

Whilst this did not emerge from the current dataset, we have conducted focus groups amongst Singaporean elders, and the following is a quote from one earlier study (Teo et al. 2006, this is from the 2006 book (p. 125), please state the page number below). A grandparent compares his unrestrictive lifestyle with that of his peers who are 'tied down' during the weekdays because of grandchild minding:

> I am as free as a bird. Other people my age, I have quite a number of friends, who have to look after grandchildren, and sometimes the grandpa goes out, grandma stays at home. They take turns to go out, you know, to enjoy life, and that's part and parcel of life. If you are in that situation, if you have to do it, you've got to do it! [If] you are free, then you are lucky – that's all! *Singaporean grandparent* (from Teo et al. 2006: 125)

The speaker of the above statement considered himself fortunate to be spared from the difficulty of making a choice between his own 'lifestyle' and his family's 'needs'. The Singapore government has allowed foreign domestic workers (FDWs) to be employed for childcare. This option has facilitated grandparents to request that their adult children apply for such employed help so that their physical stress can be reduced. Nevertheless, this type of request would increase the adult child's family expenses. Not all link parents can afford the additional government levy and FDW's salary. A newspaper article (Straits Times 2004) written by a young parent illustrated that Singaporeans in his cohort do have expectations that their own parents (who are healthy) would assist in caring for the grandchildren. Consider this situation within the context of the societal and cultural milieu where grandparenting is perceived as synonymous with caring for grandchildren! (See Chap. 4 for further discussion around this theme.) The family dynamics are tense in such situations where adult children expect their parents to help out, but the elder parents or parents-in-law wish to give priority to their own freedom and retirement aspirations. This dilemma and structured ambivalence has been discussed in depth elsewhere

(Teo et al. 2006: 120–133) as has the impact of an FDW on family dynamics (Mehta and Thang 2008).

Within low-income families, the grandparents have 'no option' in reality. Their responses are often couched in ambivalent terms such as 'what can I do?' or 'I have to think of my grandchildren', as it is often the belief of Asian grandparents that they make better caregivers than childcare teachers or FDWs.

The following interview outlines the experience of a Malaysian Chinese grandmother and reflects the cultural dilemma:

Interviewer: Are there any stresses involved in grandparenting?
Respondent: Yes, I feel very stressed because I need to bath my grandchild, baby sit them, cook for them and look after my shop.
I: Are there times when you felt you could not carry on your contributions toward your children and/or grandchildren but you have no choice?
R: Yes, I have *no choice*[1] but I will do it slowly by myself. I have to take care of my eldest granddaughter because both her parents are working and they don't get a maid to help around the house. I cannot say I do not want to help because he is my eldest son.

Grandmother, Malaysia (co-residing with son) MC1

Let us now look at the structured ambivalence that link parents are sometimes entangled in. When link parents have to rely on the goodwill of parents to provide childcare but there are complex dynamics in the relationship with one of them, situations of helplessness and tension arise.

Respondent: I don't call [my mother] unless I am distressed, is it good at that extent? Normally I don't call her, it is like, when I have a favor to ask from her, I will contact her. I have quarreled with my father quite often.
Interviewer: When you are distressed, who do you seek help from?
R: My mother.
I: How is your relation with your mother?
R: Ordinary, I think.
I: Your father?
R: With my father, it's estranged, I think. Probably rather estranged.

Link parent, Japan (non-co-residing) JF2

Often we tend to assume that a link parent has good relationships with both parents or parents-in-law. The above quote highlights that the relationship with each parent or parent-in-law can be different. The link parent, in the interview, goes on to describe the eccentricities of her father, such as his dislike of travelling, which would put a limit on her plans to travel with her mother on family holidays.

Let us now look at the structural ambivalence that grandchildren in Asia face. Again, there is a layer of cultural and gendered influence. In the example cited below, there was emotional conflict in the granddaughter's relationship with her grandmother.

[1] Italics mine.

Respondent: I think that the parents are more of the bridge between me and my grandmother, because there are some conflicts between me and my grandmother. We share one bedroom, so sometimes I really feel very hot at night, but she just doesn't want to put on the aircon, it's quite bad. She feels cold and she closes the window but I am feeling super hot. [My parents] are the one to say don't be angry or whatever.

Interviewer: What would you like your grandparent to do in addition to what they are doing now?

R: Taking care of grandchildren, cooking, helping in household chores when she was younger. Now, we don't expect her to do much anymore.

I: You said that you feel that she favours the grandson more, in what way?

R: I remembered when I was younger, she seemed to cane me more (ha ha). Because we have a three year age gap, so we play with each other. Obviously when children play they will fight, so as far as I remember I got caned more. It's the way [she says] when my brother comes back, "oh, you are back…" and she is very proud of him – he is a doctor, that's why she is very proud of him, because she is the one who took care of him when he was young…. He is in NS now, he did his studies first before he went to NS (National Service).

Singaporean granddaughter (co-resident) SJ3

The quote above is an illustration of a patrilineal culture, like the Chinese culture, where there is a strong preference for males in the traditional older generations. The granddaughter loves her grandmother due to the sacrifices the former has made in the past, but simultaneously feels ambivalence when 'favouritism' towards her brother arises. During the interview, it was clear that there was no sibling rivalry as her parents did not show such gendered preference. It should be noted that the granddaughter continued to describe in the interview that her knowledge and interest in gerontology was derived from her bond with her grandmother. Her ambivalent feelings towards her grandmother are based on her past memories, as well as current family dynamics. To summarise: 'The embeddedness of family relationships in matrices of multiple family ties is crucial to understanding grandparent-grandchild relationships and family relationships in general' (Mueller and Elder 2003: 415). It can be added that the life course perspective, cultural influence and generational differences should be included in the analysis to capture the dynamics of Asian multigenerational families.

3 Strategies of Conflict Management

This section will focus on the strategies applied by Asian grandparents to seek a solution for handling difficult family situations. At the outset, it would be important to point out that these are not remedies; they are human efforts by ordinary grandparents who are caught in the winds of change – societal, communal and generational – as well as their own psychosocial, physical and spiritual development. Grandparents are almost always above 50 years, and they are also facing their own ageing process. The self-assessed satisfaction level of the grandparents interviewed was measured to be above 7 out of 10. The resilience of Asian grandparents can be gleaned from their invincible spirit in working through their family issues,

no matter how challenging they were. Creativity, wisdom and adaptability were traits that they capitalised upon to help them manoeuvre through intricate family circumstances.

3.1 Avoidance and Non-interference Strategy

It was common amongst many of the families across the five countries for grandparents to avoid getting involved in the way the link parents handled their children.

> Since my grandchildren are now teenagers, I do not want to get involved. *Thai grandmother (co-residing) TF1*

> Interviewer: How is your daughter-in-law?
> Respondent: My daughter-in-law is busy, working full-time, therefore she comes back, says thank you very much, and then goes up to the second floor. Sometimes I make something, and ask, "Want to eat?" and if she says, "I will take it", I will bring it to her. My daughter-in-law mostly does not have the time to talk with us. But now we are connected to the second floor, so when there is business to be done, then there is enough help.
> I: Do you find it awkward?
> R: No – in my opinion, it is bad to 'stick' too much. Both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law can do better if we do things at the proper distance. If we get in too much, it is hard to amend the situation when it is very stiff. Because my older daughters are married, I have been watching. As I have also served the family before, there are territories that cannot be entered.
>
> *Japanese grandmother (living as neighbour to son) JI1*

In many Japanese homes, there is a system of living 'upstairs, downstairs' in the same building. There is close physical proximity, but the social and psychological distance is adjusted according to the relationships between the middle and older generations. The word 'refrain' was used very frequently by Japanese grandparents in regard to their non-interference strategy towards the lives and lifestyles of their adult children. The following is a good illustration:

> Interviewer: Have you provided advice to your daughter on the ways to bring up the grandchildren?
> Respondent: I refrained myself.
>
> *Grandmother (non-co-residing) JE1*

As the Japanese family system is patriarchal, there was a conscious effort made by mothers-in-law to refrain from interfering in the lives of their adult children and children-in-law in order to maintain harmony in the family. The term 'family preservation' has gained popularity in literature (Connealy and DeRoos 2000: 23–34). By using harmonisation strategies, Asian grandparents are actually preserving their family's unity and internal equilibrium. In other words, grandparents are major players in maintaining and sustaining the delicate balance within multigenerational families. An additional point that relates to the Asian context is that grandparents see their role as important in 'lineage preservation'. In cultures where ancestor worship is valued, the continuity of the lineage and 'family name' is accorded a premium.

3.2 Flexible Boundaries

Interviewer: Is there any conflict regarding grandchildren?
Respondent: No, I listen to everybody first. Sometimes I have to let it go. What is not right, I will tell them. I don't want conflict

Thai grandmother (co-residing) TH1

The above quote illustrates the efforts of a Thai grandmother in forgoing minor differences to maintain the family peace.

Interviewer: Isn't it the same feeling you had when you brought up your children?
Respondent: Because there is no responsibility. Ultimately… what is good to say? How should I put it? Because there are areas where it is not good to step in, I will not go there, but on the surface I will scold and praise. We have our respective ways in educating.
I: Ah I see.
R: I do not step into those matters. If I am asked "what should I do?" I will say "what about doing this?".
I: You do give advice though.
R: When I am asked by my grandchildren "Grandma what should I do?", I will not answer immediately. I will say, "Grandma doesn't know, so go ask father".
I: Ah.
R: If I don't do this, if the kids say "Because Grandma said it was good", I will be in trouble.
I: Actively giving advice?
R: Because it depends on the situation somehow.
I: You are refraining.
R: Therefore I rarely step in. Until what time, be it bringing other kids to play here, or be it a lot of friends coming, therefore I have no relation to all these. Because these are things done on the second floor. Therefore I will not interfere in these matters.

Grandmother (co-residing with son) JC1

In contrast to the earlier example of the Thai grandmother, this Japanese grandmother draws boundaries between happenings on the 'first floor' (her territory) and the 'second floor' where her adult son lives. Her decision as to whether to give advice is tactical and 'situational'. Such are the 'landmines' that grandparents in Asian contexts must avoid, otherwise they may be 'trapped' and even 'injured' psychologically.

3.3 Adaptability to Circumstances

No choice. I can only wish for them to develop their character, not learn bad [things)] improve on themselves, have capabilities. But they can only depend on themselves. *Grandmother, Hong Kong (co-residing) HR1*

Strategies of 'secondary control' are common amongst Asian family members, particularly older ones. When older people feel that they have less power and status

within the family, they can be more effective in changing their own perceptions and adaptive tactics (Xu and Mehta 2003; Mehta 1997). Primary control is exercised when individuals attempt to change their circumstances by their own influence and resources. However, in the case of older generations, in particular frail and dependent widows, secondary control can help them to survive difficult situations with equanimity and intact self-identities.

In our study, secondary control was exercised more often by grandmothers than grandfathers. This was often in situations where in-laws were concerned as they perceived such friction to have long-term consequences. Daughters-in-law also used this strategy in dealing with potential areas of conflict with mothers-in-law, for instance over spending habits or cooking styles. Daughters-in-law would urge their children to eat the food cooked by the grandmothers without criticism as the grandmothers would feel hurt by such criticism.

Interviewer: So you feel that there's somehow a fussy line between grandparenting and parenting, in a sense that there should probably be more awareness?

Respondent: It's really difficult to tell an elder person. You cannot tell them 'you cannot do this, you cannot do that'. Because you do not know when's a bad time, you see. The only time you can do this is when the parent actually has to do their role by speaking to the child about the day and to know what is happening, you have to ask. The child will never come and tell you what happens in school, what happens to the teacher, what happens to the friends. So you have to ask your own child actually. So it's like a daily routine. Probably it's like nagging and ask them to do their homework, etc.

Link parent (co-residing with mother-in-law) SM2

Unlike cultures where being direct in giving one's opinion is accepted in in-law relationships, in Asian cultures a great deal of indirect, non-confrontational communication is the common practice in order to preserve peace and harmony in the home.

3.4 Philosophical Wisdom

Constructive strategies were noticed as common adopted channels for grandparents in negotiating their own choices without 'rocking the boat' of intergenerational ties. One Japanese grandmother embarked on writing her own autobiography in order to express her grandparenting experiences for future generations. She wished to capture the historical and cultural differences between cohorts, and she felt that a book would be appreciated not only by her peers but also future grandparents.

Grandparents were sometimes worried about their adult children who were undergoing pre-divorce strains and stresses or suffering from alcohol addiction. They assured themselves that they could not interfere, but they could pray for their adult children's well-being. Some grandparents felt frustrated that they had no time for their own leisure pursuits, their friends or their hobbies. A couple of grandmothers expressed a high sense of dependency as they had no status, no power, nor did they feel appreciated for the years of sacrifice made for grandchildren.

The concept of 'ikigai' (purpose of life) was often reiterated by Japanese grandmothers and grandfathers. Grandchildren gave them a high sense of purpose; in fact, one grandmother had raised nine grandchildren in total. Family life was deemed to be full of highs and lows. One Japanese grandmother mentioned 'laughter, and sometimes there are quarrels, but these are important to life too'.

Philosophical wisdom was also expressed by other grandmothers, who felt that they experienced feelings of loss when their favourite grandchildren move away or grow distant due to other interests, school activities or friends. The senior retirees accepted the fact that as the grandchildren grew up, their need for the grandparents 'becomes smaller'. Whilst they felt the emotional loss, they were resigned to the reality.

Thoughts of death sometimes caused grandparents to ponder over issues of bequest:

Respondent: The matter I am most troubled with is the matter after my death. My daughters are married. My sons have hot tempers, and one of them is missing. The only one who is reliable is Ms Saito, but I can't say to that person, "Take care of the matters after my death", so I hope that Koyazan could accept me for permanent memorial service. Both my son and me. It has been 28 years since my son passed away. The other day it was grandpa's 50th death anniversary, Grandma's 33rd death anniversary had ended, it is already fine that side.

Interviewer [pointing to a photograph]: That is?

R: My father.

I: And this?

R: Yes, the son who passed away.

I: Losing your son is really… We do understand – it is hard on you.

R: It is harder on me compared to losing my husband.

I: You are a little worried about matters after you pass away. But your feelings now, you would want Koyazan to perform the memorial service.

R: Because of that, before I came here, I went to Koyazan

Grandmother lives in nursing home, JG1

To sum up, older people, who are often grandparents (active or passive), face all the issues of ageing; over and above these issues are their stresses and worries about their grandchildren. Whilst playing their grandparenting roles and functions, they also continue their other roles such as spouse, sibling, father-in-law or mother-in-law; hence, we must look at grandparents within their total social context when we examine their stresses and strains. However, the upside to this is the sense of purpose they feel, the gratification they get from their family members and the satisfaction obtained from seeing their family members healthy and successful in their lives. Comparing across the five countries in the research project, the data reflected the financial constraints of grandparents more dramatically in Thailand and Malaysia than in Singapore, Hong Kong or Japan. However, this has to be treated with caution, as the data is not representative. As with all qualitative methods, it is illustrative and depicts reality without claiming breadth of prevalence.

References

Bengston, V., Biblarz, T., Clarke, E., Giarrusso, R., Roberts, R., Richlin-Klonsky, J., & Silverstein, M. (2000). Intergenerational relationships and aging: Families, cohorts and social change. In J. M. Clair & R. M. Allman (Eds.), *The gerontological prism: Developing interdisciplinary bridges* (Society and aging series, pp. 115–147). New York: Baywood.

Bengston, V. C., Giarrrusso, R., Mabry, J. B., & Silverstein, M. (2002). Solidarity, conflict and ambivalence: Complementary or competing perspectives on intergenerational relationships? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*, 568–576.

Connealy, M., & DeRoos, Y. (2000). Grandparenting and family preservation. In B. Hayslip & R. Goldberg-Glenn (Eds.), *Grandparents raising grandchildren: Theoretical, empirical and clinical perspectives* (pp. 23–34). New York: Springer.

Engelmayer, P. F., & Izuhara, M. (2010). Spiritual debts and gendered costs. In M. Izuhara (Ed.), *Ageing and intergenerational relations: Family reciprocity from a global perspective* (pp. 111–128). Bristol: Policy Press.

Goodman, C. (2003). Intergenerational triads in grand-parent-headed families. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences, 58B*(5), 281–289.

Goodman, C., & Silverstein, M. (2001). Grandmothers who parent their grandchildren. *Journal of Family Issues, 22*(5), 557–578.

Hayslip, B., & Goldberg-Glenn, R. (Eds.). (2000). *Grandparents raising grandchildren: Theoretical, empirical and clinical perspectives*. New York: Springer.

Hermalin, A. (Ed.). (2002). *The well-being of the elderly in Asia: A four-country comparative study*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kinsella, K. & Wan, He. (2009). *U.S. Census Bureau, International Population Reports* (P95/09–1). An ageing world: 2008. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Mehta, K. (1997). The impact of religious beliefs and practices on ageing: A cross-cultural comparison. *Journal of Aging Studies, 11*(2), 101–114.

Mehta, K., & Thang, L. L. (2008). Visible and blurred boundaries in familial care: The dynamics of multigenerational care in Singapore. In A. Martin-Matthews & J. E. Phillips (Eds.), *Aging and caring at the intersection of work and home life: Blurring the boundaries* (pp. 43–63). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Mehta, K. K., Osman, M. M., & Lee, A. E. Y. (1995). Living arrangements of the elderly in Singapore: Cultural norms in transition. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 10*(12), 113–143.

Mueller, M. M., & Elder, G. H. (2003). Family contingencies across the generations: Grandparent-grandchild relationships in holistic perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 65*(2), 404–417.

Teo, P., Mehta, K., Thang, L. L., & Chan, A. (2006). *Ageing in Singapore: Service needs and the state*. London: Routledge.

The Straits Times. (2004). Grandparents, please help out. 23 May.

Xu, J., & Mehta, K. (2003). The effects of religion on subjective ageing in Singapore: An interreligious comparison. *Journal of Aging Studies, 17*, 485–502.

Chapter 6
The Socio-psychological Well-Being of Grandparents

Peerasit Kamnuansilpa and Leng Leng Thang

Understanding what contributes to the well-being of older people and the ways to promote this is undoubtedly an important area of enquiry, especially in a steadily ageing society. It is common to associate successful ageing with psychological well-being (Baltes and Carstensen 1996) and quality of life. What constitutes psychological well-being may vary across cultures. As discovered in a study by Ingersoll-Dayton et al. (2004) exploring culturally relevant measures of psychological well-being, the conceptualisation of psychological well-being amongst Thai elders differs distinctly from those identified by Western scholars. Whilst the conceptualisation of selfhood as independent and autonomous is highly valued in the Western context (Ryff and Keyes 1995), Thai elders are instead found to conceptualise well-being, centring on the family and valuing acceptance by others, interdependence and harmonious relationships. These values also parallel the perception of the self in relation to others in Asian cultures (Fiske et al. 1998; Oerter et al. 1996).

In the context of Asian culture, how would one's role and identity as a grandparent impact on one's well-being? What is the connection between intergenerational relationships and well-being of older people? Whilst it is relatively common to focus on the impact of consecutive generational relationships and support on psychological well-being of the older generation (e.g. Chen and Silverstein (2000) on older Chinese parents; Kim and Kim (2003) on the subjective well-being of Korean elders), the emphasis on the alternate generation and its connection with grandparents' well-being remains much less studied in Asia. In one of the few

P. Kamnuansilpa (✉)
College of Local Administration, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand
e-mail: peerasit@kku.ac.th

L.L. Thang
Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore,
Blk AS 4 # 03-32, 9 Arts Link, Singapore 117570, Singapore
e-mail: lengthang@nus.edu.sg

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_6,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

studies on the well-being of Thai grandparents in northeast Thailand, Kamnuansilpa and Wongthanavasu (2005) found grandparents who are replacement or surrogate parents to be worse off in health and financial well-being when compared with the other three categories of grandparents: those who are day care providers, those with discretionary involvement with grandchildren and those who do not provide care giving. However, the challenges did not deter the grandparents from assuming the responsibilities; these grandparents loved their grandchildren with all their heart, they expressed their desire to spend time with them and gave first priority to their grandchildren's safety and well-being. Although not without ambivalence and stresses, as discussed in Chap. 5, these grandparents derived psychological well-being from close intergenerational bonding. Furthermore, intergenerational interdependence is implied when some elders hoped that their grandchildren would eventually reciprocate by caring for them in old age.

In this chapter, we focus on the socio-psychological well-being of grandparents by exploring how closeness is perceived by the grandparents. This is followed by a section examining the emphasis of food as a cultural construct and communication tool to promote intergenerational interaction, and, to some extent, contributing to the experience of well-being of grandparents in the Asian families. Finally, we move beyond the family to explore the social lives of grandparents: Whilst social interaction outside the family offers them the opportunity to develop identities beyond being a grandparent, must it be balanced at times with intergenerational commitment?

It should be noted that although we focus on the socio-psychological aspects of well-being, we are well aware of what defines well-being as a whole, agreeing with the conceptual framework of Hermalin (2002) which suggests that well-being is multi-dimensional, including activity levels, economic well-being and physical, mental and emotional health. The grandparents in our study – the majority of whom were in their 70s – perceived their health status as influencing their activity levels, and they reasoned that their inability to provide care for the family and grandchildren was a result of their declining health. Some expressed a sense of helplessness: For example, a 71-year-old Hong Kong grandmother (HR1), who perceived caring for grandchildren as a grandparent's responsibility, expressed regret that she was not able to 'share the responsibility', although she knew that help was needed to look after her grandchildren. Others learned to live with declining health, seeing it as expected due to their old age. One Singapore grandfather (SJ1) said:

> …as you age, it is not possible that there is no problem at all. The ears are short of hearing, and the eyes are blurred. Cardio muscular disorder has emerged; backache has emerged, saying so, if you ask if there is any hindrance to the daily life, then there is nothing. Well, it is fitting for this age.

This is supported by a Thai grandmother (TB1) who gave a long list of health problems including thyroid, nervous disorder, heart disease, high blood pressure, pain in the knees and kidney stones, but said: 'That's a natural path, if I have pain I would pray and work, I don't think about it'.

Compared with health, finance seems a lesser concern amongst the grandparents in our study, except for Thai grandparents, who all came from rural communities in northeast Thailand. Some of them readily replied 'no good' about their well-being

because of poverty; a grandmother (TD9) felt poor but glad that her children 'have provided for me all they can, especially money'. In addition, the previous Thai grandmother above (TB1) answered forthrightly that she was not happy, and when asked 'how can we make you happy?', she said, 'give me money', and continued that 'the house is deteriorating but we can stay. My children didn't give me money'. She lived in a house that she owned, but the zinc roof was already rusty and required replacement, amongst other problems. Although her children and grandchildren, who lived with her, paid for the meals and utilities, they did not contribute towards repairs for the house. Her wish of building a new house is well noted by her children and grandchildren, but they found it hard to meet her wish with the tight economic situation. Although feeling unhappy about her lack of money, the grandmother was glad to be surrounded by her children and grandchildren. She has a close grandchild whom she has cared for since he was young. Although only 8 years old, her favourite grandson would give her his savings when she needed it: 'He got his savings from his school pocket money. He also gave money to me [to go to the doctor] when my leg hurts'.

A few of our Thai cases included interviews with both the grandfathers and grandmothers in the household. Their responses reflect a somewhat closer relationship between the grandmothers and their grandchildren, as they provided more for them on a daily basis, such as cooking and doing their laundry. It is also interesting to note that when asked if they had a favourite grandchild, grandfathers were more likely to say they loved all their grandchildren the same, but the grandmothers could usually identity one that they felt closest to.

In parallel to problems relating to the feminisation of ageing, grandmothers, especially from Thailand, tend to fare poorer in aspects of health and financial well-being, especially if they are widowed. Although mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict is more apparent in family tensions, an 80-year-old divorced Thai grandmother (TE1) brought to our attention the possibility of mother-in-law and son-in-law conflicts when grandmothers co-reside with their daughters. This Thai grandmother regarded her son-in-law as a rude person and was always angered by him for scolding her daughter and her at home.

Despite these family tensions and other shortcomings, the grandparents nonetheless felt that it was important to have grandchildren. They saw intrinsic reward in grandparenting and derived socio-psychological well-being from the process. This suggests that although one dimension of well-being may not necessarily be more important than another, it may compensate in contributing to one's overall well-being. The socio-psychological dimension is often significant in compensating for poorer well-being in other aspects, such as the health and financial aspects discussed above.

1 Closeness with Grandchildren

Most grandparents in the study felt, or would like to feel, a strong bond with their grandchildren. The sense of affectual solidarity that grandparents felt with their grandchildren has been well studied as one of the six dimensions of intergenerational

solidarity in Bengtson's (2001) concept of intergenerational relationships. So what is the nature of closeness felt amongst the grandparents and the grandchildren?

1.1 Enjoying Co-existence with the Younger Generation

The grandparents' experiences show that co-generational living is important in fostering a sense of intergenerational closeness, as most of them referred to the grandchild living in the same household as them as the one they were closest with. However, the sense of positive sentiments that grandparents felt with their grandchildren may not necessarily be about having close relationship as a result of caring for them, but can also often refer to the simply joy of enjoying the presence of different generations co-existing in the same living space. Some grandparents felt that 'the house will be too quiet' without the presence of grandchildren.

A Japanese grandfather (JH1) who lived with his daughter and her family was happy simply with the presence of a grandchild enlivening the home atmosphere, but at the same time also realised that three generational families has become less common in contemporary Japanese families:

> If my grandchild is not around, there will only be four adults - this becomes a rather uninteresting family. Because my grandchild is around, various conversations could flow, the laughter never ends. And there are various things [to do]. To us, to the elderly, living together with my grandchild is a good thing. At the sports club [I attend], I am not sure if there is one out of ten people there who are living together with their grandchildren. There is almost nobody who talks about their grandchildren [over there].

1.2 Closeness to the Grandchildren at Home

Some grandparents clearly articulated a much closer relationship with their grandchildren at home compared with others. A 63-year-old Thai grandmother (TC) who lived with her daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren repeatedly said that 'I love them [my grandchildren] so much. I got angry when their parent scolded them'. She was confident that the two grandchildren felt closer to her than to their own parents, especially the 13-year-old granddaughter who suffered from a skin problem:

> How can I say, she is closer to me than her mother because of her sickness. She has bad skin. It is swollen like a burnt scar. It was there since she was born. She is not close to her father. When she sees her mother sitting with her father, she will come to me. When she is watching television, if her father comes she will come to me in the room. It is because her father doesn't talk to her, if he talks to her, the girl will be less scared of him.

The grandmother gave an example of the closeness she felt especially with the granddaughter through the daily routine, where her granddaughter who slept in a separate room would come in to hug and kiss her before going to bed. This nightly

routine is also mentioned by the granddaughter as what the warmth of the family is about. Like her grandmother, she equally expressed that she loved her grandmother very much, although she differed in that she felt that she loved both her grandmother and her mother equally. Both the grandmother and granddaughter were able to recount fun things they did together, such as the type of games they played and how they laughed happily at such times. Grandparents as fun companions for their grandchildren are quite commonly cited by grandchildren as reasons why they felt close to their grandparents, suggesting the alternate generation as friendly and egalitarian as posited by Radcliffe-Brown (1952) in his famous essays on joking relationships between the old and young.

1.3 The Closest Grandchild and Past Interaction

Although it is most common for grandparents to cite the grandchildren living with them as the closest, there are also a few cases of grandparents who referred to the grandchildren living apart from them as the ones they are closest to, even if they now lived with other grandchildren. A Malaysian-Chinese grandmother who lived with her younger son's family and took care of their children said she felt closest to the first daughter of her eldest son, who was her first grandchild, and missed her since the eldest son's family and she now lives apart. Two Singapore grandmothers referred to grandchildren who now live overseas as their favourites, of which one was a grandchild studying in Australia and the other had migrated to the UK with her parents. These two grandmothers recounted how they used to take care of their favourite grandchildren when they were young, suggesting that past intimate contacts, especially through the provision of care by grandparents, promote the feeling of closeness even when the grandchildren have grown up and moved away.

Such a perception of closeness through fond collections of the past is evident amongst some grandchildren as well. A 17-year-old Singapore-Malay granddaughter described her late maternal grandmother as 'a substitute mum' because she took care of her for many years. One 14-year-old Chinese granddaughter (SB3) described the relationship with her maternal grandmother, who took care of her when she was young, as intimate, and recalled the past to justify their closeness now:

> Maybe it's like this sense of peace since we've known each other since I was really young. When I was younger, I tended to spend a lot of time with her since I was studying really near her house. She came every [lunchtime] to school with very, very nice food and she just waited there. Yah, so it's very, very sweet.

In reflecting on the current situation, she felt she had fewer opportunities to spend time with her grandmother because she had become too busy with her studies. Moreover, now that her grandmother looked after a few other young grandchildren, she had much less free time:

> She now has so many babies to look after, so whenever we go there, all the babies are like busy, busy, busy, so we never manage to have much time with her anymore.

The granddaughter also recognised the changing state of her grandmother's health:

Respondent: …When I was younger, she used to tell stories, but now her memory's gone bonkers. Last time I asked her to tell me stories again and she can't remember them anymore.
Interviewer: But as her health deteriorates, how do you think it will affect your relationship with her?
Respondent: I'm not sure actually, I don't think it's really changed. As in, I wish I would have more time to go spend time with her, but nothing will be the same.

1.4 Teenage Grandchildren and Closeness to Their Grandparents

Whilst it is inevitable that teenage grandchildren tend to grow up and grow away from their parents and grandparents, past experiences and intimacy with their grandchildren continues to influence the grandparents' sense of closeness with their grandchildren. Grandchildren often become the subject of family conversations where their well-being becomes of significance to the grandparents' sense of satisfaction. A Singapore-Indian grandfather regarded the relationship with his 18-year-old grandson as 'very close' because his grandson used to live with him in the same household when he was very young.

> When they were living here, I would take him out every morning, evening, the whole neighbourhood started knowing me as the grandfather of that boy. I would put him in a pram, and then started taking him. And there's a playground there, and I would play with him, and [tell] him stories. He was very close to my wife and me rather than [to] his parents.

This closeness is acknowledged by the link parent (SA2), who also noticed the change over the years: 'My father was very close to my son when he was young. Of course, when he became a teenager, they became distant. Still, I'm sure he's very fond of him'.

The link parent noticed his son as being central to his communication with his father:

Interviewer: What do you talk about [with your father]?
Respondent: If we are watching TV it's probably TV programmes. Otherwise we would be discussing… usually the common interest we have would be my son. Because if it's anything affecting my son – whether it's his studies or whether it's him entering the national service or anything – probably there would be some input from my parents as well. So we talk about that or we talk about the future – for my son again. Everything is focused, you know, and how we see the future.

In comparison, the grandson (SA1) was aware of the generation gap and felt that sometimes his grandfather could not understand things that he was going through as a teenager. But he recognised that his grandfather was more open-minded than others in his generation and had made an effort in maintaining the closeness with his grandchildren by keeping up with the younger generation.

> My grandfather is… he's not [like] many other people of his generation in the sense that I feel that he's far more open. He's also less demanding in terms of formal respect. He tries his best to understand me and keep up. And definitely compared to others of his generation he understands quite a bit of me.

The grandson equally perceived their relationship to be much closer when he was younger, when his grandfather was fun to be with because of many activities they could do together. In comparison, now that he was older, their time spent together was only limited to occasional conversations or watching television. He sensed that a distance had developed as he grew up and started to have his own group of friends.

This teenage grandson may be typical of a teenager who puts little effort into fostering close relationships with his grandparents even when they used to be close in the past. Another grandchild, a 17-year-old granddaughter (SK3) shows otherwise.

The Singapore-Malay granddaughter used to be very close to her maternal grandmother. When she passed away, the granddaughter felt a sense of emptiness and turned towards cultivating a closer relationship with her maternal grandfather instead:

> Yes, I guess I'm growing… closer to my grandpa in a sense, but it's a very gradual sort of process because he is very close to my youngest sister, and since I was very close to my grandma, I didn't really feel the need to be close to him. In fact I didn't really feel the need to be close to anyone else when I was close to my grandma. And my grandma would also entertain whenever I sat with my parents… she would say 'never mind I'm here for you, no need to bother about all of them'… so it was like the two of us were in our own realm… so, but now… I wanted to get to know my grandpa similarly how I got to know my grandma so I'll take a walk with him, whenever he wants to go for shows and….

However, despite the intention of wanting to be close to her maternal grandfather, she expressed a similar dilemma of having little time available for her family:

> I want them to spend more time with me but I don't have time to spend time with them. So it's quite a contradicting thing… yes, inconsistent, but maybe when you have time then you want them to have time for you but by then maybe they may not be around, who knows. But actually when we talk about time it could be just five minutes, but you know it doesn't have to be a few hours, so that's the concept of time. I think even five minutes for them is a lot. If you sit and give them that little bit of attention or share something that happened in your life, it means a lot to them. It's like you're sharing part of you with them. So maybe that concept of time can be different.

Although not commonly found amongst the grandparents in the study, the case of a proactive grandparent shows the possibility of fostering a close relationship even with teenage grandchildren. This is all the more possible with energetic and financially well-off grandparents. A Singapore-Chinese grandfather (SF1) claimed that he was close to all his four grandchildren and spent time with them through activities they do together, as well as showing concern and offering support:

> … We want to be with them before we are too old, too infirm, to do anything. Like now I can still drive, I drive them a lot, all over the place. I can still even play badminton with the two girls, they are learning badminton. I taught my grandson badminton you know? And he became the school representative.

> One and a half months before National Service, I took him to the golf course. I taught him to play golf, I put him under an instructor, and he's got his certificate already, so I played golf with him once or twice. I took him to Palm Resort in Johor, he enjoyed it so much. I played with him at green fairways. So with my granddaughter, I keep in touch with her by asking her what projects you do and so on and so forth and I support her.

The above account shows how grandparents, especially when they are healthy and financially well-off, can be a valuable resource for their grandchildren providing help such as instruction of various kinds, including sports. Such forms of interaction not only empower the grandparents but also enhance a sense of intergenerational closeness through time spent with each other.

However, not all grandparents are able to find effective means to continue or even start engaging with their grandchildren, especially when they no longer live with them, or when they have failing health.

A Hong Kong grandmother who lived apart from her children and grandchildren felt that she was not particularly close to her grandchildren but still looked to their occasional contact for a sense of well-being derived from the thought that her grandchildren still cared for her. She said with a tinge of sadness, 'I only wish for them to ask about my well-being sometimes, just through phone calls, that is enough to make me happy'. In a way, this shows how little it takes from the grandchildren for their grandparents to feel good.

2 Food and Well-Being

Food features frequently in the narratives of the grandparents in relation to intergenerational connections, especially amongst the grandmothers. Many perceived one of their family roles to be cooking for the family and feeding the grandchildren; some derived a strong sense of usefulness and well-being from being able to provide their children and grandchildren with daily meals. Food provides an opportunity for bonding, as the family gathers at the dinner table, and it is often one of the few opportunities to meet and talk. When different generations cook together, or when grandparents teach the young the skills of cooking, such as a Malaysia-Indian grandparent who taught her granddaughter how to cook traditional Indian food, conversations could flow whilst doing things together. Food also served as an expression of affection for both the grandparents and grandchildren. A Hong Kong grandmother (HP1) felt that her grandchildren would feel her love for them through her efforts to cook delicious food for them; a Japanese grandmother (JA1) recalled fondly that her granddaughter, who was 14 years old at the time, once made her a 'grandma salad' with her name written with octopus.

A 21-year-old Singapore-Chinese grandson (SO3), whose 76-year-old grandmother lived in the same household, noticed that although she prepared dinner early during weekends, she would wait until everyone had come home and eaten before taking her dinner. He perceived this to be a way in which his grandmother

cared for the family. In showing his affection for his grandmother, he took note of what she liked:

> There was a point of time [when] we knew she loves *kueh* [cake] from Bangawan Solo [a pastry shop]. So whenever I went down to West Mall [a shopping mall nearby], I would buy that for her. Until there was a [moment when] she got so scared of it (laughter) and told me "don't buy anymore!" She's still terrified now, and says no, no, no…

This family did not eat together during the weekdays since everyone had a different schedule and ate dinner as and when they returned home. However, during the weekends and holidays, they would eat out together with their grandmother to relieve her of cooking chores. At times, the grandmother would also enjoy going out for meals with her other children and grandchildren, who live separately. Three-generational families eating out especially during the weekends, holidays and festive seasons is a common sight, especially amongst the Chinese in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. In typical Chinese restaurants, families gather around one big round table to chat and socialise whilst sharing the food served, symbolising harmonious family relationships.

The epitome of the socialising role of food is most probably the *yum cha* (literally 'drinking tea') culture prominent in Hong Kong. These yum cha restaurants are commonly referred to as teahouses in translation, but in reality, this Cantonese term refers to drinking Chinese tea with small servings of different foods referred to as *dim sum.* Besides serving traditional Cantonese *dim sum*, nowadays many teahouses serve a wide variety of cuisine, from Western to Japanese and south-east Asian flavours. Teahouses begin business early in the morning, and they are popular amongst a wide variety of customers, serving as a breakfast place for workers to a leisurely relaxing place for older people after their morning exercises and walks. Especially during Saturday and Sunday mornings, they would be packed with families gathering for food, tea and chats.

All of the Hong Kong grandparents in the study mentioned *yum cha* as a common activity for them to do with their children and grandchildren, as well as with friends of their own age. When asked what they would do during a crisis, an 85-year-old Hong Kong grandmother responded to go for *yum cha* as a solution, implying that the socialisation with friends and family during *yum cha* was an important way to de-stress and enhance well-being. For the grandparents, to be included by their children and grandchildren in their *yum cha* routine signified that the family cared for its older members; the opportunity for intergenerational togetherness also contributed to their socio-psychological well-being. It is thus understandable for the same 85-year-old grandmother to say, when asked what she wanted her grandchildren to remember, that they take her for *yum cha*.

With the significance of eating together as symbolising family togetherness, Japanese grandparents showed deliberate efforts to draw a boundary with their children's family by having separate kitchens and eating separately, even when they lived in the same building. The understanding of household independence and the principle of non-interference are thus reflected in the grandparents' insistence that grandchildren should eat with their own parents, not their grandparents.

According to a Japanese grandmother living on level one of *nisetai* housing (two generational households) (JI1):

> … as much as possible, I will not interfere. When they're having troubles, I will help them dry the clothes and take in the washing but, concerning meals, with the principal objective of having meals together with the parents, I allow them to eat snacks here, but not too full that they can't eat when they return to have meals with their parents. I make it a point not to take care of their meals.

Food as a medium thus has multiple functions, serving as an expression of care and affection, as a social role to contribute to one's well-being and as the means to represent the boundaries of the nuclear family.

3 Social Lives and Well-Being

Besides intergenerational contact, most grandparents in the study were able to identify friends, acquaintances and/or neighbours as part of their social network (see also Chap. 8 focusing on Malaysia and Singapore grandparents). Social relationships outside the family contributed to their socio-psychological as well as other forms of well-being. For example, visiting the temples with friends, as mentioned by grandparents in Thailand and Malaysia, and going on Christian mission trips and bible studies, as mentioned by a Singapore-Chinese grandmother, also contributed to one's spiritual well-being. Regular exercise with neighbours and friends such as morning *tai chi* followed with *yum cha* amongst the Hong Kong grandparents enhanced both their social and physical well-being (Ku et al. 2007). Amongst the Chinese grandparents in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, mahjong[1] sessions with friends were popular activities.

There are numerous examples of grandparents who led busy social lives, especially amongst the Japanese and Singapore grandparents not living with their children. A Singapore-Indian grandfather (SG1) gave an example of the various types of social involvement his wife and him were engaged in:

> Oh… we have a lot. In our own respective ways we are socially involved… [my wife] was socially involved in AWARE [a not-for-profit organisation] at one time … she gave home tuition for the neighbourhood children. We have personal friends [with] whom we interact. We have the rotary club where we interact. I have my nature society group to interact with… we go to the Sai Baba [groups]. We have the Hindu centre meetings. We have friends from all places…

Japanese grandparents, too, were found to be socially active with networks of friends from participating in different types of activities. A 78-year-old widowed grandmother (JH1) who lived on her own but close to her son's family, who lived on

[1] Mahjong is defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary as 'a game of Chinese origin usually played by four persons with 144 tiles that are drawn and discarded until one player secures a winning hand' (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mahjong. Accessed 30 May 2011). It is a popular game that is especially well liked by older Chinese.

the upper level in the same apartment building that she owned, joined various cultural activity groups, such as a flamenco dance group and a singing group. She also started to take classes to learn how to use the computer recently.

Another 69-year-old Japanese grandmother (JF1), apparently affluent with an inheritance of property and an income from teaching *ikebana* (Japanese flower arrangement) at home, had different groups of friends from her English class and amongst her students. She did various activities with them such as playing golf and attending concerts. She claimed that she had become busier than her husband who was retired and spending more time doing housework instead.

There are various reasons why more grandparents from Japan and Singapore in the study tended to engage in more activities. They tended to be in relative good health, and had a higher level of education and income. The activities available also suggest that more programmes are available for seniors in these countries, especially in Japan, where from the Japanese respondents alone, we have learnt of a wide variety of sports and lifelong learning programmes suitable for seniors, such as sports club, seniors college and cultural classes at conveniently located culture centres. Finally, they also tended to have more time free from caring for grandchildren. They could have deliberately protected their time for their own activities, as another 70-year-old Japanese grandmother (JA1), who attended an essay-writing course at a culture centre, amongst other things, observed: ‘among my friends, there are people who would adjust themselves to fit in with their grandchildren, but I do not want to go this far. I still have a lot of things to do’.

However, these active grandparents maintained that they still had close relationships with their grandchildren. As the 69-year-old grandmother (JF1) attempted to explain the coexistence of her different pursuits and having grandchildren:

> There are those with one *ikigai* [purpose of life], there are also those with two, and there are those with many I think. I have a lot of *ikigai,* the grandchildren form a big part though, but well, not my only [one].

There are also instances where grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren full time engage more with their own activities as the grandchildren become more independent. A Singapore-Chinese grandmother (SN1), originally from Malaysia, whose granddaughter she cared for had just turned 13, said:

> I have time, that’s why, when my granddaughter goes off to school, I find time to do my own things, my own hobbies, I socialise with my friends, interact with old colleagues, [every] two weeks or once a month. Then you can go for concerts that’s the beauty of Singapore, you can attend concerts, you can attend CC [community centre] activities.

She attended line dancing and aerobics at the community centre, and once every fortnight she also visited an older person at a nursing home.

Obviously, not all grandparents had such an extensive web of social relations and networks with family and friends. Factors such as one’s personality and health could influence social contacts. Amongst the Singapore grandparents, two widowed grandfathers appeared to have little contact with friends. One (SD1), who was living alone, regarded himself as a lonely person who stayed indoors most of the day; he had 17 grandchildren but did not meet them often.

Social relations and contacts with family and friends are widely identified as significant to the well-being of older people (Bowling 1995). Although some studies have further found that friendships are not necessarily less important than intergenerational family relationships in enhancing the well-being of older persons (for example Lee and Ishii-Kutz 1987), it is nevertheless more desirable to be able to foster a good network of relationships amongst both friends and family members, which may enhance multi-dimensions of well-being beyond socio-psychological impact.

4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on how grandparents experience socio-psychological aspects of well-being through three seemingly unrelated themes: the perception of intergenerational closeness, food as a medium to promote well-being and grandparents' social activities beyond the family. Nonetheless, they all demonstrate how the complexity and interrelatedness of sociocultural-psychological dimensions impact on the well-being of grandparents. Whilst the exploration of closeness in grandparent-grandchild relationships reveals the need to take into account the shift in time, where grandchildren growing up as teenagers grow away from the grandparents they once felt close with, experiences of time spent and activities done together in the past could still influence one's sense of affectual solidarity. Food, particularly when family members of different generations are eating together, is included in the discussion due to its significance as a medium in mediating intergenerational relationships in Asian societies and cultures. Finally, the move outside of the familial realm to examine engagements that grandparents may have with social activities and programmes, especially with others in the same cohort, recognise the co-existence of social contact and familial intergenerational relationships in understanding the socio-psychological well-being of older people.

References

Baltes, M. M., & Carstensen, L. L. (1996). The process of successful ageing. *Ageing and Society, 16*, 397–422.

Bengtson, V. L. (2001). Beyond the nuclear family: The increasing importance of multigenerational bonds. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 63*, 1–16.

Bowling, A. (1995). The most important things in life. *International Journal of Health Sciences, 5*(4), 169–175.

Chen, X., & Silverstein, M. (2000). Intergenerational social support and the psychological well-being of older parents in China. *Research on Aging, 22*, 43–65.

Fiske, A., Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., & Nisbett, R. E. (1998). The cultural matrix of social psychology. In D. Gilbert, S. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed.). San Francisco: McGraw-Hill.

Hermalin, A. (Ed.). (2002). *The well-being of the elderly in Asia: A four-country comparative study*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Ingersoll-Dayton, B., Saengtienchai, C., Kespichayawattana, J., & Aungsuroch, Y. (2004). Measuring psychological well-being: Insights from Thai elders. *Gerontologist, 44*(5), 596–604.
Kamnuansilpa, P., & Wongthananvasu, S. (2005). Grandparents' relationships with grandchildren in Thailand. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 3*(1), 49–66.
Kim, I. K., & Kim, C. S. (2003). Patterns of family support and the quality of life of the elderly. *Social Indicators Research, 62–63*, 437–454.
Ku, P. W., Jim McKenna, J., & Fox, K. R. (2007). Dimensions of subjective well-being and effects of physical activity in Chinese older adults. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity, 15*, 382–397.
Lee, G. R., & Ishii-Kutz, M. (1987). Social interaction, loneliness, and emotional well- being among the elderly. *Research on Aging, 9*(4), 459–482.
Oerter, R., Agostiani, H., Kim, H. O., & Wibowo, S. (1996). The concept of human nature in East Asia: Etic and emic characteristics. *Culture and Psychology, 2*, 9–51.
Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1952). *Structure and function in primitive society*. New York: Free Press.
Ryff, C., & Keyes, C. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*, 719–727.

Chapter 7
Custodial Grandparents and Intergenerational Support in Rural China

Zhen Cong and Merril Silverstein

1 Introduction

China has the world's largest scale of internal migration because a surplus of rural labourers has forced working age adults to look for opportunities in cities (Cai 2006; Giles and Mu 2007). Rural migrants had high demands for childcare because of barriers to bringing their children with them, caused by high living and education expenses associated with *Hukou* (the household registration system, which separated rural and urban areas) (Bai and Song 2002; Li and Zahniser 2002; Wang and Fan 2006). Silverstein et al. (2006) found that about 20% of elders in a rural area with high migration rates lived in 'skipped-generation' households, taking the full custody of grandchildren, even though grandparents in China traditionally were not obliged to be the primary caregivers (Chao 1983; Secondi 1997).

In this investigation, we examined how custodial grandparents in skipped-generation households influenced family interactions, including financial support and emotional closeness between grandparents and their adult children, and the possible redistribution of obligations amongst adult children.

Z. Cong (✉)
Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Texas Tech University,
Box 41230, Lubbock, TX 79409, USA
e-mail: zhen.cong@ttu.edu

M. Silverstein
Davis School of Gerontology and Department of Sociology, University of Southern California,
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0191, USA
e-mail: merrils@usc.edu

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_7,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

1.1 Intergenerational Transfers in Rural China

The corporate group/mutual aid model is a useful one in interpreting transfers within Chinese families, where influences of filial piety, familism and modernisation combine to create a mixture of different motivations (Lee and Xiao 1998). It regards a Chinese family as a corporate group, following the principle of reciprocity either in the short term (i.e. mutual aid) or the long term (i.e. corporate group), taking care of each member's needs and maximising their combined benefits based on the capacity of each member.

In Asian families the 'time-for-money' hypothesis is often advanced under the corporate group/mutual aid model, whereby grandparents provide childcare to the families of their adult children in exchange for transfers of money or food, as grandchildren receive care to cover childcare expenses or to pay for grandparents' time (Frankenberg et al. 2002; Yang 1996). Silverstein et al. (2006) have found that elders living in skipped-generation families received more financial help from their children.

With rural to urban migration, children's increased economic capacity and enhanced reliance on their parents to facilitate their migration provides a prospect that elders can benefit financially from children's migration (Cong and Silverstein 2011; Silverstein et al. 2006). However, it is unclear whether the increased remittance is to cover grandchildren's expenses, or acts as additional compensation to grandparents.

Emotional support is also an important dimension of intergenerational support, which is found to be particularly important for Chinese elders' psychological well-being and physical health (Cong and Silverstein 2008b; Li et al. 2009; Silverstein et al. 2006; Zhang et al. 2005). It is likely that when parents take care of their children's offspring, there is an enhanced emotional closeness between the help providers and receivers, because of more interaction and a sense of gratitude or indebtedness (Chen et al. 2000; Cong and Silverstein 2008b; Mercier et al. 1997; Silverstein et al. 2006; van Gaalen et al. 2010). However, considering the strong familism and belief in intergenerational support in rural Chinese families, a sense of gratitude may not be obvious because caring for grandchildren may be regarded as elder parents' obligations instead of a favour to the middle generation (Chen et al. 2000).

1.2 Distribution of Obligations Amongst Siblings

The feeling of obligation was associated with actual help provided (Ganong et al. 2009). Particularly, co-residence is one of the biggest commitments to parents (Yan et al. 2003). It is a manifestation of filial piety, endorsed by cultural values, and forms a basis for promoting intergenerational exchanges; thus, it has substantial

mental and physical health consequences (Silverstein et al. 2006; Unger 1993; Whyte 2003).

Obligations towards parents and the choice to co-reside with a specific child resulted from a joint decision amongst the extended family (Pezzin et al. 2007). For example, Cong and Silverstein (2010) have found that migrant children's exchanges with their parents influenced their parents' likelihood of co-residing with non-migrant children. When parents provided help with childcare for an adult child, the corporate group/mutual aid model would suggest this child to be more obligated to parents. However, the influences of grandparenting on the feelings of obligation by children who are not the parents of grandchildren under custody have rarely been explored. Investigating the obligations felt by family members in the extended family will further current research beyond dyadic interactions.

1.3 Grandparents, Grandchildren and the Middle Generation

Different generations' descriptions of their relationships tend to be inconsistent (Giarrusso et al. 2004). In this study, we took account of three generations involved in skipped-generation households, including (1) grandparents, (2) grandchildren, who were taken care of, and (3) the middle generation, who were either the parents of grandchildren under care, or grandparents' other children.

Our middle generation included daughters-in-law, who are typically ignored family members and whose perspective may be more pivotal because they are the assumed major beneficiary of childcare due to the traditional gender role (Chen et al. 2000; Cong and Silverstein 2008a).

Taking full-time custody of daughters' children is rare in rural China, because resources including time and money were much less likely to be allocated to married daughters due to strong patrilineal family ideology (Chen et al. 2000; Das Gupta and Li 1999). In this particular investigation, when we used the word children, it almost always means sons and sons' spouses.

1.4 Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to use in-depth interviews to explore the intergenerational relationships associated with elders' role as custodial grandparents in skipped-generation households from three generations' perspective. Our central research question is this: whether and why living in skipped-generation households increased adult children's financial transfers to their elder parents who took the custodial role for grandchildren; their intergenerational emotional closeness to elder

parents; and what adult children's obligations were to their elder parents as compared to their siblings towards their parents.

2 Method

Our elder respondents (G1, grandparents) were purposefully selected from those who attended the Longitudinal Study of Elders in Anhui Province (LSEAP). LSEAP used a stratified multistage sampling and collected data from 1,715, 1,368 and 1,067 respondents in 2001, 2003 and 2006 in a region with a high migration rate (for details, see Cong and Silverstein 2010).

We conducted further in-depth interviews at 2006 in a township with the highest proportion of skipped-generation households, where we chose 11 elder respondents (G1). We also interviewed these elders' 7 children (G2) and 8 grandchildren (G3), which added up to a sample of 26.

These 11 elders were deliberately selected based on their previous and current living arrangements documented during our larger-scale interviews. Four of them had been living in skipped-generation households for several years. Others had changed from living in skipped-generation households to other living arrangements, either because the grandchildren's parents returned from migration or the grandchildren went to live with their parents or simply left their grandparents' nest after having grown up.

After selecting elders, we interviewed their children and grandchildren. Different living arrangements suggested differing availability of children and grandchildren. For certain living arrangements, grandchildren or children were not living in the village and therefore were not available to be interviewed. For elders who lived in skipped-generation households when the interview was conducted, we interviewed their co-residing grandchildren. For elders who did not live in skipped-generation household at that time, we interviewed grandchildren who had been taken care of by these elders when available, and tried to interview the parents of these grandchildren. If these parents were not available, we followed the principle that if the elders had co-residing children, these children would be interviewed. If an elder did not have any co-residing children, we randomly interviewed one available child in the village.

We used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with similar interview questions for three generations, in order to capture their perspectives on similar topics. We interviewed each family member individually, typically at the respondent's home. Because some grandchildren were boarding at school, we interviewed three grandchildren in one middle school and one grandchild in an elementary school. We tried our best to secure privacy during the interview, and avoided topics when confidentiality was a concern. Each interview lasted from 30 to 90 min.

Our first set of questions focused on the experiences of custodial grandparents, including the situations in which elders stepped into and out of the role, grandparents' daily life and daily tasks and their feelings about and evaluation of taking care of their grandchildren. The second set of questions focused on how grandparenting

influenced intergenerational relationships, including financial support, emotional support and the obligations felt by children.

We had a local translator because of the dialect used in that area. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim by two students who knew the local dialect. Coding was developed in Chinese. We read the transcripts multiple times and then conducted thematic analysis to determine grandparenting experience and its consequences on elders, their children and their grandchildren. Themes related to financial matters, emotional interactions and obligations were picked out and analysed for this particular study. Transcripts and notes were first categorised into various sub-topics with appropriate headings. The independently categorised group transcriptions were later unified into recurring themes. Finally, the results were translated into English.

3 Themes

Table 7.1 shows family members interviewed in the study categorised by living arrangements and family names. The 11 grandparents (G1) we interviewed consisted of 5 grandmothers and 6 grandfathers. For the middle generation (G2), we interviewed 3 sons and 4 daughters-in-law. In addition, we interviewed 5 grandsons and 3 granddaughters (G3).

Q, Zou, S and W were living in skipped-generation households with their grandchildren when the interview was conducted. Parents of the grandchildren were not available because they migrated out for job opportunities. Thus, we interviewed one available son who was not the parent of the grandchildren being taken care of, i.e. for each elder who lived in the village. Zou did not have any child available in the village.

Zu, G, Z and H were selected because they had lived in skipped-generation households, but their grandchildren had now either reunited with their parents in other places or left because they had grown up and gone out to work. Again, the grandchildren's parents were not available because they were migrants. We interviewed one of Zu's and one of Z's daughters-in-law who were not the parents of the grandchildren taken care of.

Ha, F and X were selected because they had lived in skipped-generation household but terminated this living arrangement because the grandchildren's parents had returned to the village. For them, their grandchildren were still in the village, and we interviewed those grandchildren who had been taken care of. For Ha and F, we were also able to find their grandchildren's mother (daughter-in-law) for an interview.

3.1 Financial Support from Children

Financial support from children was clearly related to taking care of grandchildren. For example, when Z, an elder woman who once lived in a skipped-generation

Table 7.1 Family members by living arrangements

Elders' living arrangements	Elders' (G1) name	Elders' gender	Elders' children (G2)[a]	Elders' grandchildren (G3)
Currently live in				
Skipped-generation	Q	M	Another son	Grandson
Skipped-generation	Zou	F	No eligible child available	Grandson
Skipped-generation	S	M	Another son	Grandson, granddaughter
Skipped-generation	W	M	Another son	Granddaughter
Previously lived in skipped-generation household, but now:				
Live alone, because grandchildren have gone to join migrant children	Zu	F	Another daughter-in-law	Cannot be reached by design
Live alone, because grandchildren have gone to join migrant children	G	M	No eligible child available	Cannot be reached by design
Live alone, because grandchildren have gone to join migrant children	Z	F	Another daughter-in-law	Cannot be reached by design
Live alone because grandchildren have grown up and left	H	M	No eligible child available in the village	Cannot be reached by design
Live alone, although the grandchildren's parents have come back to the village	Ha	F	Daughter-in-law	Grandson
Live alone, although the grandchildren's parents have come back to the village	F	M	Daughter-in-law	Granddaughter
Live with other children, although the grandchildren's parents have come back to the village	X	F	No eligible child available	Grandson

[a]Son or daughter-in-law means the parent of grandchildren being taken care of; another son/daughter-in-law is not the parent of grandchildren

household, was asked 'Did your third son give you money because you took care of his child', Z said very affirmatively: 'Yes'. X, another grandma, explicitly expressed: 'If you did not provide childcare for them, they did not give you money'.

A thorny question in studying financial transfers to elder parents in skipped-generation household is that it is hard to know whether the money given to parents was to cover children's own expenses or represent additional compensation for grandparents for their help, which makes it difficult to discover the real motivation for providing grandchildren care (Silverstein et al. 2006).

In this investigation, most grandparents admitted that they benefited from this living arrangement financially. Financial assistance from parents usually was enough to cover their children's expenses. H, a 92-year-old grandfather, mentioned that: 'The money is enough, and exceeds children's needs… They [my grandchildren's parents] gave us addition money.'

Q, a grandpa, echoed this: 'They gave money… to us too. We did not farm, so if they did not give us money, how could we cover our living expenses?'

Z confirmed receiving money from her grandson's parents, and when asked whether that is enough for the kid, she said: 'Yes. How could that not be enough for a little one?'

Grandparenting was also associated with extra help in addition to covering expenses related to children themselves. The extra help, however, came in various forms. It could have been extra money, grains (basic living substances) to guarantee the basic survival or the right to farming land. As expressed by Zou, a grandma taking care of three grandchildren sired by two sons: 'This is [a] village. In cities, this looks poor. But this is [a] village'.

Zou elaborated: 'I help her [my daughter-in-law] take care of her son – how could she not provide food for me? Concerning money, she worked outside, and did not have much. She needs to live and support her family. We are old, and the only expectation is some food. Isn't that right? This is rural life'.

Zou also mentioned that even though the money is barely enough, her younger son offered her the right to farm and make benefits from his land, which could be regarded as a kind of financial compensation:

> They give money and food. Money is theirs. They put my grandson here - money is barely enough. It is good enough if they provide enough to cover the kid's expenses. My husband and I can still work, and can still get food, and do not want their help. It is good enough if the little one gets enough. Several years ago, when the agricultural tax was not absolved, my little son gave his allocation of farm[land] for me to farm, but he paid the tax, and told me that he paid the tax, and I worked on the farm [and got the revenue]. He did not want me to pay the tax, just wanted me to get some money from farming. Isn't that right?

Interviews with the middle generation also showed that food is an important contribution to compensate elder grandparents. An adult child (S's second son), who is the uncle of the grandchildren under custody, said: 'He [my brother, S's first-born son] brought some money back home, to buy some food. [My father, S] did not ask him to do other things'.

There were cases where elders mentioned that money provided was not enough because of the children's poor situation. When asked about what the hardest thing was when taking care of grandchildren, G complained:

> Money… They [the parents] paid for the tuition and then they left [without further support]… If it [the grandchildren's expense] is not a big amount of money I can pay for that, but that is a big amount. Where can I get it? I farm on the land, buy fertilizer [this also means expenses].

X, a grandma, also thought that money from grandchildren's parents was not enough to cover children's expenses, but she thought her situation was an anomaly. Interestingly, this was a grandma taking care of one of her daughters' children. She showed greater expectations of financial support from daughters and cited another case in her village where taking care of a daughter's children was used to justify the daughter's provision of financial support to her own parents instead of her parents-in-law.

When asked 'Do your daughter and son-in-law give you money?', X said, 'A little bit'. We asked, 'Is that only enough for kids' expenses or some additional money for you?' She replied, 'This New Year, they told me that they would give me RMB 500. Five hundred is not enough even for getting kids enrolled for school. It is not enough for a whole year, and we have to make up for that [out of our own pockets]'.

When we probed 'What is the benefit for elders? You paid to cover your grandchildren's expenses out of your own pocket, how about others?', X answered:

> Others are not the same. Their kids have money. There is one elder in our village who has one son and one daughter. The daughter puts her kids in her [elder's] place, and gives her some money, otherwise no money at all. The daughter has mother-in-law and father-in-law. She does not give them money, saying that I have my kids in your place, so I do not give money to my parents-in-law.

The local translator added:

> What she said is not an individual case, it is quite commonplace. No matter whether it is sons, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law or daughters, they can put their kids in your care, and they will give you money in the name of that. You take care of my kids, and I will give you some financial help and elder parents will have a better-off life. Otherwise, what is their source of income? In our place, the most prevalent thing [if not for grandchildren care] is that children only give parents' some food, 500 Jin [555 lb] of rice, and some oil, and nothing else. In some rare cases, sons are good and give some money, but very little. Elders do not have other income, and their only choice is to take care of grandchildren [to better their lives]. She [X] used an example that there is another elder in the village who takes care of a daughter's kids and the daughter gives money.

We also explored the perspective of the middle generation, though they were not in the best position to establish whether financial support was enough to cover kids' expenses. Their perspective offered a reflection of what grandparents felt.

Because of the nature of our study, only two daughters-in-law whose children were taken care of were available for interviews. Both of them provided money because their children were looked after by grandparents.

One of F's daughters-in-law, whose children were once under the custody of F, complained that even though she gave the grandparents enough money, they did not spend on the grandchildren. She told us:

> Once, my kids called me telling me that life was really hard at home. They [F and his spouse] were not willing to spend on their food. I told them [F and his spouse] to buy food for kids, I have given you money for that - but older people are very frugal, and they did not spend on eating.

Ha's daughter-in-law also described how they struggled to meet the children's needs and gave as much as she could, and compensated the grandparents at least by providing some grain:

> We sure gave her [Ha] money, the money children need. But she did not farm, we bought grain for her, and put at home. That is it… We were financially hard [up]. We went out to work, but did not make much [at the beginning], so the family left behind did not have money. But we were much better off after several years. When we had money, we gave more money. She [Ha] said the kids came back home every day asking for money because the teacher asked for money [for the payment of tuition]. For these years, no, just for [the] years the kid went to school. The kid asked [for] money to buy food.

This daughter-in-law's account could be regarded as a defence by the middle generation who failed to provide for their parents and even their own children. Their own financial hardship simply did not allow them to provide. This suggested that migrants' reliance on their parents was not only in the aspect of grandchildren care but was sometimes even for financial help in raising their children.

Financial support was strongly expected when taking care of grandchildren because their care alone was associated with expenses. Some of the grandchildren's parents could not provide enough to cover their children's expenses; however, most grandparents expected something extra to support their lives if they did not have other resources of support. Financially independent grandparents may have covered some of the kids' expenses; but for financially insecure grandparents, caring for grandchildren was one way for them to get paid and live to a higher standard. This is generally consistent with the hypothesis of 'time-for-money exchanges' (Hermalin 2002). But these exchanges may have presented a simplified picture of intergenerational assistance. First, elders' time was sometimes compensated for with money when the adult children who benefited from it were rich enough to do so; but it was compensated sometimes by food, which was most likely when children were financially insecure and all they could provide was basic food, such as grain. Second, a time-for-money exchange may not be easily observed because what elders received was no more than what was needed to support their basic living standard. We propose that a better way to understand intergenerational relationships in rural China is that providing care for grandchildren reinforces children's responsibilities towards their parents, which is stipulated by filial piety even without grandparents' help. When grandchildren were under care, adult children were more likely to voluntarily provide support on a timely basis, with the parents' increased priority resulting from their lives being bonded with their grandchildren.

3.2 Emotional Closeness

We asked whether there was any change in the relationship between the grandparents and their children, who are the parents of grandchildren being taken care of, after the care took place. The most likely answer was that there was no change. S's granddaughter who was looked after by her grandparents said that '[their relationship is] always good'. S himself said:

> Nothing changed. Our relationship [with our grandchildren's father] is always good. My relationship with my daughter-in-law is good too. I am not a picky person. I take care of their kids. How could our relationships be bad? Even when they were at home and I did not take care of their kids, our relationships were good.

Q, a grandfather, said: 'Our relationships are always good, never quarrelled'. A daughter-in-law (F's second daughter-in-law) whose children were in the care of her husband's parents said, 'Our relationship is always OK, no fighting'. And a grandfather (H) said, '(Our relationship is) no better, no worse'.

These unenthusiastic expressions could not be related to any gratitude from the middle generation. One respondent, a daughter-in-law, explicitly associated this to the unconditional obligation of elders to their children:

> According to my opinion, isn't taking care of their own grandson the grandfather's responsibility? Why should I be grateful? He had sons and sons had sons. If he did not care for his grandson, who should? This is regulated by law. This is what should be. The generation to generation [transfers], this is the right thing. [There is] nothing to be grateful for.

Ha's second daughter-in-law told us:

> [This is] her [Ha's] obligation to her sons, how could she not take care of kids? Everyone goes out to work. [People] cannot earn money by farming. Farming does not work. But our kids are young, and [we] could not leave them alone. She helped us. … She would not refuse to help. If it had happened, I would have stayed at home. She could take care of grandchildren. When she could not, we come back.

This kind of lack of gratitude is associated with the belief that it is the responsibility of grandparents to take care of grandchildren – so taking care of grandchildren does not necessarily enhance the emotional bonds from these respondents' narratives.

No child ever doubted that their parents would provide grandchildren care. When asked what happened if the elders refused to care for a grandchild, the first response from children was that it was impossible: 'They would not refuse', 'Not possible for them to refuse', 'They are their grandchildren, their son is poor [so has to go out to work], if she did not care, who will', said Ha's second daughter-in-law.

According to another daughter-in-law (the fourth daughter-in-law of Z): 'It should be that [way, that grandparents take care of grandchildren]. Taking care of [the] grandson is helping the son. It is what should be done'. Q's second son said: '[Grandchildren are like] his own kids, how could he not take care of them?'

Although the above account may initially seem to be selfish defences by the middle generation who benefited from grandchildren care but refused to show appreciation, elders themselves also had never doubted that they should take responsibility for caring for their grandchildren when called upon. S said:

> It would be really embarrassing if I had not taken care of them. My children wanted to go out to earn money. I stayed at home, how could I not take care of [the] kids? Now [the] kids need to get an education, this is a burden, and they will need more money when they go to college. Working away and saving some money will make it easier when kids go to college later. Isn't that right?

F expressed something similar: '[My grandchildren] are my son's offspring, how could I not take care of them? I did nothing else, could not do anything else, could not earn money, and could only stay at home to take care of them'.

When F was asked what the consequences would be if he had refused to take care of his grandchildren, he said: 'How could that be? It would not happen. It would not happen, so I could not imagine'.

G similarly said: 'Your own kids, your own offspring… We will fulfill our obligations till we die'. H also mentioned: 'That is what elders should do. They [the adult children] went out for a job. Taking care of grandchildren and watching the door, that is what we should do. If I can help I help them'. Ha said very affirmatively: 'If grandchildren need care, I will certainly provide care'.

However, one grandson, who was being cared for by his grandmother Zou when the interview was conducted, did mention family feud and conflicts, and said that taking care of grandchildren helped alleviate the conflicts. He was raised in his mother's parents' home and was transferred to his fathers' mother's home (i.e. Zou's) only a few years ago. The reason that he had not been raised in his paternal grandparents' home, as stipulated by patrilineal family tradition, was that his mother did not get along with his paternal grandmother. When he was taken care of in his maternal grandparents' home, his mother in fact provided a lot of help. But when his mother finally decided to go together with her husband to work outside, her own family was not regarded by the traditional norm as an appropriate place to provide full-time care. But, as a result of the tough relationship with his mother, his paternal grandma refused to take care of him when asked to do so. Consequently her mother had to stay home to provide care for quite a while. Eventually his father came back from work to mediate between his mother and his wife and to help the relationship. Only after his mother compromised with his paternal grandmother did he begin to live with his paternal grandparents.

When asked about the consequences if his grandmother refused to take care of him, his first reaction was to focus on the relationship between his mother and grandma: 'I thought my mother and grandma must still have a very hard relationship'. He then added: 'Because, she [Zou] did not accept me to live in her place, my mother was very angry'. When we asked 'Is that you who felt angry or your parents?', he explained: 'I felt angry and my parents too'.

Ha's grandson also said similar things when questioned about the consequences if Ha had not taken care of him; he told us: 'You will be angry'. When we probed: ' "You" will be angry? Is that "you" will be angry or "your parents" will be angry?', the grandson answered, 'My parents will be angry'. We asked, 'How about you?', and the grandson replied, 'Same'.

Although those who benefited from grandparenting did not mention that their relationship was improved because of caregiving, those who did not benefit from

caregiving complained about that. It was the norm for grandparents to take care of grandchildren. Failure to provide care was usually the root of family conflicts and excuses of children to default on their responsibility for taking care of their parents or living together with them.

This point could be best illustrated by the story of Zu. Zu had not helped her first or second son with childcare because she was widowed very early before the wedding of her third son. The family was very poor, and she stayed with her third son to work hard on building a house and finding him a wife. Because of her responsibilities to her third son, she did not provide any grandchildren care for her other sons. Zu's second son's wife expressed clearly the hardship and bitterness she felt because Zu did not provide childcare for her. She mentioned that she could not go out to work as others did because her mother-in-law (Zu) did not help look after the grandchildren. She told us about her hardship when she and her husband (somewhat disabled because of glaucoma) worked hard in the field:

> My husband and I had to take our child into the field when we worked. We put our child in a bathing tub in the sun, and we did our farm work. He [the child] cried and we could not help it. We did not blame my mother-in-law. Since I had my son at that time, we were asked to leave for independent living. In addition, her third son did not marry at that time [and needed to marry, which is a major reason for us to live by ourselves].

She expressed very clearly that she did not feel obliged to support her mother-in-law because her mother-in-law did not provide support to her for grandchildren care:

> I understand both of us had a hard life. There is no right or wrong. I did not criticise her, and she did not criticise me. She is living with her youngest son anyway.

This quite negative expression and distancing herself from her mother-in-law is an indirect way of showing strong dissatisfaction in a culture that dishonours those who openly disclaim their responsibilities to parents.

Zu herself demonstrated a sense of guilt when she mentioned that she could not take care of her first two sons' children because she had to help her youngest son to build a house and get married. She did not, however, think that she had other choices. Particularly, her spouse died before the youngest child got married. If she had not worked together with her youngest son and contributed every effort to help him become established, he would have a very slim chance of getting married at all. She said:

> I had not taken care of my eldest son's son at all. If I took care of him, how could I take care of my third son? I did not take care of my second son's son either. I could not do that. I had my own business. If my third son did not work hard [together with me] for so many years, worked bitterly hard to earn money, how could he build this house? The house was built by my third son himself… I currently live with my third son. His father died early, and he was the only son that was young at that time. We did not have house, just some earth walls. If I did not live with him [and help him], how could he manage his life?

The above accounts could be regarded as another side of the story that when elders failed to provide care, their relationship with their children was substantially worsened. The bitterness that then ensues was clear in Zu's second daughter-in-law's description. The 'we do not blame my mother-in-law' and 'I did not criticise her and

she did not criticise me' expressions both showed a kind of irrelevance of her mother-in-law to her life when strong familism in rural China defined them as a family and when intergenerational exchanges were assumed to be the norm. In fact, Zou and Ha's grandsons expressed very directly how upset they would be if their grandmas had refused to take care of them. Their mothers would not have been able to work outside, and their whole family would be very angry, which mirrored the actual rejection and bitterness felt towards Zu by her second daughter-in-law.

To summarise, there is no linear relationship between caring for grandchildren and the emotional closeness between G1 and G2. A better way to understand the association is from the perspective that the failure to fulfil one's responsibility to children in providing grandchildren care will traumatise the relationship; whereas if elder parents take care of their grandchildren, their help is regarded as fulfilling their obligation to offspring, will not be much appreciated and may not directly increase intergenerational emotional closeness.

3.3 Obligations Amongst Siblings

A less obvious aspect of intergenerational relationships is how obligations are distributed amongst siblings. We found that the middle generation typically agreed that it was grandparents' irrefutable responsibility to take care of grandchildren when the middle generation needed help, which was associated with a lack of appreciation for grandparents' efforts. Findings from financial support suggested that adult children whose children were taken care of would make sure that their parents at least have enough food, which implied reduced pressure on other adult children. Despite this, there remains the question of whether taking the custodial grandparents' role increases obligations amongst siblings, and whether other siblings would feel that the adult children who benefited from grandchildren care should have more responsibilities as a result.

When asking which one amongst siblings should be most responsible for their elder parents, we found that the middle generation rarely related their obligations to parents based on whether elder parents provided grandchildren care or not – possibly because elder parents were supposed to provide grandchildren care for every son when asked to. However, when elders had provided grandchildren care only for one child and had no potential to provide more childcare in the future (e.g. when all the grandchildren had grown up or grandparents were not healthy enough to provide care anymore), grandchildren care would become a factor in how adult children measured their own obligations towards their parents.

W had three sons. His second son was living in the village to take care of W, whereas other sons went out for employment. W was taking care of his youngest son's daughter. During the interview with W's second son, we asked: 'Do you think that when older parents take care of grandchildren, the child has more responsibilities toward the older parents?' W's second son answered: 'That is not the

case. If we [my wife and I] want to go out, my parents will probably take care of my kids too'.

When we probed: 'Your third brother put his kids in your parents' place. Does that mean that he should have more responsibilities to take care of your parents?', he answered, 'That is not right. We should understand each other'. The reason that he believed that his brother should not have more obligation seems to be rooted in the belief that his parents would help to the same extent when he needed help.

S had two sons, and he was taking care of his elder son's son and daughter. When asked whether he felt that his elder son should be more responsible for taking care of him because he took care of his eldest son's kids, S answered that 'they [my elder son and younger son] have the same responsibilities. My elder son takes care of my food, and they share the other stuff'. When S's second son was asked about S's possible living arrangement when he became dependent, the second son did not cite S's taking care of his brother's kids and said: 'He could live with whoever he wanted to live with. We did not have any objection. He said he will live wherever he feels comfortable'.

F's eldest daughter-in-law mentioned that she offered to take care of her parents-in-law as a return for their taking care of grandchildren.

> At that time, my parents-in-law were still being together [without being assigned separately as responsibilities of each son]. I told them that 'when I return [from migration], I will take care of you, giving you food and drink. You take care of my kids, helping them with cooking and washing. You do nothing else anyway. You do not farm, and you do nothing else anyway'.

But this 'I will take care of you' offer had not been taken seriously. At the time of this interview, F's daughter-in-law was responsible for taking care of her father-in-law (F); whereas her mother-in-law (F's wife) was assigned to be the responsibility of her brother-in-law's family. F's daughter-in-law described how the family reached that arrangement, which apparently had released her from her previous promise:

> We negotiated to reach the results [that our family takes care of my father-in-law and my brother-in-law and his family take care of my mother-in-law]. After the negotiation, my father-in-law became our responsibility. The reason is that our kids have grown up and will not need care. The grandma [my mother-in-law, F's wife] will take care of [her younger son's] kids. She [F's wife] said, 'I need to live with the younger son, to take care of their kids.' Our kids have grown up, so my father-in-law lives with us. He does not need to take care of kids.

Here the responsibility was equally shared between two sons. Each son took care of one parent. Even though both grandparents had taken care of this daughter-in-law's kids for a while, it did not obligate this daughter-in-law into caring for them both. Another son would still need help with grandchildren care, and the equal share of responsibilities seems to be a fair arrangement that will serve the needs of the middle generation when caring for elders simultaneously. Thus, the obligation of a son's family because of elder parents' help with childcare was renegotiated when elder parents started taking care of another son's children.

However, when grandparents had not taken care of other children's kids, things were different. When asked directly whether taking care of grandchildren obliged them to live with the elders, Ha's second daughter-in-law related grandchildren care to her own responsibilities in a 'right-thing-to-do' manner: 'To be fair, she (Ha) should live with us – she took care of my children for the longest time'.

But the current situation was that this daughter-in-law did not live with her mother-in-law (Ha), who had been very old and poor. She justified not co-residing with Ha, saying:

> Who should take care of her? [After hesitant silence…] Others must say it should be me. She [Ha] spent more time taking care of my kids. She had not taken care of their [other siblings'] kids. We [the family] did not think that way. Other families would negotiate who provides and how much. We did not. If we provide enough food and help, that is fine. She did not ask for that. She did not force us to provide a certain amount of money. She is satisfied with enough food.

Similarly, Zu did not contribute to the care for children other than her third son. When asked 'Has your third son told you that they [he and his family] will take care of you?', Zu said:

> Yes. They said so. My third son said 'I will take care of you.'… He told me to help take care his child for another 3 years [and he will return to take care of me], when the grandchild turns 18. They would come back to farm with a tractor. I told them 'I could still take care of your kids for 3 years. I am older and older, each year gets worse'.

Z told us that when the family negotiated about who should care for her, her eldest daughter-in-law argued that 'You did not raise my kids, why should I provide for you?' The general theme is that when grandparents took care of every child's children, no child felt particularly responsible for the old age care. On the contrary, when the elder parents only helped a specific child, that child felt some pressure to provide care, or at least acknowledged that it was the right thing to do.

It was very rare for grandparents to cite their contributions to children in childcare as justification for their right to receive care from those children. In addition, some elders who took care of almost every son's children preferred to live by themselves. These elders are often financially independent and in good health. Again, they did not link their contributions to their children as a reason for them to expect co-residence with them. Q said, 'Living alone is comfortable. Who wants to live with children? I will not'.

H and Zou said similar things. Zou told us: 'I will not live with them, not live with them. I will live in my own hut. Even when I get older, I will not live with them'. H had three sons and had helped with childcare in skipped-generation household for the first- and second-born sons. When he talked about how his living arrangement was negotiated, he said: 'I had three sons and three daughters-in-law. My eldest son said "each of us lives with one of you [H and H's wife]". I said, "I do not want to live with you; I will live with your mother" '.

Z also mentioned that she would rather live alone but was in a more negative sense: 'I will not want to live with any of them. It is no good to live with any of them. If no one cares for me, I will wait to die on bed'. Again, no grandchildren care was mentioned.

Even when Ha's second daughter-in-law thought her family had stronger obligation to Ha than Ha's other children's families because of Ha's exclusive help with childcare, Ha herself did not cite her taking care of the second son's children as a justification that she should live with her youngest son. When asked who should live with her, she did not answer directly but kept on interrogating, maybe, herself: 'Who am I willing to live with? Who wants to live with me? Who wants to live with me?' Then she reached the conclusion that 'I will live with whoever willing to live with me'.

Grandchildren interviewed typically showed strong preference for future co-residence with their grandparents. Grandchildren's opinion might not be a reliable measure of the future obligations of their parents to their grandparents, particularly concerning co-residence possibilities. Nevertheless, the obligation felt by grandchildren might be a factor that contributed to more favourable treatment to grandparents later.

When asked: 'Are you going to live with your grandma?', Zou's grandson said, 'I will ask my mom to live with them'. When S's grandson was asked 'When your parents come back, what your living arrangement will be? Will your grandpa live alone? Or are you going to live with them?', he replied '(We will) live with grandpa'. S's granddaughter gave the same confirmative answer.

Whether grandchildren care would lead to the redistribution of responsibilities amongst siblings depended on whether grandparents had provided grandchildren care exclusively for one child or more children. The first impression was that grandchildren care was not related to children's increased responsibilities towards parents; consequently custodial grandparenting would not influence how obligations were negotiated amongst siblings. A detailed examination, however, showed that elders who had taken care of only one child's children, but not those of others, were regarded as deserving more support from that child. In rural China, because elders may have provided care for each son, the obligations spread out. When every child benefited from childcare help, a balanced solution was that grandchild care was not an important consideration.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, we explored how taking care of grandchildren in skipped-generation household influenced intergenerational relationships, including emotional closeness with children, financial support from children and how the obligations amongst siblings were influenced and negotiated. We took an extended family perspective to delve into how different generations address the above questions.

Adult children provided financial support for elders during childcare when they could afford it. More importantly, we found that grandchildren care strengthened children's responsibilities towards their parents and led them to prioritise elder parents' needs, as they were more closely associated with grandchildren's needs. This may not necessarily be observed with explicit 'time-for-money exchanges'.

In this study, taking care of grandchildren per se did not mean strengthened emotional closeness, because caring for grandchild was regarded as the obligations of elder parents. However, choosing not to take care of grandchildren was a difficult decision, and one which might occur only under special circumstances and was unacceptable to both the parents and children. It created antagonised relationships later in life.

We found that grandparenting is *not* important in influencing the distribution of responsibilities amongst siblings when every son's children had or would be taken care of by their grandparents; but when elder parents had or would take care of only one son's children, grandparenting was a factor to consider. This suggests that a better strategy for elders to ensure support from children might be strategically bonding themselves with one child instead of all children, such as providing grandchildren care only for one child.

These findings present a picture that is consistent with the corporate group/mutual aid model, in which family members provided what they could to disseminate resources and to make sure the success of the family as a whole (Lee and Xiao 1998). Elder parents felt irrefutable responsibilities to provide care for their adult children and support their migration, and in return their children felt some increased obligations towards their parents and made sure that their parents received the basic living substances. Elders' responsibilities towards their offspring were so deeply embedded in the culture that no one felt it explicitly. Thus, the fulfilment of the responsibility was taken as normal, whereas to default on that responsibility was strongly resented. This is almost a story of mutual filial piety, which strongly endorses children providing for their elder parents. When both sides have strong obligations towards each other, the responsibilities of another side would not be thought of as conditional, even when they are in practice. Even though a skipped-generation household seems to be an extension of parents' obligations towards their children, caring for grandchildren as surrogate parents strengthened grandparents' rights to children's resources.

These findings are also consistent with our studies based on quantitative analysis using data from the survey. In our studies, we found that migrants received more grandchildren care help and even more financial help from their parents (Cong and Silverstein 2011). It was generally believed that financial help from parents was related to helping migrant children cover expenses related with migration, such as transportation and training expenses (Liu and Reilly 2004; Secondi 1997). This in-depth interview further revealed that some of the financial support may be used to cover some childcare expenses that the adult children themselves should provide for their children.

Cong and Silverstein (2010) found that taking care of grandchildren generally did not increase grandparents' likelihood of co-residing with their grandchildren's parents, except when co-residence is beneficial to grandchildren's parents. The results from this study are consistent with that study, showing that grandchildren care generally did not influence co-residence, but that it might be contextual as whether other children also received grandchildren care. In addition, this in-depth study also offered further insight into previous findings that only sons and youngest sons were more likely than other sons to return from migration and live with their parents (Cong and Silverstein 2010). It was very likely that they were the sole beneficiary

of parents' help with childcare. Without life course data, it is hard to precisely capture this mechanism with a survey. The in-depth interviews revealed this as a possible interpretation.

This study examined how serving as caregiving grandparents influenced the multifaceted family relationships within the extended family. It will empirically enrich studies on rural Chinese elders, whose most reliable support in old age comes from their children, and who are deeply influenced by the process of modernisation when their adult children flock into cities to look for jobs and pursue their dreams. In addition, this study explored how grandparenting stimulated complicated interactions within extended families, which have generally been ignored in the study of intergenerational relationship because of the difficulties in obtaining data.

Grandparenting, particularly in the skipped-generation households, is an important contribution that parents can make to children during their old age in rural China. It is important for us to know how the extended family negotiates relationships centring on custodial grandparenting. This is crucial for rural Chinese elders, whose resources are limited in other ways.

References

Bai, N., & Song, H. (2002). *Return or stay: The return flow of out-migrants from rural China (in Chinese)*. Beijing: China Finance and Economy Press.

Cai, F. (Ed.). (2006). *Zhongguo renkou yu laodong wenti baogao: Renkou zhuanbian de shehui jingji houguo (Report on China's population and labor: Demographic transition and its social and economic consequences)* (Vol. 7). Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe (Social Sciences Documentation Publishing House).

Chao, P. (1983). *Chinese kinship*. Boston: Kegan Paul International.

Chen, F., Short, S. E., & Entwistle, B. (2000). Impact of grandparental proximity on maternal childcare in China. *Population Research and Policy Review, 19*, 571–590.

Cong, Z., & Silverstein, M. (2008a). Intergenerational support and depression among elders in rural China: Do daughters-in-law matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*, 599–612.

Cong, Z., & Silverstein, M. (2008b). Intergenerational time-for-money exchanges in rural China: Does reciprocity reduce depressive symptoms of older grandparents? *Research in Human Development, 5*(1), 6–25.

Cong, Z., & Silverstein, M. (2010). Which sons live with their older parents in rural China? The role of migration and intergenerational exchanges. *Family Sciences, 1*(1), 67–71.

Cong, Z., & Silverstein, M. (2011). Intergenerational exchange between parents and migrant and nonmigrant sons in Rural China. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 73*, 93–104.

Das Gupta, M., & Li, S. (1999). Gender bias in China, South Korea and India 1920–1990: Effects of war, famine and fertility decline. *Development and Change, 30*, 619–652.

Frankenberg, E., Lillard, L., & Willis, R. J. (2002). Patterns of intergenerational transfers in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*, 627–641.

Ganong, L. H., Coleman, M., & Rothrauff, T. (2009). Patterns of assistance between adult children and their older parents: Resources, responsibilities, and remarriage. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 26*(2–3), 161–178.

Giarrusso, R., Feng, D., & Bengtson, V. (2004). The intergenerational-stake phenomenon over 20 years. In M. Silverstein & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics: Focus on intergenerational relations across time and place* (Vol. 24, pp. 55–76). New York: Springer.

Giles, J., & Mu, R. (2007). Elderly parent health and the migration decisions of adult children: Evidence from rural China. *Demography, 44*(2), 265–288.
Hermalin, A. I. (2002). *Well-being of the elderly in Asia: A four-country comparative study*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
Lee, Y., & Xiao, Z. (1998). Children's support for elderly parents in urban and rural China: Results from a national survey. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 13*(1), 39–62.
Li, H., & Zahniser, S. (2002). The determinants of temporary rural-to-urban migration in China. *Urban Studies, 39*(12), 2219–2235.
Li, S., Song, L., & Feldman, M. W. (2009). Intergenerational support and subjective health of older people in rural China: A gender-based longitudinal study. *Australasian Journal on Ageing, 28*(2), 81–86.
Liu, Q., & Reilly, B. (2004). Income transfers of Chinese rural migrants: Some empirical evidence from Jinan. *Applied Economics, 36*, 1295–1313.
Mercier, J. M., Shelley, M. C., II, & Wall, B. (1997). Quality of adult child-aging parent relationships: A structural equations approach using merged cross-generational data. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal, 26*(2), 160–192.
Pezzin, L. E., Pollak, R. A., & Schone, B. S. (2007). Efficiency in family bargaining: Living arrangements and caregiving decisions of adult children and disabled elderly parents. *CESifo Economic Studies, 53*(1), 69–96.
Secondi, G. (1997). Private monetary transfers in rural China: Are families altruistic? *Journal of Development Studies, 33*(4), 487–511.
Silverstein, M., Cong, Z., & Li, S. (2006). Intergenerational transfers and living arrangements of older people in rural China: Consequences for psychological well-being. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences, 61B*(5), S256–S266.
Unger, J. (1993). Urban families in the eighties: An analysis of Chinese surveys. In D. Davis & S. Harrell (Eds.), *Chinese families in the post-Mao era* (pp. 25–49). Berkeley: University of California Press.
van Gaalen, R. I., Dykstra, P. A., & Komter, A. E. (2010). Where is the exit? Intergenerational ambivalence and relationship quality in high contact ties. *Journal of Aging Studies, 24*(2), 105–114.
Wang, W. W., & Fan, C. C. (2006). Success or failure: Selectivity and reasons of return migration in Sichuan and Anhui, China. *Environment and Planning, 38*(5), 939–958.
Whyte, M. K. (2003). The persistence of family obligation in Baoding. In M. K. Whyte (Ed.), *China's revolutions and intergenerational relations* (pp. 85–120). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies.
Yan, S., Chen, J., & Yang, S. (2003). Living arrangements and old-age support. In M. K. Whyte (Ed.), *China's revolutions and intergenerational relations* (pp. 143–166). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies.
Yang, H. (1996). The distributive norm of monetary support to older parents: A study in China. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58*(2), 404–415.
Zhang, W., Li, S., & Silverstein, M. (2005). The effects of inter-generational support on the mortality of older people in rural China. *Asian Population Studies, 1*(3), 325–338.

Chapter 8
Empowering Self-disclosure: The Active Post-retiree Life Accounts of Malaysian and Singaporean Senior Citizens

Maya Khemlani David and Kuang Ching Hei

1 Introduction

The elderly have become a major issue in many countries today. Health, lifestyles, living conditions and family support are important considerations for the elderly. Many of their peers have passed on and the elderly tend to be lonely. Sociolinguists (e.g. Matsumoto 2005; Coupland et al. 1991) have shown that the elderly tend to reveal their lives to interlocutors. Whilst self-disclosure discourses might be seen as strategies of rapport building (Egan 1994: 138), Peterson (1999) wrote that elderly discourse is a way of sharing acts of 'elderly heroism'. It is the elderly person's way of telling a compassionate listener what they have been through, how much they have suffered and what they are now experiencing. Doing so enables them to achieve a sense of integrity and establish an intimate connection with the listener. Such discourse has been termed 'Painful Self-Disclosure' (henceforth, PSD), and Bonnesen and Hummert (2002) describe PSD as an elderly phenomenon. They mention that PSD can be disempowering to the elderly as such discourses emphasise the negative aspects of ageing. PSD is thus seen as negative discourse, and reflects the perils of ageing (Matsumoto 2005) since such talk reveals the narrator's unhappy personal situation, such as ill health, immobility, sadness and also self-despair.

M.K. David (✉)
Member of the International Advisory Board of Linguapax, Head of Section for Co-Curricular Activities, Elective Courses by Other Faculties and TITAS (SKET), Staff of Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Languages & Linguistics, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: mayadavid@yahoo.com

K.C. Hei
English Language Department, Faculty of Languages & Linguistics, University of Malaya, 50603 Lembah Pantai, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
e-mail: kuangch@um.edu.my

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_8,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

In an experimental study which focused on the language of old and young women in first-time encounters in an African township in post-apartheid South Africa, Matsumoto (2005) showed that PSD encompasses complaints that the youth no longer obey the instructions of older persons. According to Makoni (2004), such complaints by the elderly are expressions of personal environment dissonance, or the sense of unease that follows from being in an environment in which one feels more or less like a stranger.

The aim of this study is to determine whether or not aged participants in our sample use PSD to reveal their retired lifestyles. It also hopes to determine if victimisation of oneself is broken through a change in discourse norms. We believe that many retired seniors have other ways of making themselves happy. Analysis of the narratives of our elderly participants suggests that there are some who are able to maintain a positive outlook in life and in fact empower themselves in their talk with what we term as 'Empowering Self-Disclosure' (henceforth, ESD).

Interviews were conducted with elderly grandparents of different ethnicities living in Malaysia and Singapore. The elderly participants are individuals who might be living on their own or with their children and grandchildren. Many are from the lower- to middle-class income groups. The subjects consisted of 12 Malaysian grandparents and 15 Singaporean grandparents. They were asked how they viewed their lives, their roles as grandparents and how they passed their time. The discourse of those grandparents who claimed that they were satisfied with their lives was studied. Satisfaction markers were discovered in their responses through a content analysis of the discourse. The reasons for empowerment as seen in their disclosure were compiled and analysed.

The interview with each subject generally lasted an hour and was taped and transcribed. The languages used by the interviewer and research assistants were the ethnic or preferred language of the subject and encompass the following languages: Malay, Chinese (Hokkien/Mandarin/Cantonese), Tamil and English. Translations were provided. It was found that Singaporean subjects typically used English as their medium of communication, although there may be the occasional dependence on mother tongue lexical items or expressions.

2 Content Analysis

'Content Analysis' is used to analyse the data. Babbie (2004) defines content analysis as a method of studying recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings and law. Content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within a text or even in sets of texts. The text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels. The data must be coded according to the way words appear or the different forms they appear in. For instance, the word 'expensive' may also appear as 'expensiveness'. The analyst has to

determine if the two words are very different or if they are similar enough to be put in the same category.

McKeone (1995) identifies two types of data management: 'Open analysis' and 'Prescriptive analysis' (also labelled as 'Interactive' and 'Pre-defined', respectively). Open analysis identifies and categorises subject matters within the text, whilst prescriptive analysis employs a theoretical framework to study the data. Since studies of the elderly have always focused on painful self-disclosure (PSD), a search on the literature on empowering self-disclosure (ESD) was found to be lacking, and it is probable that such an area of analysis may have been neglected. To describe ESD, this paper will employ the open analysis approach, as prescriptive analysis requires an existing framework of analysis.

3 Discourses and Society

Linguists have pointed out that discourses are shaped by society as well as by individuals. Fairclough (1995), through his three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis, showed that societies may influence discourses (ideologies and system of beliefs) through texts, and these texts in turn reinforce the discourses of the society so much so that it resembles self-fulfilling prophecies (cf. Hogg and Vaughan 1998). This idea of dialectialism was introduced by Foucault (1980). Using this concept of dialectialism in the case of the elderly, we believe PSDs exist because of society's biased belief that it is highly undesirable to be old. This belief of ageism (cf. Palmore 1990) is common in industrialised societies (Macionis 2001) where the younger generation is more empowered in terms of economic, educational and social strength than the elderly. Butler and Lewis (1982) note that ageism can be viewed as a stereotype that discriminates against the elderly and that ageism is akin to racism and sexism that discriminate against individuals because of the colour of their skin or their gender.

Bytheway (1992: 49) cites many instances where the elderly population becomes victims of ageism, such as when organisations decide upon their policies regarding the holding of office, the perception that the aged population are a burden to tax payers, and that they are prone to accidents. In addition, Arber and Ginn (1991: 41) have shown that power over the elderly is exercised through the promotion of a youthful sexualised image that causes elderly women to loathe the idea of ageing: to be old is to be ugly. Such a dialectical process of ageism may influence the way the elderly think of themselves. Bytheway (1992: 16–17) writes:

> If, as we age, we are made to feel unwanted, useless and out-dated, then it is inevitable that we will look back nostalgically to those times when we were wanted, useful and felt bang up-to-date. We will believe that in those days we respected our seniors in a way that no longer applies. And it is inevitable that if we do feel cut off from other forms of social activity, then when we get together with our age-peers, we will bemoan the present state of affairs.

4 Discourse Themes of the Optimistic Elderly

In this research, the data is sieved by breaking it into components as earlier mentioned. Focusing on the choice of words used, the expressions and tone indicated in the words, data is then categorised as PSD or ESD, respectively. As our intention is to show the ESD facets in their discourses, data will be analysed under the following themes:

- Leaving a legacy behind
- Maintaining peer and communal networks
- Being with family members
- Feeling useful and active in society

4.1 Leaving a Legacy Behind

To leave a legacy behind for the elderly meant to be remembered by their descendants or family members in ways that would be interpreted as pleasing or worthy of being mentioned by others. Generally, from the interviews conducted, it is clear that many of the grandparents want to be remembered favourably by their grandchildren. Some like to be remembered as individuals who had spent their time listening to them – i.e. having conversations and building rapport with them. This is seen in the following excerpts.

> Interviewer: How would you like your grandchildren to remember you?
> Respondent: From our conversation…between grandchild and grandmother.
>
> Malaysian grandmother (MB1)

> I hope the children and grandchildren remember my advice and experience that I have imparted to them, and to remember me as their carer and adviser. Singaporean grandparent (SL1)

> But what is important to me is that, you must enjoy the company, you must enjoy them as they grow up before you grow too old to do that you know. We wanted to be with them before we are too old, too infirmed to do anything Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

> I used to have phone calls in the middle of the day, Jonathan said, "ah gong, Abigail kicked me." Yes, when they were young they call[ed] me. Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

From the excerpts shown, it appears that all grandparents are optimistic about wanting to leave a legacy for their families, and more specifically that they wanted to be remembered as the grandparent who had spent time talking to their grandchildren and whose company had been enjoyed whilst offering knowledge, advice and care. Being part of history and being remembered in good ways by their descendants is part of ESD. Furthermore, three elderly Malaysian participants said that they wanted to be remembered by their grandchildren as someone who had made them happy:

> They will remember, do anything *lah* that is good with them, joking with them. Malaysian grandmother (ME1)

Interviewer: How do you think your grandchild thinks about you as a grandparent?
Respondent: Think about me [as a] good grandparent, loving, caring, so *happylah*

Malaysian grandmother (MD1)

I want my grandchild to think of me. When I get old, I want them to think of me as a good grandma, the food I cook[ed], and put flowers on my graveyard after I passed away. They are filial. They should think of me as a good grandma who has done so much for them. Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

4.2 Maintaining Peer and Communal Networks

An elderly person's satisfaction with life is reported to be linked to interaction with friends rather than to interaction with relatives (Philbald and Adams 1972). The idea of a social network that demonstrates patterns of relationships between people in a community was introduced by Milroy (1980). In the case of ESD, the elderly who are satisfied with their lives have said that they have strong social networks (although some did not have networks but instead had other features to compensate for lack of relationships – see below, under 'Feeling and Being Useful and Active'). Being part of a social network enabled the elderly to feel part of a group, and it is through such networks that they form camaraderie and draw on emotional support. Such relationships make them feel wanted and desired. Contented elderly participants seem to be those who did not rely on family but instead depended on friends and neighbours for companionship:

Interviewer: Who do you see on a normal day?
Respondent: Neighbours, usually when we go to shopping. My neighbour and I… chit-chat. Our relationship with our neighbours [is] OK. If they have a feast, we attend. If we have a feast, they come. The usual.

Malaysian grandmother (MJ1)

Interviewer: Who are the people whom you come into contact with on a typical day?
Respondent: Next door neighbours, my children and grandchildren. When my grandchildren go to school, I talk to my neighbours. I'm closest to neighbours on both sides. They are good. They are good to me.

Malaysian grandmother (MD1)

Interviewer: Who do you meet normally?
Elderly: My friends and neighbours.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

[My relationships with my friends are about] chatting, no quarrelling, all are very good. Malaysian grandmother (MG1)

The Malaysian grandparents seem to connect with those who are within reach, in this case their neighbours, which makes sense because these are people whom they have known over the years and whom they can rely on in times of needs. It appears that for the elderly participants, their neighbours also became their

friends and served a number of functions (McCormick 1982). Friends provide approval, affection, care and emotional support during difficult times, and the network encourages self-disclosure, mutual trust, respect and obligation. In old age, friendships help to compensate for many of the personal and social losses experienced by an individual (Hess 1972) such as spouse loss, children and relatives. Apart from neighbours and friends who provide the support, the elderly also have friends in their religious settings:

Interviewer: Do you have any close friends?
Respondent: So many *lah*. The church people. Last time [I went to] the church so many *lah*.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

Since the elderly are empowered through relationship bonding, phatic talk with friends is a feature of ESD. The contented elderly share with their peers and friends, talking about family issues, jobs and other people (gossiping), as the excerpts below illustrate. Phatic talk (also known as small talk, which is 'social grooming' – also see Goffman 1959) is an important element in rapport building as interlocutors share information with each other to signify solidarity. The excerpts below show that elderly participants talk about family, jobs, shopping and events related to festivals. This seems like a good outlet for the elderly to interact and share information with their neighbours and friends.

Interviewer: Who do you meet on a normal day?
Respondent: Neighbours, and together we chat about our family affairs, jobs and so on.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

Interviewer: What sort of activities do you do with your friends?
Respondent: Tell stories *lah*, tell stories during Raya what to buy, if not stories of Raya, we talk about nothing. Tell stories of Mak Lehar whether she has bought clothes or not, whether she has made cakes, like that *lah*.

Malaysian grandmother (MG1)

Besides phatic talk as seen in the conversation of Malaysian grandparents, the data also indicates that Singaporean senior citizens tend to be preoccupied with post-business work, social activities and volunteerism as the five excerpts below show. The evidence provided by Singaporean participants suggests that the Singaporean elderly are independent and resourceful.

Every Monday, I go to high street and I meet 2 or 3 people. Singaporean grandparent (SA1)

Yes, sometimes we go out, although not regularly Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

Neighbours. one or two people whom I meet on my morning strolls… Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

We [with friends] go out for a walk… we go out. Singaporean grandparent (SC1)

I was very much attached to my Gujarati society, Gujarati people… for many years… up to my sickness in January I just slow down. Still I am interested. Singaporean grandparent (SE1)

The next two excerpts provide some insights into the importance of religious belief to one Singaporean elderly participant, whilst a further three excerpts demonstrate discourses of elderly people who are well connected because of their social status.

> Spiritual life yes… I believe in god and then I'm a Hindu so I really love Krishna, lord Krishna… I'm a regular devotee Singaporean grandparent (SE1)

> My social life is okay… my social life is focused as I say, doing God's work you know going out on missions… You heard of bible study fellowships? I find that it's very fulfilling you see. Yah, with my free time, like I said, I go to church, go to bible study, I have my quiet time at home everyday, to do my own [thing], you know quiet time… to do my Bible Study Fellowship homework, it's all daily work you know. Singaporean grandparent (SH1)

> …We meet a lot of Rotary people… on Wednesday, the Rotary Club meets on Thursday you see the committee meeting, and now I am with the RSVP… retired senior volunteers programme… I do some writing for them [club members]… I was the facilitator… they would ask me to be the MC, you know… and things like that Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

> So many functions… so many activities. For example, we have all kinds of projects helping the sick, the elderly, children, even there are projects in the botanics where we put up sculptures and things like that you know… Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

> Oh…we have a lot [of activities] in our own ways, we are socially involved… we have personal friends whom we interact with…. we have the Rotary Club [with] whom we interact, I have my nature society group to interact with, we go on sabbatical, we have the Hindu centre meetings, we have friends from all places… Singaporean grandparent (SG1)

From excerpts from the Singaporean retirees, it appears that they also formed their own activities. Not only were they members of associations, they also practised meditation, and in fact one was teaching in a foreign land, which is interesting because instead of fearing what is new and strange, the Singaporean participant took it as a challenge.

> No, now I have my own activities because I have free time… I've always been with them [grandchildren], now I find that I've got free time now, so I have… my own activities. Singaporean grandparent (SH1)

> We have close friends because we are members of an association and I am an active member… Singaporean grandparent (SI1)

> Yes, we meet friends on Sundays, we do meditation and concentration… reading of spiritual prayers, arrange talks… Singaporean grandparent (SI1)

> And I love people, to interact… so when there was a short stint that time in Malaysia, they have this programme equivalent to Singapore's SIF… the government sent us over, and we taught English, not to children but to the executive level. Singaporean grandparent (SN1)

Besides their usual post-retirement business occupation, senior citizens in Singapore also took up recreation activities like attending concerts and dancing.

> I have time… I find time to do my own things, my own hobbies, I socialise with my friends, hold meetings with colleagues one in two weeks or once in a month… then you can go for concerts, that's the beauty of Singapore, you can attend concerts, you can attend CC activities… Singaporean grandparent (SN1)

> …yes, do (line dancing), I go for line aerobics… Singaporean grandparent (SN1)

4.3 Being with Family Members

The focus on the family is another feature of ESD. This is not surprising, since the family is a 'social institution found in all societies that unite people into cooperative groups to oversee the bearing and raising of children' that is bonded through 'blood, marriage or adoption' (Macionis 2001: 462). Strong bonds and understanding between grandparents and children encourage the use of ESD.

Interviewer: Describe your relationship with the link parent, your son or daughter.
Respondent: Very nice *lah*. Very good. [I have] stayed with her for a long time. [We are] very close.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with the people in your household?
Respondent: Very good. Would like to be closer. Happy.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

These two excerpts above show that Malaysian retirees are more inclined towards emphasising on their relationships with their children, and their ESD includes a positive description of relationships and feelings towards members of the family. It seems that Asian grandparents are close to their family members, and this could primarily be due to the reason that they rely on their children for financial support as well as in times of difficulties (Shanas and Sussman 1981). This in turn provided them with the security and confidence that they have someone dependable to whom they could turn to in times of crisis and, consequently, this results in ESD. Satisfaction and contentment came from knowing that they have individuals who act as a strong support group in times of crisis:

Interviewer: Who do you approach in times of crisis?
Respondent: Find my child, or in-law, and ask them to advise first and if they can't, we advise ourselves.

Malaysian grandmother (MI1)

Grandparents, especially grandmothers, are more likely to have influential relationships with their grandchildren (Gromly 1997). Contented grandparents view their grandchildren as important individuals. Having grandchildren makes the elderly very satisfied with life, and this is evidenced by the ESD of Malaysian grandparents as shown in the excerpts below.

Interviewer: When did you first become a grandparent? Can you remember your feelings at that time?
Respondent: 25 years already, normal feelings, yes, I felt happy.

Malaysian grandmother (ME1)

Interviewer: Is being a grandmother satisfying?
Respondent: I am satisfied, satisfied to become a grandmother.
I: How important are your grandchildren to you?
R: Important! Grandchildren are important to me.

Malaysian grandmother (MA1)

Interviewer: Is being a grandparent more satisfying than the other roles in your life now?
Respondent: Now so many grandchildren *lah* so happy *lah*.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

Excerpt 37: Malaysian grandparent
Interviewer: Do you steer clear of advising your children about how to raise your grandchildren?
Respondent: No, I advised my eldest son and eldest daughter-in-law to raise my grandchildren decently and must give them [a good] education.

Malaysian grandmother (MD1)

Whilst not many elderly people enjoy the work of being grandparents because of the responsibilities, it appears that Malaysian senior citizens enjoy their roles. Apparently, becoming grandparents has made their lives more satisfying, and this ESD is seen in the previous three excerpts. As grandparents, they also assume roles as teachers to younger members of their family as is shown in the second of the three. Also, being responsible for the welfare of their grandchildren not only occupies them but also results in them occupying the role of adviser:

I give him something to eat, bathe him, if we have the time. I clean the home for him, teach him the "Ismilah" Haji religion, joke with him, if I have money, I give, I also advise to be good in school, do not be naughty. That's all. Malaysian grandmother (ME1)

However, there are others who prefer to maintain harmony in the home by not asserting their authority and by not encroaching upon their children's mode of managing their grandchildren. They take the line of least resistance and let their children discipline their own children:

I don't interfere if my daughter scolds my grandchild. Malaysian grandmother (MD1)

Interviewer: Do you steer clear of advising your children about how to raise your grandchildren?
Elderly: I never talk. The mother knows the daughter and son and how to take care of them.

Malaysian grandmother (MD1)

There are elderly participants who 'compromise' by advising their children on methods of disciplining but do not insist on compliance. Mutual understanding and acceptance of each other's beliefs as well as ideologies help promote harmony in the household, although the interlocutors not like their addressee's (grandchildren) beliefs.

I think we are very open in our communication with our children. And they know where we stand, we know where they stand. We know when they want to settle for a deviation from the thing, and our philosophy has always been "look, in my judgment this is not the very thing to do. If you still want to do it, you're welcome to do it". Malaysian grandfather (MG1)

The contented elderly also communicated with their grandchildren at mealtimes and took the opportunity to build rapport with their grandchildren.

Respondent: Yes, face to face, ask if they have eaten already or not, when eating we ask what curries they would like.

Malaysian grandmother (MI1)

Being part of a family whose members are caring can make the elderly feel loved, and this in turn influences their discourse. In addition, being part of a family can also enable the elderly to witness the birth of a new family member, and this is empowerment for the elderly people.

Interviewer: Have you taken care of your grandchild when he was younger?
Respondent: Ah…he stays at my house *la*. He sits at home, at his own home for a while, he must return to my home [because] he really loves me, I love him, [so] he comes [and] he stays nearby.

Malaysian grandmother (ME1)

I was very happy when I saw my first grandchild Malaysian grandfather (MI1)

Interviewer: When did you first become a grandparent?
Respondent: I think 1979. More than 12 years.
I: Can you recall the feeling at that time?
R: I was very happy on being a grandmother for the first time.
I: How do you feel now as a grandparent? How has that feeling changed?
R: Now that I am older, I am happier because I have more grandchildren

Malaysian grandmother (MB1)

Our analysis shows that Singaporean grandparents are not very unlike Malaysian grandparents who enjoy being with their family members no matter where, how frequently and in whatever way. The slight difference however is that Singaporean grandparents not only desire a close family relationship, but they also reserve days of the week for family, as seen in excerpts below. Activities are planned, as is evidenced in the first two of the following excerpts, with the further five suggesting that Singaporean grandparents also feel cared for.

Saturday and Sunday I keep it for my family. Singaporean grandparent (SA1)

And every three years I go there, every three years I go to USA, stay with them… Singaporean grandparent (SA1)

They come on Saturdays and Sundays. Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

We chat, go to the market, eat, go for a drink. Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

Sometimes we go shopping or strolling. Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

They bring me because they've got cars. Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

They call to say if they can't come because of work. Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

Especially if you are at my age, my daughter-in-law takes great care of me. Singaporean grandparent (SC1)

I talk to her whenever I find time. Singaporean grandparent (SC1)

Yes, I enjoy their company… Singaporean grandparent (SC1)

My elder son who is working as a vice president of a company comes only once a month and stays for 2 to 3 days… Singaporean grandparent (SD1)

Ageism is an abstract concept, and although it is often associated with many negative connotations (see Makoni 2004), it is probably not such a setback after all. As has been mentioned earlier, networking with neighbours and friends provided

the elderly people with moral and emotional support, but it appears that when the support is given by family members, it becomes even more empowering for the elderly respondents as in the case of the Singaporean grandparents:

> My grandson will call sometimes. Singaporean grandparent (SD1)

> They are studying and working, so they will only come once in a month or two… Singaporean grandparent (SD1)

> They come once a fortnight or once a month. Singaporean grandparent (SD1)

> My grandson, when he comes. And he's free, he calls, 'Dada how are you?' Singaporean grandparent (SE1)

Not only is care, attention and being with family members an important element of empowerment for the elderly, it appears that shared activities further promote good feelings. Our study indicates that Singaporean grandparents have many activities with their grandchildren, which creates happiness, as can be detected from their discourses:

> During that one month before, there's… one and a half month before national service, I took him to the golf course, I taught him to play golf… Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

> I took him to the palm resort in Johor… Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

> I played with him at green fairways… Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

> What do I do? Nothing I think… I eat with them, watch television with them, watch soccer. Singaporean grandparent (SL1)

> Some of them [the grandchildren] come over when they are free… sometimes when they dine out, they will bring me along too. Singaporean grandparent (SO1)

> Sometimes all of my daughters and sons will also take me out to dine during the weekends… sometimes all of us go out together. Singaporean grandparent (SO1)

> Whoever wants to take me out I'll just follow them. Singaporean grandparent (SO1)

4.4 Feeling and Being Useful and Active

Gromly (1997: 636) notes that the elderly may choose either to integrate or isolate themselves socially. She argues that the elderly who choose to remain active and involved in activities with others are much more likely to feel satisfied rather than those who choose to remain solitary and passive. She also adds that in America, the elderly are frequently engaged in leisure activities including hobbies, recreation, part-time employment, voluntary service and socialising. The contented elders in our data are active and participate in activities. As the first two of the next three excerpts illustrate, they are active and go for walks. However, staying indoors may also contribute to ESD as the elderly who are involved in cleaning the homes in which they live are empowered because they are productive and feel useful:

> Interviewer: Who are the people whom you come into contact with on a typical day?
> Respondent: My family… my neighbours. I see my neighbours when I go for walks.
>
> Malaysian grandfather (MC1)

Interviewer: What are the activities that you do together with your friends?
Respondent: Talking. Once a week they call me go home, fellowship like that, I go *lah*. They call me and cook something [for me], I cook for them *lah*.

Malaysian grandmother (MD1)

I contribute to the household by doing chores such as cleaning the house, doing the laundry and going to the market to buy food and other things. Malaysian grandmother (MD1)

Apart from joining in social activities, the contented elderly spend their time in enjoyable ways. Gromly (1997: 645) states that leisure is 'non-work or non-obligatory time during which people engage in activities that they enjoy'. One elderly respondent spent her time with her grandchildren by having conversations, watching TV and singing songs with them:

Interviewer: What activities do you do together with your grandchildren now?
Respondent: chatting, watching TV, singing.

Malaysian grandmother (MB1)

Grandparents who are involved with their grandchildren are satisfied individuals (Gromly 1997), and as the following excerpts demonstrate, being involved actively with the grandchildren contributes to ESD.

Interviewer: Do you provide any physical care giving for any grandchild?
Respondent: Yes. Occasionally my children's sons will come home after school. I cook dinner for them, supervise and wash their shoes… I cook, bathe and feed my grandchildren, help them with their homework. I also take them out to the park. Sometimes I discipline them if they do wrong and teach them good habits. I also give them pocket money.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

Interviewer: Do you feel that you are regarded as more important by your children as a result of your contribution as a grandparent?
Respondent: Yes. Like everybody likes and loves me, [when I] look after the house, cooking, everything I do.

Malaysian grandmother (MC1)

The contented elderly would like to be very much responsible for the caregiving of their grandchildren and if possible, on a daily basis (see excerpt below). This helps them to occupy their time and feel useful. One reason why the elderly are involved in the household is that they want their grandchildren to understand their contribution to the household as a manifestation of their love for them. The grandparents hope to receive love in return.

Interviewer: Do you wish to be responsible for the caring of your grandchildren on a daily basis?
Respondent: Yes, I want to look after my grandchildren daily.

Malaysian grandmother (MA1)

Singaporean grandparents, likewise, chose to find ways of making themselves useful by contributing to society by doing social work, helping out with their grandchildren's growth and development and also caring for their grandchildren in their children's absence.

… but I am doing social work… I'm an advisor, I look after the accounts. Singaporean grandparent (SA1)

I help the… try to help them, I can't totally find a solution for them [in my social work] Singaporean grandparent (SA1)

Yes, I looked after my grandchildren for my second daughter. Singaporean grandparent (SB1)

Of the Singaporean grandparents, one in particular (SD1) felt that by not burdening his children, he was being helpful; thus, as a useful adult, he chose not to depend on them.

I'm open and independent, I'll go make friends and gamble Singaporean grandparent (SD1)

I don't engage in any activities with them, when my children want to take me overseas, I refuse. Singaporean grandparent (SD1)

I lead an independent life, I have no worries. Singaporean grandparent (SD1)

Some Singaporean respondents, in wanting to be useful, might also find reasons to ensure that the children will visit (see below). Such an attitude appears to be a common trait of Asian parents.

I will call Nuta [my daughter], "Nuta, please so many days we've not seen the children, why don't you bring them here and have dinner or lunch"… so sometimes she comes. Singaporean grandparent (SE1)

So if there was an occasion for my younger daughter, I'll call them again [so] they all come. Singaporean grandparent (SE1)

Others make themselves useful as a chauffeur or teacher:

Like now I can still drive, I drive them a lot all over the place… Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

I can still play badminton with… Adrian's two girls… they are learning badminton… Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

I taught Jonathan badminton you know? And he became the school representative. Singaporean grandparent (SF1)

… I still give advice, I always give advice [to the children]. Singaporean grandparent (SL1)

As old people, it is our responsibility to give advice to our children and grandchildren. Singaporean grandparent (SL1)

5 Discussion

This paper provides an alternative perspective to illustrate the discourse of the elderly. Our samples show that Asian retirees do not necessarily project PSD, which is viewed as typical of elderly discourse. It appears that the subjects in this study are generally satisfied with life, and this is reflected in their discourse. It is evident that social networks are important and contribute to the ESD (see Fig. 8.1).

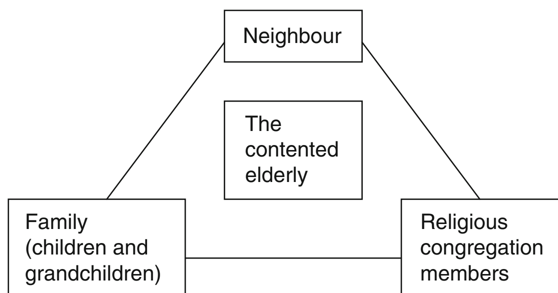

Fig. 8.1 The contented elderly social network

Our analysis shows that some elderly subjects do not seem to have the kind of extended networks as to those who are younger (cf Holmes 2001: 184) because the latter make friends in schools and in the work domain. In contrast, the elderly participants in their twilight years may have outlived many of their friends and may also suffer from physical disadvantages due to age and a lack of energy (both physical or financial), all of which may contribute to restricted mobility. Thus, they may not be as mobile as the younger generation. In that sense, part of their social network may be relatively limited, although reliance and support come from neighbours and close friends. We also saw some of the Singaporean subjects being active, keeping in touch with their religious associations and rotary clubs, going dancing as well as doing social work. Our findings also indicate that Malaysian grandparents tend to be more domesticated, generally preferring to be at home and to talk with neighbours and friends, whereas Singaporean retirees are more active and tend to be more self-reliant, independent, mobile and adventurous. However, both groups of elderly participants enjoyed their family life, their family ties and their relationships with their grandchildren, and looked forwards to spending time with them. Most of all, they did not mind performing tasks for them like driving them around, teaching them badminton, cooking for them and being visited or taken around by them, and they rejoiced in their grandchildren's attention.

The data indicates that the elderly subjects who used ESD occupy themselves with productive as well as leisure activities, such as taking care of the household, communicating with their grandchildren and participating in activities organised by religious institutions.

6 Conclusion

American elderly individuals are involved in social work and activities because avenues for them to participate have been established by governmental agencies (Gromly, 1997: 646). In the context of this paper, it would be safe to say that if the Malaysian and Singaporean elderly subjects participate in house work and social work and enjoy a strong network consisting of family members including grandchildren, neighbours and members of their respective religious networks, then ESD will thrive, and PSD will hopefully decrease in the discourse of the aged.

References

Arber, S., & Ginn, J. (1991). *Gender and later life: A sociological analysis of resources and constraints*. London: Sage.

Babbie, E. (2004). *The practice of social research* (10th ed.). Wadsworth: Thomson Learning Inc.

Bonnesen, J. L., & Hummert, M. L. (2002). Painful self-disclosures of older adults in relation to aging stereotypes and perceived motivations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 21*(3), 275–301.

Butler, R. N., & Levis, M. I. (1982). *Aging and mental health* (3rd ed.). St. Louis: Mosby.

Bytheway, B. (1992). *Ageism*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Coupland, N., Coupland, J., & Giles, H. (1991). *Language, society & the elderly*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Egan, G. (1994). *The skilled helper: A problem-management approach to helping* (5th ed.). Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Essex: Longman.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge*. New York: Pantheon.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.

Gromly, A. V. (1997). *Lifespan human development* (6th ed.). Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Hess, B. (1972). Friendship. In M. Riley, M. Johnson, & A. Foner (Eds.), *Aging and society: Vol. 3. A sociology of age stratification* (pp. 357–393). New York: Russell Sage.

Hogg, M. A., & Vaughan, G. M. (1998). *Social psychology* (2nd ed.). Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall Europe.

Holmes, J. (2001). *Sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). Essex: Longman.

Macionis, J. J. (2001). *Sociology* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Makoni, S. B. (2004). *They talk to us like children: Language and intergenerational discourse in first-time encounters in an African township*. Retrieved June 7, 2006 from http://www2.univ-reunion.fr/~ageof/text/74c21e88–129.html

Matsumoto, Y. (2005). *Dealing with changes: Discourses of elderly Japanese women*. Retrieved June 7, 2006 from http://imp.lss.wisc.edu/jk15conference/Matsumoto.pdf

McCormick, K. (1982). An exploration of the functions of friends and best friends (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University, New Brunswick).

McKeone, D. (1995). *Measuring your media profile*. London: Gower Press.

Milroy, L. (1980). *Language and social networks*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Palmore, E. (1990). *Ageism: Negative and positive*. New York: Springer.

Peterson, K. (1999). *Sharing memorable moments can calm the soul, heal the body*. Retrieved June 6, 2006 from http://archives.his.com/smartmarriages/1999-February/msg00029.html

Philbald, C., & Adams, D. (1972). Widowhood, social participation and life satisfaction. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 3*, 323–330.

Shanas, E., & Sussman, M. (1981). The family in later life: Social structure and social policy. In R. W. Fogel, E. Hatfield, S. B. Kiesler, & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Aging: Stability and change in the family* (pp. 220–229). New York: Academic.

Chapter 9
Conclusion: Change and Continuity of Grandparenting in Contemporary Asia

Leng Leng Thang and Kalyani K. Mehta

Grandparenthood is experienced with the participation of other generations. As illustrated in the conceptual model outlined in Chap. 1, the interactions and relationships are dynamic, and vary amongst the generations as each generation goes through their life course. Discussions in the chapters have illustrated that they are further mediated by a host of diverse factors, including living arrangements, gender, ethnicity, health, education, social-economic status, maternal or paternal relations, work commitments, sociocultural expectations of each generation on the other and the self, and so on. For the grandparents, these factors interplay with emerging social, behavioural and attitudinal changes and expectations to cause stress or give rise to new opportunities. For example, on the one hand, differences in expectations of child-raising practices between the generations reveal a generation gap that may stress the intergenerational relationships; on the other hand, better health, higher levels of education and time freed from caring for grandchildren as a result of nuclear living arrangement provide opportunities for one to embark on hobbies and expand the social network in later life. It was also found that there is more likelihood for grandparents from the more industrialised societies amongst the five nations in the study to illustrate the characteristics of a traditional American grandparent who cherishes individual autonomy and generational independence (Hayslip et al. 2006). These grandparents, regarded as non-traditional in the Asian context, tend to be found amongst grandparents in Japan and Singapore,

L.L. Thang
Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore,
Blk AS 4 # 03-32, 9 Arts Link, Singapore 117570, Singapore
e-mail: lengthang@nus.edu.sg

K.K. Mehta (✉)
Gerontology Programme, School of Human Development and Social Services,
University of SIM, 461 Clementi Road, Clementi 599491, Singapore
e-mail: kalyani@unisim.edu.sg

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0_9,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

suggesting the trend towards what Kemp (2004) referred to as 'institutionalised individualisation'. They differ from the image of a traditional Asian grandparent discussed in Chap. 1 by desiring independence and the freedom to lead their own social lives by strategies such as upholding the principle of non-interference in intergenerational relationship. This group of grandparents contrasted markedly with the Chinese custodial grandparents examined in Chap. 7, who regarded caring for the grandchild as an obligation amongst grandparents which they could not turn away from. Together with the grandparents in Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia, many of whom had provided daily care or were still providing daily care to their grandchildren, they bring attention to the relevance of the role of informal caregiving of the grandchildren in identifying a grandparent in Asia. This need for grandparent's intimate care of their grandchildren – especially with young grandchildren – has implications on intergenerational reciprocity and expectations as emphasised in the evolving nature of exchanges in the conceptual framework in Chap. 1. Ambivalence and dilemmas are faced by the emerging cohort of non-traditional grandparents who have to strike a balance between pursuing their social/leisure activities and responding to the link parents' need for childcare.

In this chapter, we conclude the examination of grandparenthood as experienced by the grandparents in Asia by highlighting the saliency of the grandparents' role as providers for childcare that have woven through each chapter. Next, we discuss the policies and programmes in the Asian countries relating to grandparents that simultaneously promote intergenerational interdependence in their family oriented policies and encourage the engagement of older persons in an active social life. Finally, we conclude with suggestions for future research in the context of Asia in transformation.

1 The Prominent Role of Grandparents as Childcare Provider

The significance of the Asian grandparents' role in caring for their grandchildren has been explored in various dimensions in this volume, including the stresses and conflicts involved, the ambivalence experienced, its meaning and impact on well-being of the grandparents and the other two generations in the family.

1.1 Permutations of the Childcare Provider Role

Many grandparents expressed joy and the willingness to be able to care for their grandchildren. Nonetheless, even for those who express ambivalence or reluctance, it appears that grandparents in Asia will increasingly find themselves drawn into the childcare provider role, a trend that has also been recognised in Europe (Harper et al. 2010). Higuchi (2005) reminds us that even in Japan, where it is less common to perceive grandparents in the childcare provider role, grandparents – especially

grandmothers – are nonetheless an important resource in caring for grandchildren. She calls the involvement of grandmothers 'the grandmother power' and emphasises the need to recognise the invisible power of grandmothers as a pillar of support behind the working mothers in Japan.

Grandparents could be drawn in as custodian grandparents, replacement parents, daily care provider or occasional care provider depending on the circumstances that have led to the 'absence' of link parents. In Singapore, a 2005 survey has shown that 40% of children in the country, from birth to 3 years old, are cared for by their grandparents.[1] This pattern continues even though childcare services and the employment of foreign domestic workers are increasingly made available by the state to cater to the rise of dual income families and the desire amongst most women to participate in the labour force. Overall, grandparents are still preferred by the link parents as informal childcare provider because of their love and affection for the grandchildren (Teo et al. 2006). Whilst such preference may delight some grandparents as it acknowledges their contributions in childcare, others who are active, outgoing and desire their own social life may be caught in a dilemma. For example, the active ageing discourse popular amongst older persons in Singapore has resulted in the perception that having to provide care for grandchildren is a hindrance to enjoying one's active life of leisure. This is demonstrated in the comment of one active female participant of a senior retiree centre about having to take care of grandchildren:

> 'It is unfortunate to have to take care of grandchildren. Since it is inevitable, you do your duty well. Not everyone is as fortunate to come and enjoy life like we do. Everybody would like to have a leisure life, isn't it? It is just unfortunate that some cannot afford that' (Thang 2006: 315).

A Singapore Indian link parent (SA2) observed that with the busy working lives of link parents in Singapore, more grandchildren are now taken care of by their grandparents. He perceived that regardless of ethnicity, the grandparents in Singapore have a very special bond with their grandchildren: 'Actually, I think it's a far closer relationship than parents have. Maybe parents are too busy working and so on. I think it's a special relationship. And I believe that it can be used to good effect'. He suggested that 'good effect' as follows:

> **…** rather than have maids taking care of the children, I would rather have grandparents taking care of the children. Again because it's important. The right values that they impart. There's real concern and care [from the grandparents]. The maid is a paid person… Singapore, Indian link parent (SA2)

It is a reality that quite often grandparents are left with no choice but to assume the care of their grandchildren, especially when the link parents migrate to work in the city from rural villages, or when divorce or widowhood of link parents has

[1] The survey shows that 30% are cared for by domestic maids. This survey is conducted by Singapore Children's Society for children from 10 to 12 years old (*N* = 533) (Lianhe Zaobao 21 Oct 2006).

forced the single parent to work full-time. However, where possible, grandparents try to negotiate with the link parents to ease their burden of full-time informal caregiving. This could take the form of requesting for a foreign domestic worker to be employed in the home so as to reduce the physical burden of grandparents (in societies where the employment of domestic helpers is common), negotiating to provide care part-time, or setting certain limits of care. When link parents are asked about what kind of grandparents they would like to be in the future, it is common for those who have benefited from their parents' help in caregiving to respond that they would like to care for their grandchildren in the future, whilst some added a caveat of doing it part-time rather than full-time.

1.2 Living Arrangements, Patrilineal and Matrilineal Relationships

An important factor widely discussed in the chapters on influencing grandparent's role as childcare provider is living arrangements. Grandparents who live together with their children and grandchildren tend to become the childcare provider at home. Living together with the grandchildren also enables more opportunities for grandparents to directly or indirectly impart social, cultural and religious values to their grandchildren, functions that grandparents generally perform, along with physical care.

Amongst the societies studied in the volume, patrilineal arrangements are where older people are expected to live together with their eldest son's family and grandparents usually care for their son's children. Such a trend is obvious in Cong and Silverstein's study of custodial grandparents in rural China (Chap. 7), where the authors described a case (Zou) of the grandson who was initially cared for by the maternal grandparents as less typical and happening only because of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict. When the link parents decided to work outside the village later on, the grandson had to be transferred to the care of the paternal grandparents because 'the traditional norm did not regard it appropriate for maternal grandparents to provide full-time care'. Although this example implies strict adherence to lineage systems in living arrangement and care, in practice, changes are apparent, especially in urban families across Asian societies that generally preferred sons and patrilineal living arrangements. In Malay culture, the egalitarian family system gives freedom of choice to the grandparents to live with married daughters or sons.

The avoidance of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflicts undoubtedly provides an important motivation for generations to live apart. A Singapore Chinese grandfather claimed that he was always a bit more careful when talking to a daughter or son-in-law because 'although an in-law is already married into the family, no matter who you do, no matter what you say, it is not family in the real sense of the word, there is still that distinction… that divides your own family from the other side' (SF1). Koyano's study of Japanese family relations found that although co-residence with a married son is still the preferred living arrangement in urban and rural Japan, it is

likely to 'bring harmful interactions with daughter-in-law, characterised by frequent exchanges of instrument support without emotional closeness' (Koyano 2000: 220). Thus, he suggests that it is better to avoid co-residence with a married son when one has no immediate need of instrumental support. The awareness of the daughter-in-law as an 'outsider' amongst the grandparents contributes towards closer emotional ties with their own daughters, and a preference for grandparents to live with their daughters and care for their children instead. The intergenerational literature has long noted the close relationship between maternal grandmothers and grandchildren, and close relationship between mothers and adult daughters (Hagestead 1985; Smith 1995); amongst the grandchildren in the study, many noted that they were closest with their maternal grandmothers who had taken care of them when young. Nonetheless, one should not idealise co-living with daughters' families because mother-in-law and son-in-law conflicts could happen too, as discussed in Chap. 6 about a Thai grandparent's unhappiness with her co-residing son-in-law. The matrilineal system prevails especially in north and north-east Thailand, where the Thai grandparents in the study came from (Richter and Podhistia 1991–92).

1.3 The 'Life Course' of the Childcare Provider Role and the Limits of Reciprocity

In this volume, the emphasis of grandparents' roles as childcare providers shifts the image of an older person as someone in need of care and support, to one who is capable of giving care and support to the younger generation. However, the role of the grandparent as a childcare provider is not a static one. It changes with the parallel movements of the life courses of the grandparents and the younger generation in the family as captured in the conceptual module in Chap. 1. As Chap. 6 shows, older grandparents could only speak of caring for the grandchildren as a past experience because the grandchildren have grown up, whilst younger grandparents reiterated the joy and challenges experienced from their ongoing care of the young. Similarly, late teenage and younger adult grandchildren who saw little of their grandparents because of their busy daily schedule had to recall the past emotional closeness they experienced with their grandparents when they were younger, whilst the grandchildren in early teenage years still regarded their grandparent as someone to look for when they need meals, laundry to be done and someone to play with. It also brings to attention the limits of grandparents as childcare providers in later years. As the interactions of late-teenage and early adult grandchildren with grandparents in the study reveal, a reversal occurred at a later stage, when the grandchildren became responsible in assisting their grandparents, such as by accompanying them to the market and clinics. A number of Thai grandparents have expressed that at times, the grandchildren replaced the link parents in providing financial, physical and emotional support to their grandparents.

From the exchange and reciprocity perspectives, the development in interaction between the grandparents and grandchildren from a life course perspective provides

yet further evidence of reciprocal transfers. Such alternate generational transfers are expected to become more common as the extended life expectancies of grandparents lead to more years of 'linked lives'. However, the principle of reciprocity which expects a return of earlier investment in the form of future support, and which implies that one deserves to receive help because of previous work and sacrifices, may fail to recognise the altruistic motivation simultaneously present in intergenerational support. It is evident that the reciprocal motivation is present: some grandparents were explicit about reciprocal exchange from the middle generation, such as receiving money in return for childcare and housework help, according to a Thai grandmother, and matter-of-fact explanation from a Hong Kong grandmother that her son and daughter-in-law took care of her now because she had cared for their children. However, even in Cong and Silverstein's study (Chap. 7), where there seems to be strong motivation in intergenerational reciprocity, it still cannot simply be explained by reciprocity alone. The authors observe strong culture-based responsibility and obligations felt amongst the rural Chinese grandparents to help their adult children, and consequently, the adult children's increased obligations to their older parents, and compared this with the normative expectation in filial piety. Similar to filial piety where children are expected to respect and provide for their elder parents unconditionally, they suggest that strong obligations towards each other weaken the 'condition' that brought about reciprocity even if they actually exist. The common 'imbalance' reciprocity as shown through one generation doing more for others should more appropriately be regarded as altruistic motivations (Silverstein and Attias-Donfut 2010). Grandchildren likewise regarded caring for their grandparents as natural simply because they require help. Compared with the stronger normative expectation for filial obligations between the adult children and older parents in Asian societies, the less pronounced obligation between the alternate generations in fact resulted in greater altruistic motivations for mutual provisions of support.

2 Policies/Programmes and Implications

2.1 Policies and Programmes to Promote Familial Intergenerational Support

Seen as vulnerable populations, older people and children are usually not considered together in policy and programmes. Children, as minors, are legally considered parents' responsibility, and older persons are largely considered under policies for older persons. The formulation of national policies for ageing is a relatively recent attempt amongst the Asian countries, with the exception of Japan. The Welfare Law for the Elderly enacted in Japan in 1963 is in fact the world's first elderly related law (MHLW 1999), formed during an era when the aged population in Asia was of little concern to policy makers, except in providing for a very small percentage of destitute individuals, since older members were to be the responsibility of the family. For the other Asian societies studied in this volume, national policies on

ageing only began to surface after the 1980s, prompted by demographic and family changes challenging the availability of family support, as well as a response to calls from international forums such as the 1982 United Nations World Conference of Aged Populations held in Vienna, encouraging the formulation of elderly focused policies and programmes. Thailand established the first National Elderly Council in 1982 after the 1982 UN meeting, and in 1999, the United Nations International Year of Older Persons; it established a permanent National Committee of Senior Citizens and the Declaration of Thai Senior Citizens to ascertain the Thai government's commitment to enhancing the well-being of Thai seniors (Jitapunkul and Wivatvanit 2009). In Malaysia, the national policy for the elderly was formulated in 1995. The Singapore government began addresses ageing issues with the establishment of a Committee on the Problems of the Aged in 1982; the first comprehensive approach on ageing was reflected in the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Ageing Population set up in 1998. In Hong Kong, the Elderly Commission was created in 1997 to formulate policies and programmes in meeting the challenges of an ageing population (Chan and Phillips 2002).

As family forms the backbone of support for older persons in Asian countries, it is inevitable for governments in these countries to be pervasively concerned that rapid socio-economic development will erode family support for older persons. Therefore, policies for ageing in Asia are usually formulated not only with the objective of meeting the basic needs of older persons in financial, health care, housing and social aspects but also to strengthen the support of vulnerable members in the family. There is little explicit mention of older people's roles as grandparents in policies, although they are implied in family policies. Some nations, such as Thailand, are direct in their policies of expecting older persons to live with the family, to be respected and to be cared by the family.[2] The government has named 13th April as the annual National Day of Older Persons since 1982, and as part of the celebration, awards are given to 'Outstanding Families' which have three generations living harmoniously together (Jitapunkul and Wivatvanit 2009). Other governments, such as that of Singapore, have explicit policy direction of expecting the family to provide the first line of support for older persons, but in recognising the growing preference for nuclear families, have instead formulated policy measures to encourage living close-by if not together, so as to increase opportunities for intergenerational support.[3]

[2]The second point in the Declaration of Thai Senior Citizens (1999) declares that 'The elderly ought to live with their families with love, respect, care, understanding, support and mutual acceptance of the family member roles so as to cherish the bond of contended co-residence' (Jitapunkul and Wivatvanit 2009: 64).

[3]The Multi-Tier Family Housing Scheme encourages co-residence by giving priority allocation for public housing to extended-family application; the Joint Selection Scheme encourages close-proximity living of the generations by allowing parents and married children to have priority in selecting separate public flats in the same estate. The benefits of this scheme and the Multi-Tier Family Housing Scheme also include the option to pay a lower amount of a commitment deposit and eligibility for a more attractive mortgage loan package. The CPF (Central Provident Fund) Housing Grant is available to married first-time applicants where they will be eligible for a $30,000–$40,000 housing grant if they buy a resale flat from the open market near to their parents' house (http://www.hdb.gov.sg).

Parent relief given to tax payers is another incentive to encourage familial support for the elderly. The Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore's objective is to promote 'filial piety and provide recognition to individuals supporting their parents in Singapore'.[4] In Hong Kong, grandparents have been included for tax allowance together with dependent parents. From 2011, the Hong Kong government is expected to spend an extra $570 million a year, with a 20% increase for cost-of-living adjustments in allowances for maintaining a dependent parent/grandparents, additional allowances for taxpayers residing with their parents/grandparents, and a lower deduction ceiling for elderly residential care expenses.[5]

Amongst the countries studied in this volume, Singapore is unique in its efforts in promoting grandparenting to highlight the mutual support and benefits of intergenerational interaction. From 2002 to 2006, a task force to promote grandparenting and intergenerational bonding was set up as an extended effort to promote three-generational family ties. Funding support for intergenerational bonding had fuelled various intergenerational initiatives to bond the generations in family or community settings. To recognise the contributions of grandparents in the family, an annual Grandparents' Day was created (which falls on the fourth Sunday of November each year), and there are annual awards for outstanding grandparents.

Probably the measure most directly related to the childcare role of grandparents is a scheme called Grandparent Caregiver Relief, introduced in 2004 in Singapore to provide tax relief of S$3,000 to working mothers (Singapore citizens with children aged 12 and below) whose child is being cared for by unemployed grandparents. However, as part of a new procreation package to boost Singapore's declining birth rate, it aims to benefit the working mothers rather than the grandparent, and has raised concerns that such tax relief may create an expectation for grandparents to care for grandchildren and elevate tension amongst unwilling grandparents. The limitation of the grandparent caregiver relief, which does not benefit working grandparents taking care of grandchildren in skipped generations, draws further attention to the need for grandparents, as caregivers, to be financially supported when they have to care for grandchildren who are disabled or become orphaned due to a mishap by their parents.

2.2 Policies and Programmes to Promote Active Ageing

With the expectation for grandparents to help with the provision of childcare in Asia, 'unwilling grandparents' most often evoke images of 'non-traditional' or 'modern day' grandparents who value their own freedom and choose not to live with their

[4] 'Your complete guide to completing Form B1' (http://iras.gov.sg/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_3475BA695E4C78163C65CBB36CA9AD112BA30B00/filename/Guide%20to%20Completing%20Form%20B1.pdf)

[5] Hong Kong Inland Revenue Department, 'Tax Information: 2011–2012 Budget – Tax Relief Measures'. http://www.ird.gov.hk/eng/tax/budget.htm

children, nor to be constrained by their grandchildren. The promotion of active ageing in a recent Singapore policy to encourage self-reliance, an active social life and staying longer in employment are said to have all contributed to the emergence of such 'modern day' grandparents in Singapore (Teo et al. 2006). As discussed in Chap. 6, it is also common to come across socially active Japanese grandparents, as Japan, which has, since 1972, endorsed an *ikigai* (purpose of life) policy encouraging social participation, learning and recreation activities amongst older persons, promoting the mental well-being of older persons.

Beside Japan and Singapore, various programmes to encourage older people to lead an active life also feature in the more recent comprehensive policy measures for older persons in the other Asian societies examined in this volume. For example, in 2005, Thailand announced the new national agenda of 'Healthy Thailand' for all ages; for older persons, the agenda aims to "achieve a peaceful and happy life with their family members, access due care, practice health-strengthening activities (i.e. exercise), participate in their community's activities, and join in elderly representative clubs in their communities" (Jitapunkul and Wivatvanit 2009: 70). As diverse programmes and activities abound for older people in the community, grandparents who wish to be involved with social and leisure activities, as encouraged by active ageing policy, may find grandchild-minding a barrier. The competing intergenerational interdependence in family oriented policies and the encouragement of active social lives challenge the Asian grandparents, who have to learn how to strike a balance between their caregiving responsibilities and social/leisure activities.

3 The Alternative: The Changing 'Traditional' Grandparent

> About 20 seniors who are in the rank of grandparents meet once a month at a community centre, usually during the weekends. They are not meeting to sing karaoke, exercising or to while away their time, instead they meet to interact about their experiences in caring for grandchildren, hoping to support their children in the care of the younger generation, and to foster closer grandparent-grandchild ties (Mo 2009: 8).

The above quote is an excerpt from the first paragraph of a newspaper report featuring a senior activity group called 'Grandparents Contact Point' in Singapore. It reflects the stereotypical image one has of a meeting of seniors, before highlighting the 'Grandparent Contact Point' as extraordinary for having a purpose beyond the usual merrymaking of the elderly in Singapore.

The idea of a grandparenting interest group was first proposed to a local community centre by a grandmother who was caring for three grandchildren. As a full-time caregiver whilst the parents were at work, she prepared their three meals, supervised their homework and organised their extracurricular activities. She was often questioned by neighbours and friends on her effectiveness in childcare, which motivated her to propose setting up a grandparent support group. Her proposal was soon accepted, as the support group is perceived to be fulfilling not only for the exchange of experiences on childcare but also in fostering social networking and

promoting active and enriching later life amongst its members. The community centre further invited a retired school principal to serve as an advisor, who also designed and planned educational activities suitable for the group. Over the course of time, he developed a series of thematic activities, including forums on safety at home, helping grandchildren with their school work, imparting the correct value system to the young, teaching grandchildren to respect others, developing good hygiene habits and protecting the environment. The advisor was impressed by the passion amongst the grandparents to learn, commenting: 'These grandparents did not stop at singing and travelling, they are really committed to understanding their grandchildren better, they wish to help them grow. They are truly inspirational grandparents'.

This provides a showcase example of grandparents who have integrated childcare with personal learning and development in ways that benefit the grandchildren. They suggest that whilst the contradictions between the childcare role and the active social/leisure role are complex, they are not necessarily antagonistic. Such a blurring of boundaries between the childcare role and the role of a 'non-traditional grandparent' also implies potential for more creative ways for the grandparents to change whilst keeping their 'traditional' roles. For example, for grandparents who have gathered valuable childcare experiences through the caring of their own grandchildren could be supported to develop a social enterprise of hourly rated child-minding service as a form of activity and work, whilst at the same time meeting the needs of young parents who have little support. For grandparents who rather not care for their grandchildren, but still desire to meet them and value close emotional ties, childcare services could provide space and the flexibility for grandparents to spend some time at the centre and foster closeness in a non-home setting. As individual agency, grandparents should explore new possibilities, including negotiating with the existing institutions to fulfill their needs for flexibility and their desire for co-existence between being a 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' grandparent.

4 The Future of Grandparenthood in Asia

Despite beginning the concluding chapter with a focus on the role of grandparents as a provider of childcare, we would still like to conclude with the assertion that the experience of grandparenthood in Asia is diverse, and is expected to be more so in the future.

As the demographic changes presented in Chap. 2 show, low fertility means that more singlehood and childlessness will exist in the Asian population, where a significant proportion of older people may not get to experience grandparenthood if they don't have children, or if their children remain single or do not have children. The increasing rate of divorces also means more diversified roles for grandparents, which may mean that grandparents' help is required as their divorced children turn into single parents, or to have step-grandchildren under their care in reconstituted families. Sometimes they may miss out the experiences of grandparenting altogether

if the grandchildren are brought away by the other parent. With migration becoming common in a globalised interconnected economy, some older persons may become grandparents without meeting many of their grandchildren if they have migrated with their parents, although compared with the past, the improvements in communication technology have made 'meeting' each other easier through video calls and Internet chats.

With children's migration, some grandparents find themselves increasingly 'parachuted' to help care for their grandchildren overseas. In Singapore, where there are many new Chinese migrants, mainland Chinese grandparents are a common sight, many of whom have to leave the familiarity of their home and community to care for the grandchildren. However, grandparents may change with this new environment too. A study on older Koreans has found that, compared with those who live in Korea, the older Koreans who have migrated to the USA preferred to live apart from their children and considered their new homeland a 'paradise' for them (Soh 1997).

Migration will also result in more custodial grandparents who will come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, not necessarily from rural areas such as the rural Chinese and rural Thai grandparents. In urban Beijing, for example in the housing complexes near prestigious universities occupied primarily by professors and retired professors, retired professors who are also custodial grandparents are a common sight, as most of their highly successful children have migrated overseas for their careers, but have left preschool age grandchildren with them due to the higher cost and lower availability of formal childcare overseas. Most of these grandchildren re-join their parents when they reach school age.

Long life expectancy also contributes to diversity in grandparenthood experience. With the tendency for those in their 1950s and 1960s to be increasingly perceived as middle-aged, and with the encouragement of individuals to work for longer years, even beyond the official retirement age, there may be fewer grandparents available to help care for their grandchildren if they remain longer in the workplace.

In the past, widowed grandmothers have tended to be reliable childcare providers because they were able to devote their time fully to the care of grandchildren. However, as it is becoming more common for both older spouses to survive for longer years, grandmothers find themselves straddled with caring for grandchildren and their own spouses. Caring for grandchildren may also affect spousal relations, as a grandfather may realise that his wife is too occupied with the grandchildren to be able to enjoy a retired life together. Longer life expectancy also means an increase in the possibility for grandparents' own parents and parents-in-law to survive beyond their 90s, which will increase younger grandparents' burden in having to care for both their own older parents and their grandchildren.

Longer life expectancy also implies longer years in the overlapping of the life course between the grandparents and grandchildren, where there is more likelihood for adult grandchildren to play an instrumental role in caring for their grandparents. Will future Asian families expect the extension of family care down the generations?

Amidst this diversity in grandparenthood experience, it seems that future grandparents in Asia will remain neither entirely traditional nor non-traditional; it

is likely that both traditional and new ideas will coexist as grandparents seek ways to find satisfaction in grandparenting. Will more grandparent education be required in the future? How can intergenerational initiatives help to foster closer intergenerational ties?

Finally, diversity in the future of Asian grandparenthood also implies the need for more research to capture the experiences of grandparents from different cohort groups, genders, social classes and ethnicities, as these variations affect personal meaning and experiences. Whilst quantitative research will continue to be important to capture the trends in grandparenting, qualitative methods that give voices to the grandparents remain relevant. They should include participatory research with grandparents by involving them in the stages of research design formulation and data collection so that their needs can be better met. In addition, intervention research to collect evidence-based data on programmes that enable grandparents to see which interventions yield positive outcomes, is useful to evaluate the effectiveness of intergenerational programmes. In addressing a diverse Asia, there is a need to promote indigenous models of service delivery to support grandparents based on the cultural context, sociopolitical and economic circumstances of each country.

References

Chan, A. C. M., & Phillips, D. R. (2002). Polices on ageing and long term care in Hong Kong. In D. R. Phillips & A. C. M. Chan (Eds.), *Ageing and long-term care: National policies in the Asia-pacific*. Singapore/Ottawa: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies/International Development Research Centre.

Hagestead, G. O. (1985). Continuity & connectedness. In V. Bengtson & J. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Harper, S., Smith, K. P., & Hagestad, G. O. (2010). Introduction: Editorial and introduction. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 8*, 207–218.

Hayslip, B., Jr., Baird, A. H., Toleda, R., Toleda, C., & Emick, M. (2006). Cross- cultural differences in traditional and custodial grandparenting: A qualitative approach. In B. Hayslip Jr. & J. H. Patrick (Eds.), *Custodial grandparenting: Individual, cultural and ethnic diversity*. New York: Springer.

Higuchi, K. (2005, July 25). Soboryoku (The grandmother power), *Asahi Shimbun Weekly* AERA, p. 70.

Jitapunkul, S., & Wivatvanit, S. (2009). National policies and programs for the ageing population in Thailand. *Ageing International, 33*, 62–74.

Kemp, C. L. (2004). "Grand" expectations: The experiences of grandparents and adult grandchildren. *Canadian Journal of Sociology, 29*(4), 499–525.

Koyano, W. (2000). Filial piety, co-residence, and intergenerational solidarity in Japan. In W. T. Liu & H. Kendig (Eds.), *Who should care for the elderly?* Singapore: Singapore University Press.

MHLW (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare) (1999) *Annual reports on health and welfare 1998–1999*. Online. Accessed October 1, 2009 http://www.mhlw,go,jp/english/wp/wp-hw/vo11/plc3s3.html

Mo, M. Y. (2009, March 9). The grandparent contact point: Enabling you to grow with your grandchildren. *Lianhe Zaobao*, p. 8.

Richter, K., & Podhistia, C. (1991–92). Thai family demography: A review and research prospects. *Journal of Population and Social Studies, 3*(1–2), 1–19.

Silverstein, M., & Attias-Donfut, C. (2010). Intergenerational relationships of international migrants in developed nations: The United States and France. In D. Dannefer & C. Phillipson (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of social gerontology*. London: Sage publishing.

Smith, P. K. (1995). Grandparenthood. In M. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (1st ed., Vol. 3). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Soh, C. S. (1997). The status of the elderly in Korean society. In S. Formanek & S. Linhart (Eds.), *Aging: Asian concepts and experiences past and present*. Vienna: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Teo, P., Mehta, K., Thang, L. L., & Chan, A. (2006). *Ageing in Singapore: Service needs and the state*. London: Routledge.

Thang Leng L. (2006). *Experiencing Leisure in later life: A study of retirees and activity in Singapore*. Journal of Cross Cultural Gerontology 20 (4): 307–318.

Index

A
Abuse, 3, 72
Active ageing, 147, 152–153
Activities, 7, 13, 48, 49, 51, 54, 74, 78, 84, 92, 101, 104–106, 134, 135, 138–142, 146, 153, 154
Advisor, 48, 52, 141, 154
Age, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 26–29, 32, 41, 43, 48, 49, 52, 62, 64, 77, 80, 81, 86, 88, 96, 103, 109, 123, 126, 131, 134, 138, 142, 155
Ageing societies, 28, 36, 80
Ageism, 131, 138
AIDS, 3, 5
Altruism, 84, 85
Ambivalence, 5, 8–9, 85–88, 96, 146
Arguments, 9, 52, 78, 79, 82
Asian, 2, 4–9, 12–16, 21, 22, 24, 26–39, 44, 47, 49–53, 56, 57, 62–64, 70, 73, 78, 80, 83, 85–91, 95, 96, 103, 106, 110, 136, 141, 145, 146, 148, 150, 151, 153–156
Aspirations, 13, 86
Autonomy, 3, 4, 47, 49, 57, 145

B
Baby boomer, 8
Babysitting, 78
Behaviours, 2, 4, 10, 27, 48, 56, 61, 67–69, 145
Bilateral family system, 39
Birth rate, 6, 31, 152
Bonding, 96, 102, 125, 134, 152
Boundaries, 68, 73, 90, 103, 104, 154
Boy-biasness, 63, 64

C
Care, 3–5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 26, 49, 50, 52–56, 58, 62, 64–69, 72, 74, 78–85, 87, 88, 92, 96, 99, 104, 110–125, 132, 134, 137–140, 142, 146–155
Caregivers, 3–5, 56, 66, 74, 81, 87, 109, 152, 153
Caregiving, 3, 5, 12, 67–68, 79, 80, 119, 125, 140, 146, 148, 153
Carers, 4, 48, 62, 132
Childcare, 4, 5, 8, 9, 33, 37–39, 65–68, 70, 73, 86, 87, 109–111, 113, 120–125, 146–150, 152–155
Childminding, 12, 78
Child-rearing, 26, 29, 49, 50, 54, 55, 57, 78
Children, 2–7, 9, 14, 26, 27, 31, 32, 34, 37–44, 48–50, 53–58, 62, 65–68, 70–72, 74, 78–91, 97, 99, 102–104, 109–126, 130, 132–137, 140, 141, 147–155
Chinese, 32, 33, 35, 37, 38, 53, 56, 57, 63–65, 69, 70, 72– 74, 80, 87, 88, 95, 99, 101–105, 110, 112, 126, 130, 146, 148, 150, 155
Chores, 50, 82, 84, 88, 103, 140
Closeness, 10, 14, 96–102, 106, 109–111, 117–121, 124, 149, 154
Cohabitation, 39
Cohort, 6, 7, 9–11, 54, 56, 57, 86, 91, 106, 146, 156
Commitment, 4, 9, 62, 96, 110, 151
Companions, 52, 53, 99, 133
Compensation, 110, 115
Conceptual, 3, 6–15, 80, 96, 146, 149
Conflict, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 66, 67, 77–92, 97, 119, 146, 148, 149
Confucius, 4

K.K. Mehta and L.L. Thang (eds.), *Experiencing Grandparenthood: An Asian Perspective*, Social Indicators Research Series 47, DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2303-0,
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

Contentment, 64, 136
Contributions, 2–4, 6, 8, 49, 51, 52, 65, 79, 81, 87, 115, 123, 126, 140, 147, 152
Co-residence, 7, 49, 52, 80, 110, 123–125, 148, 149, 151
Co-residing, 64, 79–81, 83–87, 89–91, 111, 112, 123, 125, 149
Cost of living, 13, 77, 152
Crisis, 35, 36, 38, 49, 103, 136
Cultural, 4–6, 13, 16, 38, 47–49, 53, 55–58, 61–65, 69, 74, 78, 86–88, 91, 96, 105, 110, 148, 156
Culture, 3, 4, 12, 15, 38, 47–49, 52, 53, 55–57, 61, 63, 64, 68–70, 73, 74, 80, 83–85, 88, 89, 91, 95, 103, 105, 106, 120, 125, 148, 150
Custodial care, 3
Custodian grandparents, 109, 111, 112, 121, 124, 126, 147
Customs, 53, 70

D
Daily care, 48, 49, 52, 53, 66, 68, 146, 147
Dating, 53, 78
Daughters, 6, 65–68, 72, 78, 80, 83–85, 89, 91, 92, 97–99, 111, 113–118, 120–123, 136–139, 141, 148–150
Daughters-in-law, 6, 67, 91, 111, 113, 116, 123
Day care, 96
Death, 31, 34, 41, 92
Demography, 31
Depopulation, 22, 24
Depression, 7, 86
Detachment, 62, 73
Developed countries, 3, 40
Disagreements, 71, 78
Discipline, 15, 44, 70–73, 78, 137, 140
Distance, 7, 10, 14, 79, 89, 101
Diversity, 2, 62, 80, 155, 156
Divorce, 26, 41, 65, 66, 72, 91, 97, 147, 154
Domestic help, 66, 82
Double-income, 26
Drug abuse, 3
Dual-working households, 5

E
Economic, 5, 6, 21–26, 28–39, 44, 50, 56, 70, 96, 97, 110, 131, 151, 156
Economic development, 26, 30, 31, 36, 38, 50, 151
Education, 32, 33, 37, 48, 57, 70, 105, 109, 118, 137, 156
Egalitarian, 72, 80, 99, 148
Elderly-only households, 6
Elders, 7, 9, 12, 56, 57, 64, 65, 80, 86, 91, 95, 96, 109–126, 138, 139, 150
Emotional support, 53, 80, 110, 112, 133, 134, 139, 149
Employment, 33, 37, 121, 139, 147, 148, 153
Empowerment, 130, 138, 139
Environmental, 55
Ethics, 69
Ethnicity, 3, 52, 54, 56, 57, 147
Exchange, 6, 8–10, 12, 14, 36, 40, 47, 51, 56, 66, 80, 81, 110, 111, 117, 120, 124, 146, 149, 150, 153
Expectations, 2, 3, 5, 13, 14, 47, 49–52, 55–57, 68–70, 74, 85–88, 115, 116, 146, 150, 152
Expenses, 67, 86, 109, 110, 115–117, 125, 152
Experience, 5, 6, 9, 10, 21, 24, 37, 47, 48, 52–57, 64, 65, 68, 70, 74, 77, 81–83, 87, 91, 92, 96, 98, 100, 106, 112, 113, 132, 134, 146, 149, 153–156
Extended family, 4, 6, 7, 39, 80, 111, 124–126, 151

F
Familism, 110, 120
Family continuity, 2, 63–64, 73
Family structure, 6, 26, 39, 47
Family system, 2, 39, 62, 63, 80, 89, 148
Family transformations, 2, 6, 26
Farm, 82, 115, 117, 120, 122, 123
Favouritism, 64, 88
Feminisation, 97
Fertility, 24–34, 36–39, 50, 63, 154
Filial piety, 4, 7–8, 50, 56, 58, 64, 110, 117, 125, 150, 152
Filial responsibility, 7–8, 47, 50, 57
Financial assistance, 115
Financial issues, 78
Financial support, 9, 74, 85, 109, 112–117, 121, 124, 125, 136
Flying-geese patter, 44
Foreign domestic workers, 86, 147, 148
Foreign residents, 36
Formal, 48, 57, 101, 155
Friendship, 9, 106, 134
Functions, 5, 6, 13, 36, 47–58, 61, 92, 104, 134, 135, 148

G
Gender, 3, 6, 14, 32, 52, 54, 56, 57, 63, 87, 88, 111, 114, 131, 156
Generational independence, 3, 145
Generations, 2–4, 6–16, 22, 39–42, 44, 48–54, 56, 57, 62, 64, 65, 67–70, 72, 74, 78, 80, 81, 83, 84, 86, 88, 89, 91, 95, 98–102, 106, 109–118, 121–126, 131, 142, 146, 148–153, 155
Gerontology, 10, 88
Globalisation, 9, 47
Government, 7, 31–33, 37–39, 86, 135, 142, 151, 152
Grandparenthood, 1–16, 48, 52–57, 62–64, 67, 73, 74, 77–92, 146, 154–156
Grandparenting styles, 62
Gratitude, 110, 118
Great-grandparents, 78
Guidance, 78
Gujarati, 134

H
Happy, 5, 53, 62–64, 66, 85, 97, 98, 102, 130, 132, 136–138, 153
Health, 4–6, 10, 41–43, 55, 57, 66, 74, 80, 82, 86, 92, 96, 97, 100, 102, 105, 110, 121, 123, 129, 151, 153
Helper, 48, 50, 52, 57, 82, 148
Hierarch, 49, 63–65
Household, 3, 5–8, 13–15, 26, 31, 39–44, 50, 67, 73, 78, 80, 82, 84, 88, 97, 98, 100, 102–104, 109, 111–114, 123–126, 136, 137, 140, 142
Housewives, 39, 41
Hukou, 109

I
ikigai, 92, 105, 153
Illegitimate children, 27, 41
Illness, 7, 80, 82
Incarceration, 3
Income, 7, 26, 30, 35, 70, 82, 87, 105, 116, 130, 147
India, 22, 30, 56, 63
Individualisation, 9, 22, 146
Industrial Revolution, 9
Interactions, 4, 6, 7, 10, 56, 66, 68, 78, 80, 96, 99–100, 102, 109–111, 113, 126, 133, 148, 149, 152
Interdependence, 7, 80, 96, 146, 153
Intergenerational conflict, 6, 78, 79
Intergenerational exchange, 6, 14, 47, 51, 56, 81, 110, 120
Intergenerational family, 106
Intergenerational interdependence, 96, 146, 153
Intergenerational reciprocity, 146, 150
Intergenerational relations, 4, 6–8, 10, 13, 44, 47, 49, 51, 62, 95, 98, 106, 111, 112, 117, 121, 124, 126, 146
Intergenerational transfers, 80, 110
Internal migration, 109
Intimacy, 7, 100
Involvement, 2, 54, 65, 96, 104, 147

J
Japanese, 24, 34, 42, 53, 54, 64, 65, 67, 69, 71, 73, 82, 89–92, 98, 102–105, 148, 153

L
Labour force, 13, 29, 37, 38, 147
Land, 31, 33, 35, 80, 115, 135
Legacy, 62, 132–133
Leisure, 91, 103, 139, 140, 142, 146, 147, 153, 154
Life course, 9–12, 15, 56, 62, 77, 88, 125, 149–150, 155
Life course perspective, 10–11, 77, 88, 149
Life cycle, 11, 56
Life expectancy, 2, 27, 28, 34, 36, 39, 44, 48, 49, 155
Lifestyle, 8, 26, 43, 78, 86, 89, 129, 130
Lineage, 89, 148
Linguistic, 15, 16
Link parents, 11, 13, 15, 62, 65–68, 70–73, 80, 83–87, 89, 91, 100, 136, 146–149
Living arrangements, 4, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, 39–44, 49, 50, 52, 54, 56, 57, 78–81, 112–115, 122–124, 148–149
Loneliness, 7
Love, 54, 55, 66, 67, 71, 72, 74, 79, 85, 88, 96–99, 102, 103, 135, 138, 140, 147, 151

M
Malay, 15, 35, 36, 53, 64, 65, 69, 99, 101, 130, 148
Mandarin, 70, 130
Marital breakdown, 3
Marriage, 26, 27, 31, 32, 37, 136

Matrilocal, 80
Median age, 28, 29, 49
Mediation, 106
Methodology, 13–15, 51–52
Middle age, 7, 81, 155
Middle generation, 49, 50, 54, 84, 111, 113, 115–118, 121, 122, 150
Migration, 3, 5, 33, 109, 110, 112, 122, 125, 155
Mobility, 70, 129, 142
Modernisation, 6, 35, 48–50, 56, 57, 80, 110, 126
Money, 9, 31, 83, 97, 110, 111, 113, 115–120, 123, 124, 137, 140, 150
Moral support, 139
Mortality, 24, 28, 29, 32, 38
Multigenerational households, 5, 7

N
Negotiation, 74, 122
Networking, 138, 153
Nisetai jutaku, 15
Non-interference, 67–68, 71, 73, 74, 89, 103, 146
Norms, 3, 4, 7, 49, 56, 63, 66, 67, 74, 85–88, 119, 120, 130, 148
Nuclear families, 3, 26, 36, 39, 40, 44, 65, 104, 151
Nuclear households, 6

O
Obligation, 51, 56, 74, 109–113, 118, 119, 121–125, 134, 146, 150
Occasional care provider, 147
One child policy, 31, 32, 38
One house, two households, 80

P
Parent, 2–7, 11–15, 26, 32, 38–41, 43, 44, 48–57, 61, 62, 65–74, 79, 80, 82–89, 91, 95, 96, 98–101, 103, 104, 110–126, 136, 141, 146–155
Paternalism, 1, 39, 119, 145, 148
Patriarchal, 80, 89
Patrilocal, 80
Perceptions, 3, 6, 13, 14, 50–52, 56, 65, 91, 99, 106, 131, 147
Perspectives, 4–16, 48–51, 53, 54, 56, 62, 77, 81, 83, 84, 88, 111, 112, 116, 121, 124, 141, 149
Philippines, 8, 24
Population, 5, 10, 13, 22–39, 47, 49, 50, 56, 78, 131, 150, 151, 154
Population bonus, 29–31
Poverty, 5, 35, 97
Pre-retirees, 77
Proximity, 7, 10, 62, 89, 151
Punishment, 71, 72

R
Realities, 5, 13, 26, 82, 87, 92, 103, 147
Reciprocal, 66, 80, 149, 150
Reciprocity, 8, 12–13, 110, 146, 149–150
Relationships, 2, 4, 6–13, 34, 44, 49, 51, 53, 62, 71, 72, 78–82, 85, 87–89, 91, 95, 97–101, 103–106, 111, 112, 117–121, 124–126, 133, 134, 136, 138, 142, 146–149
Religion, 69, 70, 137
Re-marriage, 26
Replacement parents, 72, 147
Responsibility, 3, 7–8, 13, 31, 47, 48, 50, 56, 57, 63, 66, 68, 69, 71, 73, 82, 85, 90, 96, 118, 119, 121, 122, 125, 141, 150
Retirement, 4, 86, 135, 155
Ritual, 4, 53, 64, 80, 88, 104, 135
Roles, 2–6, 9, 10, 12–14, 21, 31, 47–58, 61, 62, 64–74, 79, 81–83, 89, 91, 92, 95, 102–104, 111, 112, 121, 130, 137, 146–152, 154, 155
Rules, 4, 32, 35, 48, 57, 68
Rural, 5, 32, 39, 72, 96, 109–125, 147, 148, 150, 155
  labour, 109
  migrants, 109

S
Satisfaction, 7, 13, 56, 68, 74, 81, 88, 92, 100, 120, 130, 133, 136, 156
Scolding, 97
Selective investment, 62, 73
Self-disclosure, 129–142
Senior retire, 77, 81, 92, 147
Single-member households, 39, 40, 42
Skipped-generation, 3, 5, 13, 15, 109–114, 123–126, 152
Social engineering, 7
Social exchange, 8, 9
Socialising, 50, 58, 69, 103, 139
Social lives, 7, 96, 104–106, 146, 153
Social participation, 153

Social rituals, 4
Social stages, 11
Society, 4, 5, 8, 9, 28, 33, 34, 36, 48, 51, 53, 69, 70, 80, 104, 131, 132, 134, 135, 140, 147
Sociocultural, 6, 10, 13, 15, 49, 106
Sociodemographic, 47
Sociological, 2, 8, 10, 11
Solidarity, 5, 8–9, 11, 78, 97, 98, 106, 134
Spouse, 15, 41–43, 57, 82, 92, 111, 116, 120, 134, 155
Stability, 2, 5, 61
Status, 4, 50, 62, 64, 70, 90, 91, 96, 135
Stem families, 26, 44, 85
Stresses, 6, 77–78, 81, 87, 91, 92, 96, 146
Structure, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 26, 35, 39, 44, 47, 51, 85–87, 112
Structured ambivalence, 86, 87
Styles, 48, 62, 78, 91
Substitute parents, 99
Supervision, 78, 82
Support, 3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 33, 36, 37, 39, 48, 53, 56, 57, 61, 62, 64, 70, 72–74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 95, 101, 102, 109–126, 129, 133, 134, 136, 139, 142, 147, 149–154, 156
Surrogate parents, 48, 96, 125
Symbol, 2, 52, 53, 70
Symbolism, 61

T
Teaching, 4, 53, 56, 69–71, 82–84, 105, 135, 142, 154
Teenage grandchildren, 53, 100–102
Tension, 9, 66, 70, 71, 74, 78, 80, 81, 84, 87, 97, 152
Thai, 38, 53, 63–67, 69–74, 79, 82–85, 89, 90, 96–98, 149–151, 155
Theoretical, 6–15, 47, 131
Three-generation households, 14, 40, 42, 44
Time for money, 9, 110, 117, 124
Traditional family, 4, 44, 80
Traditional grandparents, 3–6, 50, 146, 153–154
Traditions, 4, 9, 44, 47–49, 53, 55–58, 70, 83–85, 119
Transformations, 2, 6, 13, 26, 47, 146
Transmitter, 2, 48, 52, 53, 55–57, 68
Trends, 2, 4, 6, 7, 22, 24, 26, 34, 37, 40, 42, 43, 63, 146, 148, 156
Triads, 10, 80, 81, 86

U
Unemployment, 68, 152
Unmarried, 26, 27, 37, 40–42, 50
Upstairs-downstairs, 80, 89
Urban, 5, 9, 26, 32, 38, 39, 109, 110, 148, 155
Urbanisation, 6, 26, 32, 36, 80
Usefulness, 66, 102

V
Values, 2, 4, 6, 26, 50, 56–58, 68–73, 80, 82–84, 110, 147, 148, 152, 154
Value transmission, 68–73
Vulnerable family members, 151

W
Wealth, 5
Weekends, 4, 5, 102, 103, 139, 153
Welfare, 36, 137, 150
Wellbeing, 97
Western, 4, 5, 24, 26, 28, 30, 34, 47, 48, 103
Widows, 82, 91
Wisdom, 48, 89, 91–92
Workforce, 5, 78
Workplace, 9, 155

Y
Young retirees, 77, 78
yum cha, 103, 104