

Albert I. Hermalin, Carol Roan, and Aurora Perez

The Emerging Role of Grandparents in Asia

No. 98-52

Elderly in Asia Research Report Series
October 1998

This series of research reports deals with the status of the elderly in several Asian countries. It presents research that is being conducted under a broad project sponsored by the U.S. National Institute on Aging, the Comparative Study of the Elderly in Four Asian Countries (Grant No. AGO7637). The goal is to measure the social, economic and health characteristics of the older population (age 60 and above), to predict what changes may occur over the next decades, and to suggest implications for public policy. The original countries involved in the study are the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. Reports on the elderly in other countries in Asia and on methods developed through the project using data from various countries may also be included in this report series.

Organizations collaborating in this research include: Population Studies and Training Center, Brown University; Population Institute, University of the Philippines; Department of Social Work and Psychology, National University of Singapore; Taiwan Provincial Institute of Family Planning; and Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University. For additional information about the comparative project, please contact the Principal Investigator: Albert I. Hermalin, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan, 1225 South University Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104-2590.



Setting the Agenda for Research in Aging in Developing Countries

Abstract:

This paper utilizes several recent datasets to examine the role of grandparents in the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand. Due to past high fertility, those over 50 in these countries have a large number of grandchildren, and due to the tradition of extended family coresidence, more than half have grandchildren living with them. Grandparents provide both direct assistance to their children and grandchildren, through time devoted to childcare, and indirect assistance, by taking responsibility for major household functions. The extent of this assistance and the factors associated with its provision are analyzed. Across all three countries, grandparents appear to be heavily engaged in assisting with grandchildren.

Datasets used:

- Philippine Elderly Survey, 1996
- Survey of the Middle Aged and Elderly in Taiwan, 1996
- Survey of the Welfare of the Elderly in Thailand (SWET), 1995

The Authors

Albert I. Hermalin, Research Scientist, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan

Carol Roan, Research Associate, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan

Aurora Perez, Director, Population Institute, University of the Philippines

Acknowledgments

A previous version of this paper was presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Chicago, IL, April 2-4, 1998.

Research for this paper was supported by the U.S. National Institute on Aging Grant No. AG07637, Comparative Study of the Elderly in Four Asian Countries.

I. Introduction

"Grandparenting" appears to be in vogue, both in popular culture and on the research front. On the cultural front, one sees more attention to grandparents in the mass media, in advertising, and in merchandising. [See Schlosberg (1990) and Schwartz and Waldrop (1992).] On the research front, there appears to be an upsurge of articles on the role of grandparents in both the broader family journals and those focusing more on the elderly as well as several relatively recent books (Bengston and Robertson, 1985; Cherlin and Furstenberg, 1986; the special issue of *Generations*, Spring, 1996).¹ It is important to put this apparent upsurge into perspective. Certainly, grandparents in the narrow kinship relational sense of signifying the parent(s) of one's parents have always been present. In a broader sense, we know that the demarcation of certain sections of the life span or portions of the life cycle as distinct roles, with particular privileges and responsibilities is always culturally defined. New roles may emerge as the rights and duties associated with a given stage are redefined. "Grandparenting" may not be a new role but images of the role and its associated costs and benefits appear to be undergoing considerable transformation. Gratton and Haber, 1996, trace three phases in the status of grandparents in American history, from figures of authority in the 18th century, to being viewed as burdens in the late 19th and early 20th century, to the more recent, mainly post World War II, ideal of the independent elderly, providing companionship and affection to their children and grandchildren. They point up several of the economic, demographic and socio-cultural factors associated with these changing statuses. The income and health of the elderly, their education, the age distribution of grandparents vis a vis that of the grandchildren, all influence their image and the role definition of "grandparent" at any given time. These characteristics in turn are manifestations of larger societal forces--the level and nature of economic development and industrialization, land tenure arrangements, medical technology, demographic forces (levels of fertility and mortality, ages at marriage, migration patterns), and "cultural" definitions of the elderly.

In the early part of the century, Gratton and Haber note that aging was considered a disease in medical circles and the elderly were generally viewed as "burdensome and non-productive." Our current images focus on the elderly as able, active and independent and this emphasis both contributes to the changing role of the grandparent and is reinforced by the view of grandparents as helpful companions. Not too long ago there was more emphasis on the "empty nest" stage of the life cycle--which conjures up the loneliness of older age-- and on the "women in the middle," with its implications of needy elderly being cared for by a daughter under stress. Obviously these other life situations have not disappeared but insofar as we give more emphasis to the capable and useful grandparent role, we reinforce the current tendency to put a "happy face" on the trends in population aging. (Also see Luborsky, 1995 on this)

The upturn in awareness of the role of grandparent in the United States and elsewhere also has its roots in less positive dynamics of family life and social trends. As Giarruso et al. (1996) note, trends in divorce and remarriage, teen-age childbearing, levels of drug and alcohol

¹ We have not done any analysis to document this trend; this is a subjective assessment. It is worth noting that searching the literature on the topic of grandparents can be daunting since relevant analyses may appear under "childcare" articles or under articles focusing on the relations and needs of younger parents.

addiction, and AIDS have contributed to the numbers of grandparents as surrogate parents, in addition to contributing to other role changes.

The focus of this paper is to explore the role of grandparent in the East and Southeast Asian context, by contrasting a number of dimensions in the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand. The goal is to provide basic descriptive demographic and social parameters, to raise some measurement issues, and to examine the factors associated with the level of activity undertaken by grandparents.

II. East and South East Asian Context

The importance of cultural, socioeconomic, and demographic factors in studying grandparents is evident when contrasting this role in East and South East Asia with the U.S. and other Western nations. The elderly in this region for the most part have rural, agricultural backgrounds, experienced high fertility, live in extended households, and have relatively little education, with women particularly disadvantaged with regard to education or labor force experience outside the home or family farm or business.

Insofar as living in extended families was the norm and widely practiced, grandparents in East and Southeast Asia have probably always had close involvement with some of their grandchildren, and high fertility assured that they typically had a large number of grandchildren. What is less known is the nature of the household in which these contacts took place--what role did the grandparents play, what services did they receive and what services did they provide. How was the household organized and what was the division of labor like.

To a great extent we have to rely on literary, anthropological and related sources for a sense of the normative expectations and how households actually functioned. With regard to Chinese culture, we know a fair amount about patriarchal authority, the relationship of daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, and the types of assistance and deference due the elderly (Fricke et al., 1994; Lang, 1946). At the same time, we are aware that mortality patterns and economic circumstances limited the size and generational scope of families in practice and it is likely that older women in particular provided a variety of services directly and indirectly to their children and grandchildren through childcare and other services (cooking, sewing, etc.) and provision of food and other goods (Taeuber, 1970). In Thailand, there is considerable stress in the anthropological literature on the children's obligation to parents as a cornerstone of family values, with virtually 100 percent of respondents in one survey agreeing that "it is the children's responsibility to take care of their parents when the parents get old," and 86 percent agreeing that "a woman's duty to her parents and parents-in-law comes before her duty to her husband" (Wongsith, 1994). Although the elderly have high status, they still contribute to the functioning of the family by performing a variety of household duties (Chayovan et al., 1988). Another study by Limanonda (1994) reported that among those who received assistance in buying or renting a house, parents were the most frequent source of help, and that more than 40 percent of respondents had received assistance from their own or spouse's parents during the first months after the birth of their first child. Richter (1996) in a study of Bangkok women aged 15-44, found that between 8 and 10 percent of their children lived separately from them for some time

before they reached age 5, and the predominant caregiver for children living separately were the maternal grandparents.

In the Philippines, there is also strong stress on a child's obligation toward his/her parents. "Children are expected to be everlastingly grateful to their parents not only for all the latter have done for them in the process of raising them but more fundamentally for giving them life itself (Hollnsteiner, 1973:75-76 cited in Lopez, 1991). A child's debt of gratitude, *utang na loob*, especially toward a mother is "immeasurably and eternal" (ibid). Although older Philippine parents can look forward to considerable support from children and children expect to provide it, it is not uncommon to find situations where support is being provided by the parents. Lopez (1991) cites areas where parents take in one or two young grandchildren when their own children move out, and also cites instances of older parents moving in response to the needs of their adult children. This reciprocal support is also evident in focus group discussions reviewed by Domingo (1992:7), and in her analysis of the ASEAN-Philippine survey of 1984 which shows almost half of the female elderly giving financial support to children (ibid, Table 4).

This brief overview of the cultural settings makes clear that although the value system in each country emphasizes the obligations of children to parents, there are also value components as well as the realities of socioeconomic family life that lead us to expect substantial flows of support of different kinds from older parents to children and grand-children. Indeed, the very strong emphasis on the family in these countries implies flows of support and assistance in many different directions, even though these flows remain structured in terms of age, gender, life cycle stage, and related dimensions.

The broader task then becomes the need to develop a framework in which these reciprocal flows, and meaningful sub-sets of them, can be captured. The next section addresses some of the conceptual and measurement issues that arise when one wishes to focus on the grandparenting role.

III. Conceptual and Measurement Issues

Attaining the status of grandparent and the age at which that occurs depend on the characteristics and behaviors of two generations--the age at marriage, fertility, and survival of the grandparental generation and similar characteristics of their children.² As Szinovacz (1998) notes, "trends in grandparenthood thus reflect complex generational and intrafamilial behavior patterns, which are difficult to capture with census data." This complexity means *inter alia* that there can be wide variation over time and across groups in the prevalence of grandparenthood. Szinovacz's demographic profile drawn from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) reveals the multiple perspectives from which measurement can take place. One can ask of a broad age group of respondents the proportion and number of grandchildren, or one can restrict one's attention to age groups most likely to be at risk. One can contrast the characteristics of those in a given age range who are grandparents with those who are not; or one can describe the characteristics of all grandparents. Measurement of the status can be based on

² Survival probabilities among grandchildren will also play a part.

self-reports or can be derived from assessing whether a respondent's children have (living) children.

It is also possible to study the grandparent-grandchild relationship from the perspective of the grandchildren, and assess what percentage of a given age span has one or more grandparents, the characteristics of their grandparents, the frequency of contact and types of exchanges. These multiple perspectives must be kept in mind when undertaking comparative analysis, since a change in base can greatly affect the magnitudes in question. As example, based on all NSFH respondents, Szinovacz reports 37 percent as grandparents, a figure well below that reported for the Asian countries in Table 1. But for respondents 55 and over, the percentage is 80 percent, very much in line with the Asian experience. At the same time, within the United States, the difference in the age at onset of grandparent status among the race and ethnic groupings is most clearly revealed by examining the proportions at the younger ages (Szinovacs, 1998, Table 1).

There are many dimensions of the grandparent role that can be studied, ranging from the more demographic aspects to the social-psychological that characterize the nature of the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Discussions of the latter can be found in Cherlin and Furstenberg, 1986; Bengtson and Robertson, 1985; Giarrusso et al., 1996.

From the demographic perspective, primary measures include the number and characteristics of the elderly (or of a specified age group) who are grandparents, age of onset, duration in the status, numbers of grandchildren and ages of grandparents vis a vis their grandchildren. As noted at the outset, many of these measures have rather direct implications for the prominence of the grandparent role in society and for the types of relationships that develop between grandparents and grandchildren. Data for the United States on many of these dimensions are presented in Szinovacz, 1998, who also provides data on the relationship of grandparenthood to divorce and the prevalence of step-grandparenthood, given the high frequency of divorce in the United States in recent decades. For the Asian countries under review here we present data on the proportion of those above 50 who are grandparents and numbers of grandchildren by several characteristics.

Another dimension of interest is the degree of contact between grandparents and grandchildren and their location relative to one another, including of course the extent of coresidence. Coresidence patterns can be an indicator of support flowing from grandparenthood to grandchildren but this of course depends on the ages and health of the grandparents and the ages of the grandchildren. Many elderly, especially older widows, join extended families because of failing health and functional impairments. In the data below we distinguish between coresidence with minor grandchildren and adult grandchildren as one broad indicator of the likely direction of support, recognizing that in some societies, especially in rural settings, young children can provide tangible assistance in maintaining a household and provide services to older residents. Another important distinction is whether the grandparents are acting as surrogate parents. In households in which the parents of the grandchild are absent, there is often the presumption that this represents an extra burden on the grandparents, though the caveats just noted apply here as well. Information on who is the owner of the home and/or the household head (nominally and economically) can provide additional insight on the direction of support.

In conceptualizing exchanges between grandparents and grandchildren several issues pertaining to transfers come to the fore. In studying intergenerational transfers we are aware of the need to distinguish in terms of what gets transferred (time vs. space vs. money) and such related dimensions as the frequency, magnitude, and purpose of the exchange (Soldo and Hill, 1993; Hermalin, 1997). In pursuing grandparent-grandchild relations, particular attention needs to be given to direct vs. indirect transfers. It is possible to account directly for the amount of time and duties grandparents extend to grandchildren for child care (and for time given by grandchildren to grandparents for companionship, assistance with transportation, etc.). But transfers by the elderly to their children in terms of money (or equivalent), or for general maintenance of the household via cooking, cleaning, etc. redound to the benefit of grandchildren indirectly. (In the same way that money and services brought into an extended household by older grandchildren will benefit the grandparents indirectly.) Where there is a complex household, assessing whether an older person is relatively burdened by the presence of additional persons (including grandchildren) and hence providing a net contribution of time, or whether this elder is relatively relieved by the extra hands available, requires fairly detailed accounting of hours spent at various tasks under different household arrangements. As example, an older woman may have primary responsibility for maintaining a household when living only with her husband, but only a secondary or tertiary role in a large extended household and yet put in more hours under the latter arrangement.³

In the data below we skirt most of these subtleties. We present data on the degree of surrogate parenting and child care representing rather direct forms of assistance by grandparents, and present a variety of measures of level of involvement in household maintenance to tap the kinds of indirect support that grandparents may be giving.

IV. Description of Surveys and Measures Used in This Analysis

The Filipino Data are from the 1996 Philippine Elderly Survey (PES). PES respondents were selected using a multi-stage stratified cluster sampling design which resulted in a total of 2,285 interviews with respondents, aged 50 and above living in households. The response rate for the PES was 95 percent.

The Taiwanese data were collected in 1996 and come from both a longitudinal study of the elderly beginning in 1989 and a cross-sectional sample of the elderly in 1996. The project, Survey of Health and Living Status of the Middle Aged and Elderly in Taiwan, was initiated in 1989 with a survey of 4049 respondents aged 60 and above. These respondents were contacted a total of four additional times including major follow-up interviews in 1993 and 1996. We extended the survey by launching a second panel composed of individuals aged 50-66 in 1996. The 1996 sample size for the original panel (aged 67 and above in 1996) is 2669 respondents; the second panel (aged 50-66 in 1996) has 2462 respondents. When the two panels are combined and properly weighted, it creates a representative sample of the Taiwan population aged 50 and over (including those living in institutions). The Thai data are from the 1995 Survey of the Welfare of the Elderly in Thailand (SWET). SWET is a stratified multi-stage sample of the population aged 50 years and above living in private households. Selected households were

³ Consumption patterns may also vary and these need to be factored in as well.

screened to determine whether there was a resident who was eligible to be a respondent. In households with more than one eligible respondent, the interview was conducted with a randomly selected eligible respondent. The overall individual response rate for the survey was 97 percent. Although most eligible respondents were able to be interviewed directly, in 3 percent of the cases a proxy interview was completed.

Each of these surveys are part of a cross-national comparative study entitled "Rapid Demographic Change and the Welfare of the Elderly," based at the University of Michigan and conducted in collaboration with population institutions in the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. One of the primary goals of the study was to facilitate comparative research by asking identical questions in each of the countries surveyed. While not always identical, the questions relevant to this study allow us to compare the role of grandparents in a meaningful way.

V. Demographic and Residence Patterns

As expected the majority of our respondents (80 percent) have at least one grandchild but the mean number of grandchildren varies among the countries. In the Philippines, where fertility rates continue to be high compared to the other two countries, the mean number of grandchildren for the 50 and above population is 11.5 compared to 6.8 for Taiwan and 7.2 for Thailand.⁴ (See Table 1.) As the respondent's age increases so does the number of grandchildren. Children of the "younger-elderly" have yet to complete their fertility and the children of the "older-elderly" were having their families during a time of higher fertility. Female elderly have more grandchildren than male elderly. In part, this is due to the females being older than the males and tending to marry younger. Thus when you control for length of marriage, the difference in number of grandchildren is much smaller. Elderly individuals who live in rural areas have more grandchildren than do those who live in urban areas. The difference is greater for Filipino elderly than for the Taiwanese or Thai elderly. Finally, as level of education increases the number of grandchildren decreases. Once again the most striking difference is in the Philippines where respondents with no formal education had on average 18 grandchildren compared to 6 grandchildren for those with at least secondary level education.

Table 2 presents the percentage of respondents who have coresident grandchildren and the percentage that have regular contact with at least one nonresident grandchild. In keeping with the prior discussion of minor vs. older grandchildren we also show this division. In Taiwan the proportion of elderly respondents having only coresident adult grandchildren (4.5 percent) is slightly higher than in the Philippines (2.1 percent) and Thailand (3.3 percent). Among those with at least one grandchild, more than one half had at least one coresident grandchild. Estimates of surrogate parenting (not shown in the table) indicate that about 2 percent of the

⁴ In Thailand, the word "Laan" is used to describe both grandchildren and nieces or nephews. Although SWET interviewers were instructed to ask respondents who used the word Laan to specify which relative they were referring to, the data do categorize 3.7% of household members (across households) as Laans. Although we have no way to distinguish grandchildren from nieces or nephews further analyses of household composition and project investigators experience suggests that the majority of respondents are referring to grandchildren rather than nieces or nephews. Thus in this paper we assume all Laans are grandchildren.

Taiwanese respondents have minor grandchildren in the household but no child or child-in-law present, while in the Philippines and Thailand this percentage is around 6.

Information on geographic location of grandchildren is available only for the Thai data and information on frequency of contact is available for the Taiwan and Thai data. Among Thai who had only nonresident grandchildren, 32 percent (not shown) had no grandchildren living in the same village or adjacent area. Nonetheless among those respondents whose only grandchildren were living outside of their village or adjacent area, 55 percent went to visit at least one grandchild within the last year and 76 percent received a visit from at least one grandchild.⁵ Among all Thai elderly with at least one non-resident grandchild, 92 percent either visited or received a visit from at least one grandchild in the past year. Among Taiwanese elderly respondents who had at least one nonresident grandchild, 70 percent reported seeing or talking to at least one of their grandchildren weekly.

VI. Direct and Indirect Services Performed by Grandparents

In order to present comparable numbers on the percentage of grandparents who provide childcare for their grandchildren we restricted the sample to respondents with at least one coresident grandchild aged 10 or younger since this was the definition employed in Thailand. Table 3A shows the definition of childcare employed in each country and indicates that the percentage of grandparents in each country who provide childcare for at least one grandchild varies from 48 percent in Taiwan to 67 percent in the Philippines.

Each country had additional questions about childcare that tapped somewhat different dimensions and we review these briefly in Tables 3B, 3C, and 3D. In Taiwan (Table 3B), grandparents are more likely to report babysitting coresident grandchildren (21 percent of all grandparents; 48 percent of those who have a coresident grandchild less than 10) than nonresident grandchildren (11 percent and 12 percent respectively). In Thailand (Table 3C), whereas 59 percent of the elderly with grandchildren under 10 in the household reported themselves as primarily responsible for their care, another 38 percent of elderly respondents attributed major responsibility to their children and/or children-in-law, and 3 percent mentioned other arrangements. Thus the grandparent emerges as more frequently involved with childcare in this type of household than the parents. A similar picture of heavy involvement emerges in the Philippines, which provides the most detailed information on grandparents' roles in childcare (Table 3D). Among Filipino grandparents who take care of their grandchildren 30 percent are taking care of three or more children. Additionally these grandparents are putting in a lot of hours in childcare. The mean number of hours these grandparents spend taking care of their grandchildren is 44 hours per week. (The median number of hours is 35 per week.) However, these grandparents are not likely to be working alone. Eighty percent say they get help taking care of the children, primarily from their spouse and from their daughter. Mostly, grandparents provide childcare for their grandchildren because the grandchild's parents are working (60 percent). Additional reasons given for grandparent care are listed in Table 3D.

⁵ Data on more frequent visits are not available.

Grandparents are also active participants in household chores. Table 4 shows the proportion of respondents who say either they or their spouse take primary responsibility for household chores by country and grandparent/resident status. The Philippines and Thailand questionnaires asked about each specific chore, whereas the Taiwan questionnaire grouped several chores into two questions. Not surprisingly respondents who have coresident children and grandchildren, have more hands to share the chores with, and hence are less likely to take primary responsibility for household chores than are those elderly without coresident grandchildren. As example, for those without grandchildren or coresident grandchildren, the respondent or spouse has primary responsibility for the chores shown in 57 to 93 percent of households. These proportions are lower but still substantial in households with minor coresident grandchildren, ranging from 43 to 61 percent. (As noted previously, this may not mean a reduction in hours worked however.) The percent of grandparents with only adult coresident grandchildren taking responsibility for chores is somewhat less yet still indicates high involvement on the part of grandparents (ranging from 18 to 42 percent). Thus grandparents are working hard to keep up with household tasks. The difference in the percentage of grandparents responsible for chores between those with and without adult coresident grandchildren likely reflects both the ability of elderly respondents to take on chores and the availability of alternate household members to do the work.

In Thailand and the Philippines where we asked questions on specific types of chores we found that grandparents were less likely to take on responsibility for laundry and cleaning than for cooking and shopping. Laundry and cleaning take more physical strength, especially in households without modern appliances, than cooking or shopping and also they may be viewed as less interesting chores. In general, Filipino grandparents are more likely to take primary responsibility for chores than Thai grandparents. For example, 61 percent of Filipinos with coresident grandchildren and 42 percent of those with only adult coresident grandchildren take on primary responsibility for cooking compared to only 43 percent and 23 percent, respectively of Thai elderly.

Although children are most likely to take primary responsibility for chores when grandparents do not, separate analysis (not shown) indicates that other kin (e.g. grandchildren and sisters) are more likely to take primary responsibility in Thailand than in other countries.

It may be hard for household members to decide who takes “primary responsibility” for a chore. Respondents who did not take primary responsibility for a chore were asked if they performed the specific chore at least weekly.⁶ Table 5 shows the percentage of respondents who do not take responsibility for a chore but who say they perform a task at least weekly by country, grandparent status, and sex of respondent. Among grandmothers with a minor coresident grandchild who do not take primary responsibility for a chore, 57 to 74 percent perform chores at least weekly. Among grandfathers the numbers are slightly lower, 26 to 53 percent. In Table 4 we saw a consistent pattern that Thai were less likely than Filipinos to take on chores. In Table 5 the pattern is less consistent. Among grandmothers with minor coresident grandchildren Thai women are more likely to do weekly laundry and shopping than are Filipino women, and there appears to be no difference in the percentage doing weekly cooking and cleaning. Among grandfathers Thai are more likely to do weekly shopping, laundry, and

⁶ Data on weekly chores from Taiwan are not available.

cleaning than are Filipino. At the same time, if one combines the proportion with primary responsibility with those performing the tasks weekly, it appears that Filipinos, especially women, contribute substantially to the households in which they have grandchildren.

To better understand the relationship between household chores and characteristics of households with coresident grandchildren we present a logit regression of whether the respondent or spouse takes primary responsibility for chores for each of the three countries. Table 6 presents the means and standard deviations of the variables used in the regression analysis and Tables 7 and 8 present the regression results. In Table 7 the dependent variable for Taiwan equals one if R says either R or spouse takes primary responsibility for light household chores (cooking, laundry, sweeping the floor, cleaning, dish washing and grocery shopping). The dependent variables for the Philippines and Thailand equal one if R says either they or their spouse take primary responsibility for at least one chore. We run chore specific regressions with the Thailand and Philippines data and show these results in Table 8. Because women are more likely to be involved in the household chores we are studying than are men, we use the characteristics of the wife if the elderly respondent is currently married. When the respondent is not married, we use the respondent's characteristics regardless of sex.⁷

Understandably, age is negatively related to the probability that the respondent or spouse takes primary responsibility for household chores. This likely reflects a decline in grandparents' physical ability to take on some of the more demanding chores as well as the increased availability of other kin, especially older grandchildren to take up the burden. Compared to respondents who are currently married, both single men and women are less likely to take responsibility for chores. Additionally, single men are less likely to take responsibility for chores than single females. This reflects the common arrangement where women do more housework than men.

The effect of current employment on household chores is present only for Taiwan. In Taiwan, being a working grandparent lowers the probability of taking charge of household work. Individuals employed outside the home have both less time to devote to housework and more power to buy themselves out of doing the work. It is interesting that this relationship does not hold for the Philippines and Thailand. This suggests that among the elderly in the Philippines and Thailand, employment out of the household is more compatible with household tasks. Turning to the chore specific regressions we see that in the Philippines the effect of grandparents' employment on doing the shopping is positive and significant and the effect on cleaning house is negative and significant. Working outside the household makes it more convenient to do shopping and less convenient to do the cleaning. In Thailand we also see evidence that shopping and working are compatible. (See Table 8 for the chore specific regressions.)

Although being in average or better health has no effect on the Filipino grandparents' probability of doing chores it significantly increases the odds of Taiwanese grandparents taking over chores. The effect for Thai grandparents is of the same magnitude as that of the Philippines but statistically significant. It is logical that grandparents who have health problems are less able

⁷ We also ran regressions which excluded all male respondents. The substantive conclusions from these regressions were the same as those which included men.

and hence less likely to take on strenuous household tasks. The finding that in the Philippines grandparents with less than average health are as likely to do chores as those in better health is interesting. However, note that in Table 8 being in average or better health is positively and significantly related to having primary responsibility for shopping in the Philippines. Thus elderly Filipinos in poor health are less likely to take on the shopping which involves leaving the household but their health does not limit them in their willingness to take on other chores. This fits well with the descriptive statistics in Tables 4-6 where we see higher levels of taking primary responsibility for household chores and a greater percentage providing childcare among Filipino grandparents than for those in the other countries. Perhaps levels of participation are higher among Filipino grandparents because their propensity to take responsibility for chores (with the exception of shopping) may be less responsive to differences in their capability (as measured by health status) and availability (as measured by working status).

In Thailand living in an urban environment as opposed to a rural environment increases the probability that grandparents take responsibility for chores. In the three countries under study we would expect housework in rural areas to demand greater physical strength because assistance from maids and household appliances (such as modern cooking facilities, washing machine and vacuum cleaner) are less common than in urban areas. But it is unclear why we see this effect in Thailand and not in Taiwan or the Philippines. Note that in Table 8 the effect of living in an urban area is positive and significant for each of the four individual chores in Thailand.

What we expect to be the most important variable in predicting whether or not the grandparent generation takes responsibility for chores is whether or not there is a working mother in the household. By working mother we mean a woman in the parent generation who works outside the home and has at least one child.⁸ We expected that grandparents whose coresident daughter or daughter-in-law is employed outside the household would be more likely to take on the household chores than those with stay-at-home daughters. This relationship was found in Japan which showed hours of housework by parents increased with the number of hours worked by the wife (Tsuya and Bumpass, 1996, table 4). It is this variable that gives us our most striking result. First the proportion of grandparent households that have a working mother varies dramatically among the countries. Only 21 percent of the households in the Philippines had a working mother, 46 percent in Taiwan and 74 percent in Thailand (Table 6). There is no effect of having a working mother in the household on the grandparent taking responsibility for chores in the Philippines, an expected positive significant effect in Taiwan, and a surprising negative significant effect in Thailand. This result holds in each chore specific regression for Thailand (Table 8). Further investigation of this finding showed a significant positive interaction between living in an urban area and having a working mother in the household on the performance of chores. As a result there is little difference in the likelihood of grandparents having major responsibility for one or more chores in urban areas, whether or not there is a working mother in the household. It is in the rural area-s that the strong negative effect is found, with grandparents more likely to be involved with chores where there is no working daughter or daughter-in-law. This suggests that in rural Thailand coresident daughters and daughters-in-law are more likely to

⁸ Philippine and Thailand household rosters did not ask whether daughters-in-law had children. For the purposes of this variable we assumed that coresident daughters-in-law who are working are also mothers.

juggle the concurrent roles of working outside the home (most likely agricultural work) and taking responsibility for housework. This may reflect differences in the ease with which rural mothers who primarily work in agriculture and urban mothers who primarily work outside agriculture can combine paid work with household work.

The remaining three variables in the regression model are meant to get at the availability and characteristics of additional kin who can take responsibility for chores. The number of coresident adults is negatively associated with the grandparent taking on the household chore. Hence when it comes to the child generation, having many hands makes the task easier. But this does not hold for the grandchild generation. Those additional young hands of grandchildren (< 18) make it less likely for grandparents to do chores in the Philippines and Taiwan but have no effect on whether grandparents take on chores in Thailand.

VII. Conclusion

We have attempted to identify some of the parameters related to the role of grandparent that are embedded in a series of surveys carried out in several East and South East Asian countries as part of the Michigan project, "Rapid Demographic Change and the Welfare of the Elderly." It is important to note that these surveys were not designed to study the grandparent-grandchild relationship, but rather to study the well-being of the elderly on a broad number of dimensions including health, income, assets, labor force activity, living arrangements and intergenerational relations and transfers. A broad well designed survey with these aims will produce a variety of measures relevant to the role of grandparent, as illustrated here, but will also neglect various facets of the relationship. In particular without specific questions, it will reveal little about how engaged grandparents are with their grandchildren, what specific functions they perform, and how much time they spend together. Services performed by grandchildren for their grandparents, the strength of the emotional bond, and how these evolve over time are also likely to be difficult to gauge.⁹ Those who have particular interest in the grandparental role in Asia need to develop appropriate tools to probe this, keeping in mind the challenge of providing enough information on other key relationships to provide proper context.

Our exploration of several measures contained in our survey of the elderly and near elderly confirms the expectation that these cohorts in East and South East Asia have large numbers of grandchildren and that they have frequent contact with them. About 40 percent of all those aged 50 and over in the three countries are coresiding with at least one grandchild, which translates to about 50 percent for those with grandchildren. For those with coresident grandchildren (aged 10 or younger) about one-half of the respondents in Taiwan, three-fifths in Thailand, and two-thirds in the Philippines report providing child care services to one or more of their grandchildren, and the data on number of children supervised and hours of involvement reported in the Philippines and level of responsibility reported in Thailand indicate that there is a substantial contribution to this function.

⁹ Detailed questions about leisure activities of the elderly and who accompanies them, questions on sources of emotional support, and careful mapping of intergenerational transfers can catch some of this but are likely to underestimate these dimensions.

Data on the chores performed by the elderly and near-elderly in households with grandchildren also point to heavy involvement in maintaining such households, and a notable indirect contribution to the welfare of the grandchildren and others. When the likelihood of taking on primary responsibility for chores was examined in a multivariate framework, several of the variables behaved consistently across countries and in expected directions. These include age, sex, marital status, and number of coresident children or children-in-law in the household. But the effects of health, whether the respondent was working, and whether the respondent's daughter or daughter-in-law was working were as expected only in Taiwan, raising several issues that require further exploration. Many grandparents of course take on multiple responsibilities within the household. Our data suggest that among grandmothers only, about two-fifths of those in the Philippines and Taiwan, and a quarter in Thailand, provide childcare and do one or more major chores, among those coresiding with young grandchildren.

As noted earlier, quantitative documentation of the grandparent role in Asia for earlier times is limited so it is important to establish careful benchmarks for future studies. At the same time, it is important to realize the unique position of the current cohorts now middle-aged or older in much of Asia. They are distinct in their fertility levels, their rural backgrounds and educational levels. For many there are huge differences between their education, income, and outlook and that of their children and grandchildren. The cohorts that will become grandparents 25 years or so from now will be very different in their characteristics and outlook. They may prefer a much more independent style of living arrangements, but they may have more in common with their grandchildren in terms of education and interests. All these trends suggest that the grandparent role as it exists today in much of Asia will be undergoing a transformation into new configurations in the years ahead.

References

- Bengtson, V. L. and J. F. Robertson (eds.). 1985. *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Chayovan, Napaporn, M. Wongsith, and C. Saengtienchai. 1998. "Socio-Economic Consequences of the Aging of the Population: Thailand. Bangkok: Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University
- Cherlin, A. and F. Furstenberg. 1986. *The New American Grandparent: A Place in the Family*. New York: Basic Books.
- Domingo, Lita J. 1992. "The Filipina Elderly in Development: Status and Prospects." Research Report No. 92-15, Comparative Study of the Elderly in Asia. Ann Arbor, MI: Population Studies Center, University of Michigan.
- Fricke, Thomas., J. S. Chang, and L. S. Yang. 1994. "Historical and Ethnographic Perspectives on the Chinese Family." Chapter 2 in Arland Thornton (ed.) *Social Change and the Family in Taiwan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Giarrusso, Roseann, Merrill Silverstein, and Vern L. Bengtson. 1996. "Grandparenting at Century's End. *Generations*, Spring Edition:17-23.
- Gratton, Brian and Carole Haber. 1996. "Three Phases in the History of American grandparents: Authority, Burden, Companion." *Generations*, Spring Edition:7-12.
- Hermalin, Albert I. 1997. "Challenges to Comparative Research in Intergenerational Transfers." Presented at symposium, Cross-National Aspects of Intergenerational Transfers, at the 1997 World Congress of Gerontology, Adelaide.
- Hollnsteiner, Mary R. 1973. "Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines. PP. 69-92 in Frank Lynch and Alfonso de Guzman II (eds.) *Four Readings on Philippine Values*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Lang, Olga. 1946. *Chinese Family and Society*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Limanonda, Bhassorn. 1994. "Family Formation in Rural Thailand: Evidence from the 1989-90 Family and Household Survey." Pp. 383-400 in Lee-Jay Cho and Moto Yada (eds) *Tradition and Change in the Asian Family*. Honolulu: East-West Center.
- Lopez, Maria E. 1991. "The Filipino Family as Home for the Aged," Research Report No. 91-7, Comparative Study of the Elderly in Asia. Ann Arbor, MI: Population Studies Center, University of Michigan.

- Luborsky, Mark R. 1995. "Questioning the Allure of Aging and Health for Medical Anthropology," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 9(2):277-283.
- Richter, Kerry. 1996. "Living Separately as a Child-Care Strategy: Implications for Women's Work and Family in Urban Thailand," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58(2): 327-339.
- Schlosberg, J. 1990. "Grandparents: Before you can market to grandparents, you must find them, describe them, and measure their spending," *American Demographics* 12:32-35.
- Soldo, Beth J. and Martha Hill. 1993. "Intergenerational Transfers: Economic, Demographic, and Social Perspectives." *Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics* 13:187-216.
- Schwartz, J., and J. Waldrop. 1992. "The Growing Importance of Grandparents," *American Demographics* 14:10-11.
- Szinovacz, Maximiliane E. 1998. "Grandparents Today: A Demographic Profile," *The Gerontologist* 38(1):37-52.
- Taeuber, Irene B. 1970. "The Families of Chinese Farmers." In Maurice Freedman (ed.), *Family and Kinship in Chinese Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tsuya, Noriko O. and Larry L. Bumpass. 1996 Household Tasks and Employment in Japan and the U.S. Paper presented at the 1996 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, New Orleans, 9-11 May.
- Wongsith, Malinee. 1994. "Attitudes toward Family Values in Rural Thailand." Pp. 401-418 in Lee-Jay Cho and Moto Yada (eds) *Tradition and Change in the Asian Family*. Honolulu: East-West Center.

Table 1
Mean Number of and Proportion with Any Grandchildren for the 50+ Population
by Elderly Characteristic and Country

	Philippines		Taiwan		Thailand	
	Mean	Any	Mean	Any	Mean	Any
Entire Population	11.55	0.82	6.80	0.81	7.20	0.86
Who have had at least one child	12.20	0.86	7.00	0.84	7.50	0.89
Who have at least one grandchild	14.06	1.00	8.40	1.00	8.38	1.00
<i>By Age of Elderly R</i>						
50-54	3.70	0.63	1.79	0.56	2.75	0.71
55-59	7.43	0.80	4.02	0.79	4.61	0.81
60-64	11.92	0.89	7.03	0.90	6.84	0.92
65-69	17.45	0.94	7.97	0.85	9.00	0.90
70-74	19.13	0.94	10.28	0.89	11.22	0.94
75-79	19.27	0.96	12.88	0.94	12.12	0.95
80-84	21.26	0.90	14.95	0.96	15.05	0.92
85+	20.81	0.93	18.33	1.00	15.61	0.94
<i>By Sex of Elderly R</i>						
Male	10.20	0.78	5.61	0.73	6.56	0.84
Female	12.72	0.86	8.16	0.90	7.67	0.87
<i>By Number of Living Children</i>						
0	0.06	0.01	0.08	0.02	0.00	0.00
1	2.31	0.54	1.81	0.58	1.56	0.64
2	3.95	0.65	2.36	0.60	2.49	0.68
3	5.06	0.75	3.20	0.72	3.54	0.80
4	7.75	0.77	5.61	0.88	4.99	0.91
5	10.20	0.89	8.90	0.95	6.80	0.95
6	12.15	0.92	12.00	0.97	9.18	0.98
7	13.68	0.93	15.61	1.00	10.64	0.98
8	18.33	0.96	19.56	0.99	12.34	0.99
9	19.29	0.95	19.73	1.00	14.18	0.99
10	20.61	0.97	29.26	1.00	16.39	0.99
11	23.39	0.97	31.92	1.00	20.72	1.00
12+	25.63	0.98	32.00	1.00	22.59	1.00
<i>By Urban/Rural</i>						
Urban	9.73	0.79	6.01	0.78	5.23	0.75
Rural	13.03	0.85	8.81	0.88	7.60	0.88
<i>By R's Education</i>						
No formal education	17.80	0.88	9.50	0.90	9.90	0.88
Any Primary	12.40	0.86	5.90	0.81	6.60	0.86
Secondary and above	6.40	0.72	2.70	0.55	3.80	0.63

Table 2
Percent with Coresident Grandchildren and Frequency of Seeing Grandchild for the
50+ Population by Country

Entire Sample	Philippines	Taiwan¹	Thailand²
No Grandchildren	17.1	20.7	14.4
Only Non-coresident grandchildren	38.0	36.4	36.3
Has Minor coresident grandchildren (< 18) ³	42.8	38.3	46.0
Only Adult coresident grandchildren	2.1	4.5	3.3
	100.0	99.9	100.0
 For those with one or more grandchildren			
Only Non-coresident grandchildren	45.8	46.0	42.4
Has Minor coresident grandchildren (< 18) ³	51.6	48.3	53.7
Only Adult coresident grandchildren	2.5	5.7	3.9
	99.9	100.0	100.0
 Among those with any non-resident grandchildren how many have contact with at least one non-resident grandchild?			
	Not Available	70.0	92.0

¹In Taiwan R says at least one grandchild visits or telephones at least once a week

²In Thailand R says that at least one grandchild was seen regularly over the past year (either R went to visit or Grandchild visited R)

³May or may not live with an adult grandchild as well

Table 3A

Proportion of Grandparents who say they provide child care for a coresident grandchild. Sample
of 50+ population with at least one coresident grandchild aged 10 or younger.

The Philippines	67.0
Thailand	59.1
Taiwan	56.7

Filipino respondents were asked if they took care of any grandchildren. However it appears as though married respondents may have included their spouse's contribution to grandchild care when answering.

Thai respondents were asked who did the most of taking care of children under age 10 in the household. The number above shows the percent answering either they or their spouse took care of the children.

Taiwanese respondents were asked if they provided assistance babysitting grandchildren (high school or younger). However it appears as though married respondents may have included their spouse's contribution to grandchild care when answering.

Table 3B

Distribution of whether Elderly Respondent Babysits Grandchildren and their location: Taiwan

	Have at least one grandchild	Coresident Grandchild 10 or younger
Whom does R babysit for:		
Nobody	70.0	43.0
Coresident Grandchildren	19.0	44.0
Nonresident Grandchildren	9.0	8.0
Coresident & Nonresident	2.0	4.0
	100	99

Table 3C

Who does most of taking care of children under ten in the household: Thailand

Respondent/Spouse	59.1
Child/Child-in-Law	37.8
Other Arrangement	3.1
	<u>100</u>

Table 3D

Distributions of questions asked of Philippine Grandparents

How many of your own grandchildren do you take care of?

How many hours per week, on average?

Non grandchildren	1.6	1 thru 9	10
1	40.1	10 thru 19	14.8
2	28.4	20 thru 29	18.8
3	17.2	30 thru 39	9.3
4	7.1	40 thru 49	9.8
5+	5.5	50 thru 59	15.4
	<u>100</u>	60 thru 69	1.9
		70 thru 79	3.3
		80 thru 89	8.7
		90 thru 168	7.8
			99.8

Does anyone help R take care of grandchildren?

Why is R taking care of grandchildren?

Yes	79.4	(Multiple Responses Allowed)	60.0
Who helps R?		Child's parents are working	12.9
(Multiple Responses Allowed)		Child prefers to live with R than with own parents	8.2
Spouse	49.4	Child's parents are separated	5.5
R's daughter	48.7	Enjoy being with Grandchildren	5.5
R's Son	22.0	Living in same household	5.6
Other grandchild	5.8	Mother does household chores	3.3
Female adult family member	3.6	Proximity of residence	3.1
Male adult family member	0.7	For companionship	2.2
Female adult not related	1.1	When they pay visit	2.8
Paid Help	2.0	Mother of child ill	2.0
		Child is orphaned	1.8
		Child's parent not married	0.8
		For emergency purposes	0.5
		For adoption	0.3
		Because of Superstitious beliefs	

Table 4

Percentage of Respondents who say they or their spouse takes primary responsibility for chores by country and grandparent status.

	Philippines					Taiwan		Thailand			
	Cooking	Shopping	Laundry	Lt. Clean	Hv. Clean	Lt. Chores	Misc. Chores	Cooking	Shopping	Laundry	Cleaning
R has no grandchildren	77	82	69	62	61	93	85	75	76	65	67
R has no coresident grandchildren	77	80	66	66	57	91	76	72	72	62	65
R has minor coresident grandchildren	61	58	45	48	43	58	44	43	44	34	38
R has only adult coresident grandchildren	42	33	26	33	22	25	16	23	20	21	18

Table 5

Proportion of Respondents who do not take primary responsibility but who say they performed a task at least weekly by country, grandparent status, and sex.

Females	Cooking		Shopping		Laundry		Cleaning	
	Filipino	Thai	Filipino	Thai	Filipino	Thai	Filipino	Thai
R has no grandchildren	85	88	71	84	75	86	83	87
R has no coresident grandchildren	82	82	67	79	68	81	72	83
R has minor coresident grandchildren	73	74	59	71	57	72	71	74
R has only adult coresident children	63	46	33	43	39	59	55	51

Males	Cooking		Shopping		Laundry		Cleaning	
	Filipino	Thai	Filipino	Thai	Filipino	Thai	Filipino	Thai
R has no grandchildren	44	58	42	61	30	56	36	62
R has no coresident grandchildren	42	51	35	51	28	54	39	57
R has minor coresident grandchildren	36	39	26	48	25	47	29	53
R has only adult coresident children	33	20	32	29	27	39	33	47

Table 6
Means of Household Characteristics by Country

	Philippines	Taiwan	Thailand
Light Chores		0.55	
Misc. Chores		0.44	
Does at least one chore	0.72		0.58
Does shopping	0.55		0.44
Does cooking	0.59		0.43
Does laundry	0.43		0.35
Does light housework	0.46		0.38
Wife or Respondent's Age	63.70	62.40	61.70
Married couple Household	0.58	0.76	0.68
Single Male	0.09	0.06	0.06
Single Female	0.33	0.18	0.26
Wife or Respondent currently working	0.30	0.18	0.48
Wife or Respondent's Health Average or better	0.54	0.69	0.66
Urban Area	0.46	0.70	0.16
Working Mother in Household	0.21	0.47	0.65
Age of Youngest Coresident Child	5.23	5.78	5.44
Age of Oldest Coresident Grandchild	10.56	9.50	8.79
Number of Minor coresident grandchildren	2.53	2.25	1.76
Number of coresident children-in-law	0.57	1.00	0.68
Sample Size	978	1894	3574

Table 7

Logit Regression of Whether Respondent or Spouse takes Primary Responsibility for Chores by Country

	Philippines ¹	Taiwan ²	Thailand ¹
Wife's or R's Age	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07
Single Male (vs. Married couple)	-1.88	-1.75	-1.80
Single Female (vs. Married couple)	-0.93	-0.83	-0.58
Wife or R currently employed	0.31	-0.57	0.18
Wife or R's health is average or above	0.18	0.51	0.22
Urban	0.12	-0.07	0.91
Working Mother	0.14	0.44	-0.93
Age of Youngest Coresident Grandchild	0.00	-0.02	0.02
Number of Coresident Grandchildren < 18	-0.22	-0.23	0.04
Number of Coresident Adults in Household	-0.23	-0.24	-0.24
Constant	7.57	5.68	6.18
Log Likelihood	-466	-1083	-1898
Number of cases	978	1854	3506

p < .01*.01 < p < .05*

Sample of Respondents aged 50+ with at least one coresident grandchild < 18 years old.

¹ Working mother = 1 if R has either:
 a) at least 1 coresident daughter-in-law who is currently employed
 or
 b) at least 1 coresident daughter who is currently employed and has a child

² Working mother = 1 if R has a coresident daughter or daughter-in-law who is currently employed and has a child

The dependent variable for the Philippine data and the Thai data equals 1 if R says either R or spouse takes primary responsibility for at least one chore (shopping, cooking, laundry, cleaning house).

The dependent variable for the Taiwan data equals one if R says either R or spouse takes primary responsibility for light household chores (cooking, laundry, sweeping the floor, cleaning, dish washing and grocery shopping).