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Intergenerational Support and Gender: A Comparison
of Four Asian Countries

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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.

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Intergenerational Support and Gender: A Comparison of Four Asian Countries

(March 1999)

Abstract:

This paper examines patterns of intergenerational support, with a key focus on the gender of the providers, in four countries in East and Southeast Asia: Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. These countries make an interesting set for comparison because they are characterized by varying levels of social and economic development and different family systems, with the Philippines and Thailand having bilateral family systems, Taiwan having a strong patrilineal family system, and Singapore having a mix of the two systems across ethnic groups. Analyses are based on a recent round of national surveys of older persons that were conducted in each country. The results reveal distinctive patterns and varying levels of flexibility across countries with respect to the gender of coresident married children, but only modest gender patterning in the provision of financial and material support and exchanges of visits.

Datasets used:

- Philippine Elderly Survey, 1996
- National Survey of Senior Citizens in Singapore, 1995
- Survey of the Middle Aged and Elderly in Taiwan, 1996
- Survey of the Welfare of the Elderly in Thailand, 1995

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Despite likely impacts of demographic and socioeconomic change on the situation of the elderly throughout Asia, the family has been and continues to be the primary provider of old-age support.¹ It is interesting to note, however, that there is significant variation in the structure of the family and support systems in different countries and regions within Asia. These structural features have strongly conditioned patterns of intergenerational support, particularly with regard to defining which family members participate in exchanges of various types of support. A key structural difference across countries in Asia, and the one that we focus on in this paper, has to do with the nature of gender relations in the family. As Karen Mason (1992) noted in a review article about family change and support of the elderly in Asia, two major types of family systems prevail: the patrilineal/patriarchal systems found in East Asia and the northern tier of South Asia, which stress the responsibility of sons (and their wives) for caring for and supporting parents, and the more flexible bilateral systems found in Southeast Asia and the southern tier of South Asia, in which daughters play an equally or more important role than sons.

Although a number of important studies of intergenerational support in Asia have emerged in the past decade (e.g. Chang and Ofstedal, 1991; DaVanzo and Chan, 1994; Hermalin, Chang, Lin, Lee and Ofstedal, 1990; Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1992; Martin, 1989), these studies have not focused on gender patterns of support *per se*. Important exceptions include studies of intergenerational coresidence, financial and material transfers, and/or assistance with household tasks in Japan (Hirosima, 1992), Taiwan (Hermalin, Ofstedal and Lee, 1992; Lee, Parish and Willis, 1994) and Vietnam (Knodel, Friedman, Anh and Cuong, 1998). In contrast, studies of gender differences in intergenerational support in the United States abound (see edited volume by Dwyer and Coward, 1992; and articles by Brody, Johnsen, Fulcomer, and Lang, 1983; Dwyer and Coward, 1991; Finley, 1989; Horowitz, 1985; Houser, Berkman and Bardsley, 1985; Spitze and Logan, 1990; Stoller, 1983); however, the vast majority of those studies have focused on the provision of assistance with personal care and/or household management tasks, as opposed to the broader types of material and social support. These studies have consistently found sharp gender differences in caregiving by children, whereby daughters play a more central role overall in the day to day personal and routine care of their aged parents and sons tend to take on a more managerial role and/or provide material as opposed to hands-on assistance.

This paper describes gender patterns of intergenerational support in four countries in East and Southeast Asia: the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. The countries included in this study make an interesting set for comparison in that they represent varying levels of social and economic development and they fall on both sides of the family-system divide. In particular, both the Philippines and Thailand have predominantly bilateral family systems, Taiwan has a strong patrilineal/patriarchal family system, and Singapore has a mix of the two systems across the major ethnic groups (Chinese, Malay and Indian). The types of support we examine in this paper include coresidence, a looser form of coresidence which we refer to as quasi-coresidence, social support in the form of visiting, and financial and material support.

Most research that has been conducted on intergenerational support involving elderly parents has tended to focus on support received by the parents as opposed to support provided by parents to children and other kin, and that is the focus that we adopt in this article. We recognize, however, that it is likely that there is a strong bi-directional flow of support between parents and children, even for parents who have reached advanced ages. Furthermore, exchange of support across generations is a dynamic process and the propensity for a person of either generation to provide support is likely to be influenced by exchanges that have occurred at some point in the past or are anticipated to occur in the future. Although the surveys that we use in our analysis provide the data needed to address some of these issues, their treatment is beyond the scope of the current paper.

Data and Methods

The analyses presented in this paper draw from a recent round of nationally representative surveys of older persons that were conducted in each country (in 1995 for Singapore and Thailand, 1996 for the Philippines and Taiwan). The surveys in the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand are based on samples of persons 50 years of age and over, while the Singapore survey sampled persons age 55 and older. Because our primary interest is in exchanges of support that occur during the latter stages of the life cycle, our analyses in this paper are restricted to the subset of persons age 60 and over in each country.

Institutional populations were excluded from the sampling universes for the surveys in all countries except Taiwan, for which the institutionalized sample members are excluded from the present analysis. Thus the results refer only to the elderly population living in private households. As indicated by 1990 Census figures, the fraction of elderly living in institutional settings is extremely small in all four countries, ranging from 0.2 percent in the Philippines to 1.8 percent in Thailand. Despite their small numbers, however, elderly in institutions obviously differ in their non-formal support arrangements from those in private households, a fact that should be kept in mind when interpreting results.

The Philippines, Taiwan and Thai surveys were closely coordinated in terms of questionnaire content, and each of these countries collected detailed information on characteristics of all of the respondents' children, household composition, location and frequency of visits with non-coresident children, and exchanges of material and financial support with children and other individuals. As a result, it is possible to examine in some depth the extent to which intergenerational support is conditioned on gender, as well as on other characteristics of adult children. For Singapore, and to a lesser extent Taiwan, the information on intergenerational support is more limited (as described below), although some comparative analyses are still possible.

The types of support that we focus on in this paper include intergenerational living arrangements, transfers of money and material goods, and exchanges of visits with non-coresident children. Living with or very nearby an adult child lies at the heart of the familial support system for elders in all four countries encompassed by this study. For many elders, support and care from adult children living within the same household or living nearby is crucial for their psychological, physical and economic well-being. Such living arrangements certainly facilitate exchanges of services between elderly parents and their children, particularly those requiring personal contact. Measurement of monetary and material transfers between members of the same household, however, can be very problematic. This is particularly true in countries such as those included in this study, where household members may pool their income and other goods, and the household (or sometimes a collection of households) is viewed as the basic economic unit. In light of these measurement difficulties, our analysis of financial and material support focuses exclusively on exchanges with non-coresident children.

When considering the role of non-coresident children in relation to non-formal support, it is useful to distinguish children who live very nearby from those who are more distant. The daily lives of elderly parents are likely to be far more intimately entwined with those of nearby children than with those living further away. Such an arrangement can serve many of the same functions as coresidence with respect to exchanges of assistance between generations. In examining living arrangements, we thus focus not only on children who are literally coresident (i.e., living in the same dwelling or housing unit as their parent) but also on those who live adjacent to their parents (i.e., next door or in separate residence within the same compound or building) or who share daily visits with them (either child visiting parent or vice versa). We refer to the latter type of arrangement as quasi-coresidence. Further

distinctions of visiting patterns with non-coresident children are made by identifying respondents who exchange visits with a given child at least weekly and at least monthly.

Information on location and frequency of visits is available on a child-by-child basis for the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. Hence, in addition to establishing coresidence status from the respondent's perspective, we are able to determine for each child whether he/she coresides with a parent (either in literal or "quasi" form) and how often that child sees the parent. More limited information for Singapore allows us to identify whether respondents coreside with any sons and/or daughters and, in most instances, distinguish the marital status of coresident children. We are unable to identify quasi-coresidence for Singapore, however, as information on the location and visiting patterns of individual non-coresident children is not available.

In addition to coresidence and visiting patterns, the Philippines and Thai surveys also collect child-specific information on transfers of money and material goods. With respect to financial transfers, respondents were asked whether they received money from each child within the past year and, if so, whether the amount of money they received exceeded a set amount (1,000 pesos for Philippines and 1,000 baht for Thailand, equivalent to about 40 US dollars at the time of the surveys in both countries). In regard to material goods, Filipino and Thai respondents were asked whether each child had given them any food, clothing or personal belongings within the past year. The questions for the Philippines were slightly more restrictive than those for Thailand in that respondents were instructed to exclude transfers involving "small gifts." Other than that qualification, however, the questions regarding money and material transfers were very similar. Singapore and Taiwan also collected information on exchanges of financial and material goods but the questions were not asked on a child-by-child basis and the resulting data are thus not comparable.

Given our focus on non-formal support, for many purposes it is useful to distinguish children who are still dependent minors from those who are adults. In the analyses that follow we treat coresident unmarried children aged 18 and over and all married and non-coresident children as adults. We use age 18 to define adult status since by that age most children are capable of making significant economic contributions to the household and of providing various types of physical and emotional assistance to their parents. No doubt some young adult children are still dependent on parents, especially among those who are still coresident and are in school or not working. The extent to which this is the case varies among the four countries. For example, among coresident children aged 18-21, 18 percent were still studying and 28 percent had not worked in the previous year in Thailand. In contrast, 53 percent in Taiwan were still studying and 62 percent were not currently working. Nevertheless, for convenience, we have imposed a uniform definition of an adult child for all four countries in the present analysis.

With regard to the issue of gender differentials in intergenerational support, our primary focus is on the sex of the support provider (i.e., adult child), although for both coresidence and quasi-coresidence we also examine whether there is variation in patterns with respect to the sex of the older parent. In addition, because the influence of gender on provision of support is likely to be closely tied to the marital status of children (especially with respect to coresidence), we either provide separate breakdowns or otherwise control for marital status of children in the analyses.² Given that there are pronounced differences among the three main ethnic groups (Chinese, Malay, Indian) in Singapore with respect to gender preferences related to coresidence with married children and perhaps other support roles (Mehta, Osman and Lee, 1995), results for Singapore are shown separately for these three groups rather than for the country as a whole. Ethnic differences with respect to gender preferences are less pronounced in the other countries, hence results presented for the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand are for all ethnic groups combined.

Observed patterns of support depend not only on the needs and resources of the various people involved, but also on the availability of support providers. As a result, all of the analyses presented in this paper are conditioned on the availability of the type of child in question. For example, when examining coresidence with married sons and married daughters, we restrict the sample to those who have one or more married son or one or more married daughters, that is those for whom the arrangement is an option. In addition, when examining exchanges with children outside the household, we restrict the analyses to persons who have a non-resident child of the specified type. Precise conditioning of this sort is possible for all of the countries except Singapore, for which we know only the number of living children by gender and coresidence status, but not by marital or adult status. Hence, for most analyses the Singapore results are conditioned only on the availability of living sons or living daughters, as opposed to availability of unmarried adult sons/daughters or married sons/daughters.

In order to examine the influence of gender on patterns of intergenerational support, we use a combination of respondent-based and child-based analyses. Although the results are primarily descriptive, for selected analyses we employ standardization and logistic regression techniques to adjust for effects of factors that are likely to confound the gender associations. We begin by providing an overview of the overall levels of support from adult children to elderly parents and then proceed to examine gender differentials in these patterns for each type of support. To examine gender preferences with regard to coresidence and quasi-coresidence, we calculate ratios to determine the relative prevalence of each arrangement vis-à-vis sons versus daughters, conditioned on availability of the relevant children. We then assess the extent to which older parents are flexible in these preferences when a child of the preferred gender is not available and examine the role that birth order plays with respect to influencing the observed gender differentials. Following this, we turn to a set of child-based analyses, for which we present observed and predicted probabilities of providing financial, material and social support for sons and daughters, controlling for the marital status and location of the child. Although our analyses are based on behavioral indicators as opposed to direct measures of preferences *per se*, the observed patterns are no doubt strongly influenced by and thus reflective of gender preferences.

Research Results

Overview of Forms of Support. As is the case throughout Asia, elderly members of society in the four countries under study have traditionally been enmeshed in a familial system of intergenerational exchanges through which adult children have the primary responsibility for support and care of parents in old age. In recent decades, formal forms of support sponsored by the state have been emerging in differing degrees in each of the countries. Nevertheless, results from the national surveys described above indicate that non-formal forms of economic and social support continue to be pervasive. As Table 1 shows, only a small fraction of elderly among the current generation of older persons do not have at least one living adult child and hence a potential provider of care and support within the traditional system. Moreover, the vast majority has at least one non-coresident child and hence a potential provider of remittances or other forms of material support external to the economic resources of the household within which the elderly parent resides.

The first type of support we show in Table 1 is the percentage of elderly parents who live with at least one adult child. In all four countries, a substantial majority of elderly parents coreside with a child. There is some evidence that literal coresidence is declining in Taiwan and Thailand and possibly in the other countries as well (Knodel and Debavalya, 1997). Nevertheless, in all four countries as of the mid-1990s, over 70 percent of parents age 60 or older were living with an adult child, and among Chinese and Malays in Singapore as many as 90 percent were coresiding.

In addition to sharing the same dwelling with a child, elderly may live adjacent to a child or near enough that they have daily contact, a situation we refer to as quasi-coresidence. The extent of quasi-coresidence differs considerably among the three countries for which data are available. Among elderly with at least one non-coresident child, the proportion in this situation ranges from just over one-fourth in Taiwan to almost two-thirds in Thailand. In both the Philippines and Thailand clearly many elderly who do not coreside with a child have one living nearby, and many others both coreside and have children nearby. Overall in both the Philippines and Thailand approximately 90 percent of elderly parents live either in a coresident or quasi-coresident arrangement (results not shown).

For both the Philippines and Thailand, the surveys provide information on monetary and other material contributions from each non-coresident child. In both countries, almost equally high percentages of elderly with at least one non-coresident child report receiving any money from them during the past year (87 and 88 percent respectively). A more meaningful measure with respect to implications for support is whether or not the elderly parents received a substantial amount of money (i.e., at least 1,000 pesos in the Philippines and 1,000 baht in Thailand) from non-coresident children during the prior year. Despite the similar percentages of Filipino and Thai parents who received any money, Filipino parents were considerably less likely to receive a substantial amount than their Thai counterparts. Of those who received any money, more than three-fourths of Thai parents but only modestly more than half of Filipino parents received a substantial amount.

Receipt of any material support other than money from non-coresident children was also reported by similarly high percentages of Filipino and Thai parents (89 percent in both cases). As indicated above, no precise definition of material support was specified in the questionnaires and in Thailand even very minor amounts given as symbolic gestures during holiday visits may have been reported.

Social support in terms of visits (or contact including phone calls and letters in the case of Singapore) between elderly parents and non-coresident children is quite common in all countries. The lower level of contact with non-coresident children among Indian elderly in Singapore is largely attributable to the fact that the Indians are far more likely to have all their non-coresident children living outside the country (24 percent of those with a non-coresident child), compared to Chinese and Malays (only 2 percent in each case).

Living Arrangements. Table 2 shows the percentage of elderly living with children of different sexes and marital statuses. For all countries except Singapore the results are conditioned on availability of having a child of the respective combination of these characteristics. For Singapore, because the ages of children are unknown, adult children can not be differentiated from minor children and results are only conditioned on having a child of the particular sex (regardless of age and marital status). Moreover, because of data limitations, it was not possible to identify the specific gender and marital status combination of coresident children for 5 percent of the cases in Singapore, so these respondents are excluded from the analyses.

In order to ascertain if there is a relationship between the sex of the parent and the sex and marital status of children who coreside, results are also shown separately for unmarried (i.e. widowed, separated or divorced) parents. We do not examine currently married parents separately since in such cases coresidence involves living with both parents and thus does not provide any insight into whether the sex of parents is related to the sex of coresident children.

As shown in the top two rows in Table 2, elderly parents in general are considerably more likely to live with a son than a daughter in Taiwan, as well as among the Chinese and Indians in Singapore. In contrast, Filipino and Singaporean Malay elderly parents are only slightly more likely to live with a son

than a daughter, while Thais are more likely to live with daughters than sons. The marital status of the child, however, strongly affects the gender patterning of coresidence. The pronounced tendency to live with sons rather than daughters is largely absent with respect to single adult children in Taiwan and very much moderated among Chinese and Indians in Singapore. Likewise the strong tendency to live with daughters rather than sons in Thailand is almost absent with respect to single adult children. A very clear pattern of living with married sons rather than married daughters is evident for Taiwan and Singaporean Chinese and Indians. In contrast, Singaporean Malays show an almost equal tendency to coreside with a married son or daughter. Filipino elderly are somewhat more likely to coreside with a married daughter than son and Thai elderly show a strong tendency to live with a married daughter rather than a married son.

In order to highlight the extent of any tendency to live with children of one gender over the other, Table 2 indicates the ratio of the percentage of elderly who live with sons to the percentage who live with daughters (conditioned on availability). A ratio of unity indicates equal tendencies of elderly to live with sons as with daughters; ratios above unity reflect greater tendencies to live with sons, while those below unity show greater tendencies to live with daughters. With respect to coresidence with single children, the ratios are close to unity in all countries, indicating the absence of preference for living with children of either sex prior to their marriage. In contrast, pronounced differences are apparent among the countries and ethnic groups in Singapore indicated by the ratios that refer to coresidence with married children.

The strongest evidence of son preference in coresidence with married children is evident for Taiwan, where elderly are almost ten times more likely to live with a married son than a married daughter. Indeed, only six percent of Taiwanese elderly who have a married daughter live with one. Likewise strong son preference is also evident in Singapore for the Chinese, for whom the ratio is four times unity, and for Indian elderly, who are more than twice as likely to live with a married son than a married daughter. The reverse situation characterizes Thailand, where elderly are substantially less likely to live with a married son than a married daughter. Both in the Philippines and among Malays in Singapore, elderly are also more likely to live with married daughters than with married sons, although the imbalance is much more muted than in Thailand.

Examination of the ratios for unmarried elderly males and females suggests that the sex of the parent has little bearing on the sex of the child who coresides. In general the patterns for both sexes are similar to each other and to those for overall elderly. The only exceptions are in cases where sample sizes are small enough to cast doubt on the validity of the results, i.e. unmarried males in the Philippines and unmarried Indian males in Singapore.

Table 3 provides information on quasi-coresidence (living next to or seeing daily) with sons and daughters by marital status and sex of the elderly parents, conditioned on availability of having a non-coresident child of the respective sex. Singapore is not included in this table because of lack of comparable data. Also since very few quasi-coresident children are single, we do not show results separately by marital status of the children. Results indicate country differences in gender patterns with respect to quasi-coresidence. In Taiwan and Thailand the patterns are in the same direction as those found for coresidence, however they are less pronounced in the case of quasi-coresidence, especially for Taiwan. Quasi-coresidence is distinctly more common in relation to sons than daughters in Taiwan but the ratio of the two is less than two times unity, far lower than in the case of coresidence with married children. In both the Philippines and Thailand, differences in quasi-coresidence in relation to sons and daughters are modest although in the opposite directions. In the Philippines, quasi-coresidence is somewhat more likely in relation to sons, opposite the pattern for coresidence with married children.

The patterns of quasi-coresidence for unmarried males and unmarried females in relation to the sex of their children are quite similar to each other and the overall patterns just described. Thus, as in the case of coresidence, the sex of the parent does not appear to influence which children live adjacent or very nearby.

Table 4 addresses the extent to which the elderly are flexible in terms of their gender preferences regarding coresiding with a child. Singapore is omitted due to data limitations. Since preferences with respect to the sex of a coresident child are largely limited to married children, the analysis refers to elderly whose children are all married. We compare the percent coresident among elderly whose married children are all of the same sex with the percent coresident among elderly whose children are all married. We focus on elderly whose children are all of the same sex because no gender choice is possible if they wish to coreside with a married child. The degree of flexibility in gender preference will be evident in the extent to which elderly with no child of the preferred sex forego coresidence compared to elderly more generally.

A potentially confounding problem for the proposed comparison is that elderly whose children are all the same sex are selective of elderly with few children. This in itself would tend to decrease chances of coresidence. Thus in addition to showing unadjusted percentages coresident among general elderly whose children are all married, values standardized for family size are also provided in Table 4. In calculating the standardized values, we used as the standard the number of married children among elderly whose children are all married and of the same sex. These standardized percentages provide a more appropriate basis for comparison with those based on elderly whose children are all the same sex.³

The results for both the Philippines and Thailand indicate considerable flexibility in whatever gender preferences exist regarding coresidence (although we note that the Philippines results are based on quite small numbers). Elderly whose children are all married daughters are more likely to coreside than elderly whose children are all married sons, but even in the latter situation the chance of coresidence is only modestly lower than the standardized percentage for all elderly parents (whose children are all married). In contrast, for Taiwanese elderly, having only married daughters greatly reduces the chance of coresidence compared to having all married sons. Nevertheless, even among Taiwanese there is some flexibility as evident from the fact that almost one-third of elderly who only have married daughters still live with one of them.

Although the same analysis is not possible for Singapore, examining coresidence with a married child among respondents whose children are all of the same sex (regardless of age and marital status) permits a rough approximation. The results (not shown) indicate that Chinese elderly are over 40 percent more likely to live with a married child when all the children are sons than when all the children are daughters. This suggests somewhat greater flexibility than among the Taiwanese elderly, but still indicates that having only daughters results in a substantial reduction in the likelihood of coresiding with a married child for an elderly Singaporean Chinese. Estimates for Indian and Malay elderly are problematic because of the small numbers in the sample whose children are all of one sex and, thus, can only be suggestive. Nevertheless, they indicate that Indian elderly are substantially more likely to live with a married child if all children are sons than if all are daughters, while for Malays the opposite is true.⁴

Table 5 shows the percentage of children in different sex and sibling order combinations who coreside with and who live nearby an elderly parent. The results are child-based, i.e. the units of analysis are the children of elderly parents rather than the elderly themselves. Data are not available for Singapore. The upper panel is limited to sibships of children who are all adult and consist of at least two siblings of each sex. The bottom panel is further limited to the subset of these sibships in which all

children are married. Results are only shown for the oldest and youngest sibling of each sex (i.e. in sibships with more than two siblings of a particular sex, those who are middle sons or middle daughters are not shown). Thus every sibship included in the analysis in both panels has an 'available' oldest and youngest child of each sex.

In all three countries, when all sibships of four or more adult children are considered, the youngest child of each sex is more likely than the oldest child to coreside with the elderly parent. This result partially reflects the greater likelihood of single adult children, who also tend to be younger, to coreside regardless of sex. Thus, when only sibships in which all children are married are considered (lower panel), there is little difference in Taiwan between sibling orders in the percent of each sex who coreside, although married sons of either sibling order are far more likely to coreside than daughters. In the Philippines and Thailand, the far greater tendency for the youngest compared to the oldest to coreside persists even when only married sibships are considered. However, in the Philippines, sons of each sibling order are slightly more likely to coreside than daughters, while in Thailand daughters of each sibling order are clearly more likely to coreside than sons.

These results partially contradict the ethnographic literature (Wolf, 1968) that has generally stressed the traditional importance of the eldest son in Chinese societies, and particularly Taiwan, for living with and supporting his parents in old age. However, Taiwan does stand in contrast to the other two countries inasmuch as there is no pronounced tendency for the youngest married child to coreside. It is possible that the pattern of coresidence in Taiwan is in transition and that a previous strong preference for coresidence with the eldest son is in the process of eroding. In any event, this issue will be of decreasing importance in the future given that the widespread fertility decline over the past three decades in Taiwan will result in many elderly having only one son and thus no choice regarding sibling order.

In contrast to Taiwan, the results for Thailand are quite consistent with previous ethnographic and other descriptions that refer to a preference for coresiding with the youngest daughter, although it should be noted that there are important regional and ethnic variations in this matter (Cowgill, 1972; Keyes, 1987; Limanonda, 1989; Tuchrello, 1989). Focus group data indicate that the tendency for the youngest rather than oldest child to coreside in Thailand is partially a function of the family life course in which married children leave the parental household as long as a younger unmarried sibling is still in the household. Eventually, the last child to marry, who is typically the youngest, remains as all others have left (Knodel, Saengtienchai and Sittitrai, 1995). In the Philippines, while there appears to be a clear tendency for the youngest married child to coreside, there is less evidence that a clear preference for sons or daughters exists.

Material and Social Support. Table 6 provides information on gender differences in the provision of financial and other material support (primarily food and clothing) to elderly parents by non-coresident children in the Philippines and Thailand, the two countries with the requisite data. It also shows how these forms of support relate to the marital status and location of the child. The analysis is child based and indicates the percentage of children who provided any money, substantial money or food and clothes during the past year. As the results show, both marital status and location of the child are related to support patterns. In both countries single non-coresident children are more likely than their married siblings to provide substantial amounts of money to parents while married children are modestly more likely to provide food or clothing. In addition, provision of substantial amounts of money is considerably higher from children living outside the parents' community than among their siblings who live near to the parents. In the case of provision of other material support, the further away the child lived, the lower the percentage who gave such assistance.

In addition to the observed percentages of sons and daughters who provide financial and other assistance, statistically adjusted results are shown which control for gender differences in marital status and location.⁵ Generally the observed and adjusted results are quite similar. Overall, gender differences with respect to provision of financial and material support are modest. However, daughters in both countries, but especially in Thailand, are somewhat more likely than sons to provide parents with each type of support shown.

Table 7 provides a similar analysis with regard to social support measured in terms of visits between parent and child, either at least weekly or at least monthly. For this analysis Taiwan can also be included. In all three countries, both marital status and location of the child are clearly associated with such support. Married non-coresident children in each country are more likely than single children to visit their parents on a frequent basis. This is related to differences in their location (since married children are more likely to live nearby). As the results show, the percentage of children who visit either weekly or monthly declines with distance from the parent. Gender differences in visiting are modest in all three countries, especially after the results are adjusted for marital status and location. In the cases of the Philippines and Taiwan, sons are slightly more likely to visit their parents frequently, while in Thailand the reverse is true.

Discussion

In the foregoing analysis, we have described the gender patterns of intergenerational support in four countries in East and Southeast Asia. The results reflect substantial differences across countries with regard to the nature of gender relations within the family. In a very general sense, support patterns conform to characteristics of the two broad contrasting family systems prevailing in Asia (Mason 1992) referred to in the introduction. Thais, Filipinos and ethnic Malays are generally considered to be characterized by bilateral family systems and indeed our results indicate that in these cases daughters have equal or more prominent roles than sons in support of older parents. In contrast, Chinese and Indians (especially from Northern India) are generally considered to have patrilineal/patriarchal systems and, as the preceding analysis showed, sons have more central roles than daughters in Taiwan and among Singaporean Chinese and Indians.⁶ This contrast is particularly evident with respect to coresidence with married children. Thai elderly and, to a lesser extent, Filipino elderly are more likely to coreside with a married daughter than with a married son, while in Taiwan and among the Chinese and Indians in Singapore, there is a pronounced tendency to coreside with sons over daughters.

The interplay between gender systems and intergenerational support, however, is far more complex and nuanced than a simple dichotomous division of the two systems implies. Even with respect to living arrangements there are several important qualifications suggested by our results. First, despite the strong gender preferences that were evident with respect to coresidence with married children in some countries, none of the surveys revealed pronounced gender preferences with respect to coresidence with adult children who had not yet married. Second, gender patterning of quasi-coresidence appears to be either far weaker than that of literal coresidence (as evidenced in Taiwan and Thailand) or even in the reverse direction (as in the Philippines). Third, the findings also revealed varying levels of flexibility with respect to gender preferences in relation to married children. Considerable flexibility is apparent in Thailand and the Philippines, where the propensity for coresidence showed little variance between persons whose children were all married daughters and those who had only married sons. In Taiwan, older parents who had only married daughters were substantially less likely to coreside than those who had only married sons; yet some flexibility on the part of Taiwanese elders was evident. The more limited analyses for Singapore suggested a similar limited pattern of flexibility for ethnic Chinese there. Finally, our results relating to gender patterning of coresidence in relation to the sex of unmarried elderly

parents revealed the absence of any pronounced interaction between the sex of the parent and that of the coresident child.

Another important qualification is that the provision of support to elderly parents beyond those involved in coresidence appears to be far less gender specific. The results for the Philippines and Thailand show that the gender differentials in providing financial and material support are more muted than is the case for coresidence with a married child, being only slightly higher among daughters than among sons. Visiting patterns in these two countries also show little gender difference. Earlier studies of intergenerational support in Taiwan also revealed less marked gender differences with respect to provision of financial support (compared to coresidence) and essentially no differences in the provision of other material support (Hermalin, Ofstedal and Chang, 1992). Our results indicate only moderately more frequent visits with sons than daughters, a finding that is consistent with previous research (Hermalin, Ofstedal and Li, 1992). Moreover, our analyses did not examine gender roles in caregiving, an activity which could be very different with respect to gender patterns than those associated with support (Mason 1992). Even in societies where sons are assigned major responsibility for their parents in old age, it is quite possible that caregiving may be viewed as a primarily female role and delegated overwhelmingly to daughters or daughters-in-law.

The results presented here, especially when considered in light of findings for other Asian populations, reveal considerable gradients on either side of the family system divide. On the bilateral side of the divide, a clear predominance of living with married daughters rather than sons characterizes Thailand while in the Philippines an essentially balanced gender pattern prevails in this respect. The results for both the Philippines and Thailand are consistent with findings from earlier studies of intergenerational coresidence in those countries (Domingo and Casterline, 1992; Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1992). On the other side of the divide, the tendency for ethnic Chinese to live with married sons is extremely pronounced in Taiwan but apparently more moderate in Singapore.

Other studies have also observed substantial variation in the extent to which arrangements for old age are characterized by gender preferences. For example, strong regional differences have been observed with respect to gender patterns of intergenerational coresidence in studies in Vietnam (Anh, Cuong, Goodkind, and Knodel, 1997) and Thailand (Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1992). In Vietnam, coresidence with a married child is as skewed towards sons in the Red River Delta as that found in the present study for Taiwan, thus conforming to the extreme pattern associated with Confucian influences of the East Asian region where patrilineal systems prevail. In Ho Chi Minh City and its adjoining provinces, however, preference for coresidence with married sons, while still evident, is much less pronounced. Influences from the bordering areas in Southeast Asia where bilateral systems predominate have likely moderated the patrilineal pattern in southern Vietnam. In Thailand, far stronger tendencies for coresidence with married daughters rather than sons are found among elderly in the northeastern and upper northern parts of the country than elsewhere in the country.

Such important differences risk being overlooked if too much emphasis is placed on a simple dichotomization of family systems. Future research would do well to pay more attention to these variations within the broader categories of bilateral versus patrilineal/patriarchal systems. Among the issues that need further explication is the relative influence of geographical location versus cultural affiliations as signified by ethnic and/or religious identification. The similarities in relation to gender patterns revealed in our findings between Thais, Filipinos and Malays despite their religious differences, as well as similarities among Chinese despite great differences in their geographical location, all merit further consideration.

Taken together our results suggest that, despite the dramatic demographic and socioeconomic change that has occurred in recent years, the familial system of support is still very much in evidence in the four countries that we examined. The level of intergenerational coresidence has remained remarkably high and large majorities of older parents receive monetary, material and/or social support from one or more non-coresident children. Nevertheless, smaller numbers of children, higher levels of migration as children pursue industrial and professional jobs in new locations, higher levels of female labor force participation, and changing attitudes toward privacy and self-sufficiency are all likely to alter the patterns of intergenerational relations and support in the years ahead.

The degree to which gender preferences regarding intergenerational support persist and/or the flexibility that families are willing to exercise with regard to these preferences will in part determine the consequences these changes eventually have for the future patterns of support. It is beyond the scope of the present article to consider fully the implications of gender preferences for intergenerational support in the future. Nevertheless, we offer a few concluding comments on how the gender preferences discussed in our analysis might interact with smaller family sizes, the one change that will directly affect the sex composition of the families of future elderly by increasing the chances a couple will have children all of the same sex.

Of all the changes mentioned above, reduced family sizes for generations of elderly are the most inevitable given the substantial fertility decline that has taken place over the last several decades. Two children are already the modal family size for couples in the reproductive ages in each of the countries under study except for the Philippines, and there projections also point in this direction. Several previous studies have suggested that where gender preferences are lacking, small family sizes in themselves do not pose a serious threat to the chances of coresidence (Knodel, Chayovan and Siriboon, 1992; Knodel, Saengtienchai and Obiero, 1995; Natividad and Cruz, 1997). The predominance of small families in societies with clear gender preferences, however, will increase the proportion of parents who reach the elderly ages without a child of the sex preferred for coresidence, thus potentially posing an additional threat. Several points from our findings, however, suggest that the repercussions of this are likely to be rather modest.

First, even where gender differences are evident with respect to coresidence with married children, older parents show at least some and often a great deal of flexibility when faced with a lack of options. Hence, as the number of families with children of all one gender increase, we may observe compensating shifts in gender patterns of coresidence. At the same time, persons who hold strong gender preferences are likely to adapt their fertility behavior to accommodate those preferences to the extent that they are able to do so. Thus even if a two child family is an ideal, when faced with two children of the non-preferred sex, some will opt to have another child. They may also turn to sex selective abortion to directly adjust the gender composition of their family. Hence, it is uncertain whether the increased absence of children of the preferred sex among future elderly will exert a major independent influence on future levels of coresidence. Moreover, the importance and prevalence of coresidence may be moderated in the future as formal support systems take hold in these countries. Secondly, with respect to material and social support, the gender of children doesn't appear to matter. Thus, changes in the gender composition of families are unlikely to exert much influence on these types of support transfers independent of the number of providers.

These observations suggest that the existence of gender preferences will not necessarily magnify the consequences of social and demographic change for the family support system to any substantial degree. Clearly, however, continued research that tracks changes in patterns of support and their relation to the sex of children over time is necessary to verify our speculations on this issue.

NOTES:

¹ See the September 1992 and December 1997 special issues of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* for a detailed treatment of old-age support in a number of Asian countries.

² In treating marital status for children we distinguish between single and ever-married. For convenience we refer to the latter group simply as married.

³ Given the expected positive association between large numbers of children and coresidence, the standardized percentages would be expected to be lower than non-standardized ones. This is true for Taiwan and Thailand but not for the Philippines. Prior analysis has shown that in the Philippines sample the relationship between number of children and likelihood of coresidence is somewhat irregular (Natividad and Cruz, 1997), probably due to fluctuations associated with small sample size.

⁴ While the results for the Chinese are based on well over 200 cases each for those whose children are all sons or all daughters, there are under 40 cases each for Malays and less than 20 for Indians.

⁵ The adjusted results represent mean predicted probabilities based on logistic regression with the covariates included being marital status, location and sex of the child (entered as categorical variables).

⁶ In our analysis we have not been able to distinguish region of origin among Singaporean Indians. Qualitative evidence from focus group discussions in Singapore, however, suggests that preference for coresidence with married sons was expressed by Indian participants from both the North and the South, although those from Southern India appeared to be more flexible (Mehta, Osman and Lee, 1995).

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Table 1. Percent of older respondents receiving various types of non-formal support from adult children, conditioned on availability

Type of support	Philippines	Singapore			Taiwan	Thailand
		Chinese	Malay	Indian		
% with no living (adult) children	4.5	4.1	3.2	7.2	5.0	4.5
% with no non-coresident child	8.4	15.9	17.0	22.4	11.0	9.1
Among respondents with 1+ (adult) child: Coresidence with 1+ (adult) child	70.6	89.3	91.6	78.2	71.7	72.5
Support from non-coresident children, among respondents with 1+ non-coresident child: Quasi-coresidence	53.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	28.3	64.7
Monetary support						
- any amount	86.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	88.1
- substantial amount	46.4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	69.1
Material support	88.7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	89.2
Social contact*						
- weekly or more	57.8	65.0	65.1	50.5	65.6	75.6
- monthly or more	72.3	92.9	89.7	79.6	84.0	88.3
Unweighted N (total sample)	1311	3334	458	209	3626	4486

* For Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand social contact refers to visits in either direction; for Singapore, contact includes visits, phone calls or letters.
n.a. = not available

Table 2. Coresidence with adult sons and daughters conditioned on availability, by respondent's marital status and gender

	Philippines	Singapore			Taiwan	Thailand
		Chinese	Malay	Indian		
	Total sample					
Among elderly who have child specified, % living with any:						
(Adult) son	48.6	77.1	67.5	64.9	67.8	39.1
(Adult) daughter	44.1	46.6	63.3	47.6	19.6	53.8
Single (adult) son	69.8	46.5	41.7	36.4	69.0	58.2
Single (adult) daughter	59.6	34.7	35.4	32.7	69.3	63.3
Married son	24.3	34.6	27.2	28.0	57.4	23.7
Married daughter	28.7	8.2	27.8	12.5	5.9	40.4
Ratio of living with:						
Single (adult) son/ single (adult) daughter	1.17	1.34	1.18	1.11	1.00	.92
Married son/ married daughter	.85	4.22	0.98	2.24	9.73	.59
	Unmarried males					
Ratio of living with:						
Single (adult) son/ single (adult) daughter	2.08*	1.26	.97	2.09*	.85	.69
Married son/ married daughter	.91	2.70	.91	.68	9.31	.53
	Unmarried females					
Ratio of living with:						
Single (adult) son/ single (adult) daughter	.94	1.40	1.20	.90	1.01	.82
Married son/ married daughter	.87	3.62	.96	2.11	8.20	.55

*Numerator and/or denominator of ratio is based on fewer than 50 cases.

Table 3. Quasi-coresidence with sons and daughters conditioned on availability, by respondent's marital status and gender

	Philippines	Taiwan	Thailand
	Total sample		
Among elderly who have non-coresident child of specified type, % living next door to or seeing daily:			
Son	43.1	25.0	47.3
Daughter	39.2	15.3	56.0
Ratio of living next door to or seeing daily: Son/daughter	1.10	1.63	.84
	Unmarried males		
Ratio of living next door to or seeing daily: Son/daughter	1.14	1.85	.82
	Unmarried females		
Ratio of living next door to or seeing daily: Son/daughter	1.08	1.64	.86

Table 4. Percent coresident with a married child, among elderly whose children are all married, by sex composition of children

Sex composition of living children	Philippines		Taiwan		Thailand	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
All						
Unstandardized	58.3	217	60.0	1010	65.6	2116
Standardized*	60.0	217	53.6	1010	63.8	2119
Those with only:						
Married sons	44.7	29	56.6	157	57.4	207
Married daughters	66.6	53	32.4	133	67.1	233

*Standardized on the distribution of number of married children for all families with only married children all of whom are the same sex.

N = unweighted number of cases.

Table 5. Percent living with parent and percent living adjacent or seeing parent daily, among children of the elderly

	Philippines		Taiwan		Thailand	
	Cores	Quasi	Cores	Quasi	Cores	Quasi
Among sibships with at least two children of each sex and all children are (adult)						
All	18.6	19.8	17.5	9.4	17.8	10.9
Oldest son	12.2	26.6	29.2	13.5	7.9	11.4
Youngest son	35.3	17.0	37.7	8.1	24.9	8.5
Oldest daughter	9.9	21.0	4.3	9.3	13.6	14.8
Youngest daughter	27.6	13.5	8.8	7.1	37.2	7.7
Among sibships with at least two children of each sex and all children have married						
All married children	11.2	23.2	13.3	10.3	11.5	14.2
Oldest married son	6.0	28.8	26.4	15.4	3.7	13.2
Youngest married son	21.7	23.6	28.7	11.1	16.1	11.8
Oldest married daughter	5.9	24.1	3.1	8.2	7.3	18.6
Youngest married daughter	17.6	18.5	3.2	7.3	31.4	10.6

Note: Adult children refer to all children who have married and all single children age 18 or over. Data are not available for Singapore.

Table 6. Percent of non-coresident children providing material support by marital status, location, and sex

	Any money		Substantial money		Food/clothes	
	Philippines	Thailand	Philippines	Thailand	Philippines	Thailand
Marital status						
Single	65.9	63.4	34.3	49.7	59.5	61.5
Ever married	56.7	60.9	15.3	31.3	63.1	73.5
Location						
Adjacent Dwelling	55.0	60.0	9.9	23.9	71.6	81.0
Same Community	55.7	53.7	10.9	20.1	67.1	75.9
Same region/ Province	55.5	61.3	14.2	31.6	60.8	72.6
Elsewhere	60.9	65.9	26.1	45.9	57.1	66.3
Sex (observed values)						
Son	57.3	58.5	17.4	31.9	61.8	67.9
Daughter	58.4	63.7	18.5	34.4	62.9	76.5
Sex (adjusted values)						
Son	57.5	58.4	17.7	31.5	61.5	68.3
Daughter	58.4	63.9	18.1	35.0	63.6	76.3

Table 7. Percent of non-coresident children providing social support (visitation) by marital status, location, and sex

	See parent at least monthly			See parent at least weekly		
	Philippines	Taiwan	Thailand	Philippines	Taiwan	Thailand
Marital status						
Single	31.0	56.3	38.6	15.0	31.1	16.2
Ever married	53.0	67.6	62.8	36.2	43.5	45.7
Location						
Adjacent dwelling	n.a.	97.3	96.9	n.a.	92.8	94.6
Same community	89.3	97.8	92.6	75.5	88.9	83.3
Same region/province	61.4	90.1	67.9	28.0	68.2	34.9
Elsewhere	18.0	50.5	21.0	6.0	22.5	4.8
Sex (observed values)						
Son	52.3	69.6	58.0	35.9	47.2	39.6
Daughter	46.7	64.7	62.7	30.0	39.5	45.7
Sex (adjusted values)						
Son	55.1	68.9	59.5	39.3	45.6	41.9
Daughter	53.7	65.4	61.6	36.8	40.7	43.8

n.a. = not available.