

# Chapter 9

## Conclusion: Change and Continuity of Grandparenting in Contemporary Asia

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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,

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>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 Podhista 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 inter-generational 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>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).

<sup>3</sup>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'.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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

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<sup>4</sup>'Your complete guide to completing Form B1' ([http://iras.gov.sg/pv\\_obj\\_cache/pv\\_obj\\_id\\_3475/BA695E4C78163C65CBB36CA9AD112BA30B00/filename/Guide%20to%20Completing%20Form%20B1.pdf](http://iras.gov.sg/pv_obj_cache/pv_obj_id_3475/BA695E4C78163C65CBB36CA9AD112BA30B00/filename/Guide%20to%20Completing%20Form%20B1.pdf))

<sup>5</sup>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 inter-generational 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.

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