

Grandparenting and Intergenerational Solidarity in Singapore

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Abstract

Demographic, social, and structural changes are transforming intergenerational relationships and aging experiences in Asia. While multigenerational families have increased and the duration of grandparenting has lengthened, multigenerational households have declined. Grandparents are increasingly embedded in multigenerational support, care, and reciprocal relationships. The paper examines cognitive and affective dimensions of intergenerational solidarity and ambivalence through the lens of grandparenting using qualitative data from the city-state of Singapore. The findings show that grandparents cherish their relationships with their grandchildren. Grandparents phrased their relationships in terms of affection rather than obligation and duties. Also, not co-residing has not weakened the bonds between generations. Another finding is the strong norm among grandparents of not interfering in the lives of their children and grandchildren but being available for them.

Keywords

Asia; grandparenting; intergenerational relationships; older people; Singapore

Introduction

Intergenerational ties are central to shaping the aging experience in Asian societies. In many Asian societies, recent demographic, social, and structural changes are reshaping intergenerational bonds, relationships, and ties. The duration of grandparenting has lengthened, and the number of families with multiple generations alive has risen due to increasing longevity (Carr & Utz, 2020). While multigenerational families have increased, multigenerational households have declined throughout Asia (United Nations, 2017).

In this paper, we investigate intergenerational ties through the lens of grandparenting in an Asian setting. Singapore, the most developed country in Asia, has witnessed immense demographic changes: age structure changed from less than 5% of the population over the age of 65 in 1980 to 13% by 2017; household structure changed with the proportion of households with an older person increasing from 21% to 31% between 2000 and 2017; and life expectancy increased from 75.3 to 82.9 years between 2000 and 2017 (Malhotra et al., 2019). A significant reason for the changes in the age structure and the household structure was the rapid decline in fertility and the retreat from marriage. Fertility rates declined from 4.6 children per woman in 1965 to about 1.6 by 1987, further falling to around 1.2 children by 2010 (Chen & Yip, 2018). Delays in entering marriage and increasing rates of non-marriage have kept fertility rates low, as out-of-wedlock births are uncommon. It is projected that 1 in 4 citizens will be over 65 by 2030 (National Population and Talent Division, 2022).

On living arrangements, older persons who were married but not co-residing with children increased from 9.2% to 20.6% between 2000 and 2017. During the same period, older persons living alone increased from 7.5% to 13.4% and living in three generational arrangements decreased from 34.8% to 21.2% (Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2019). Changes in residential living arrangements have implications for intergenerational relationships. Although extended living arrangements were a common feature in the past, these patterns have been eroded (Esteve & Liu, 2017). In addition, this has changed the nature and boundaries of intergenerational relationships (Lou & Chi, 2012).

As an entirely urban country with rapid changes in family structures and living arrangements, Singapore provides an ideal setting to investigate changes in intergenerational aspects of grandparenting. Singapore has a rapidly aging population, high levels of economic development, and social and welfare policies that emphasize the importance of family in providing support. As state welfare is targeted and residual, families serve as an anchor and the primary support source (Strijbosch, 2015). Welfare policies are directed towards maintaining heterosexual married families through home ownership and other incentives. The government provides housing subsidies to promote intergenerational relationships if married children buy a house near their parents. Such schemes are intended to make it easier to provide intergenerational support—older parents provide support to care for grandchildren and for children to care for their parents when necessary (Yeung & Hu, 2018). The situation in Singapore foreshadows some of the changes currently underway in other countries in Asia and provides a unique setting for examining grandparenting and intergenerational relationships. While Singapore shares some similarities with other developmental states in East Asia, state interventions in the family domain are much more extensive in Singapore compared to East Asia. These include policies related to marriage, homeownership, and care work. The city's compact nature and accessible and affordable public transport system enable easier interactions across generations.

The demographic, social, and structural changes in Singapore impact family dynamics and intergenerational relationships. Demographic changes such as later age at marriage have increased the age at which one becomes a grandparent. Structural changes such as higher levels of educational attainment among younger cohorts and relatively higher standards of living have been accompanied by growing economic inequality, intense competition, and challenges with social mobility (Teo, 2015). The necessity to hold on to a job and build a stable career and the pressures to prepare children for a competitive educational and workforce environment put considerable strain on families (Jones, 2012).

The increase in dual-earner families and higher rates of women's participation in the labor force have increased the demand for grandchildren care by grandparents (Ko & Hank, 2014). This has further been exacerbated by the competitive nature of schooling, the intensive caring duties that parents often undertake, and the familistic model of care regimes in many Asian countries. Parents with young children see grandparents and foreign domestic workers (live-in helpers) as childcare options (Teo, 2018). Some care workers involved in raising children and caring for older adults have been transferred to live-in-helpers (Suratman & Mohamad, 2018). The presence of care workers increasingly mediates intergenerational care work. In addition to structural changes, there have been ideational changes in family norms and values, care obligations and reciprocity, and changing power relationships with older cohorts having considerably weaker influence now than in the past (Teo et al., 2003).

At the same time, demographic changes such as increases in longevity enable older men and women to spend longer in grandparenthood (Dommaraju & Wong, 2022; Xu & Chi, 2015). Within Asia, grandparenthood has heterogeneity, mirroring variation in the demographic, social, cultural, and welfare settings. For instance, patrilocal residential patterns in much of South Asia are common, with post-marital ties stronger between sons and their natal families. In Southeast Asia, the preference is for matrilocal residence, with daughters continuing to have stronger connections with their natal families (Dommaraju & Tan, 2014). The demographic variations in grandparenthood are also marked across regions in Asia, mirroring the marriage and fertility rates in the different regions. In regions where marriage continues to be universal and relatively early, most older adults will become grandparents earlier. However, in much of East Asia and Singapore, where marriage has been delayed, and many remain unmarried, many will not become grandparents. Those who do will become grandparents later and have fewer grandchildren (Dommaraju & Wong, 2022).

As in other parts of the world, grandparents in Asia are increasingly embedded in multigenerational support, care, and reciprocal relationships. Grandparenting provides an excellent lens to investigate intergenerational ties in the context of social, demographic, and structural changes in Asian societies. Intergenerational ties have multiple dimensions. One such dimension relates to the cognitive-affective aspects that comprise normative, affective, and consensual dimensions. This paper focuses on this dimension and investigates intergenerational ties from the grandparents' perspective using qualitative data. This examination contributes to the limited literature on grandparenting and intergenerational ties in Asia.

Intergenerational solidarity and ambivalence

The theory of intergenerational solidarity has been used to examine the interactions between members of different generations. This includes examining the type and nature of exchanges and reciprocity between generations (Roberts et al., 1991) and the dynamics of the interactions and relationships based on needs and changing social structures and norms (Moorman & Stokes, 2016; Quadagno, 2002). The theory has been applied to grandparenting and has proved helpful in understanding the role of grandparenting in shaping the aging experience (Clarke & Roberts, 2004), the nature of the familial bonds (Kivett, 1991), emotional attachments across generations (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989), the effect of grandparenting on quality of life (Gabriel & Bowling, 2004), and the challenges and ambivalence of grandparenting (Settersten & Trauten, 2009).

Bengtson (2001) described the intergenerational model in six dimensions. Affectual solidarity includes the expression of sentiments and evaluations by family members concerning other members of the family. Associational solidarity focuses on the type and frequency of contact among family members and other generations. Consensual solidarity concerns the unity of values and opinions among different generations. Functional solidarity covers the reciprocal support provided and received across generations. Normative solidarity is about norms, values, and filial and parental obligations. Structural solidarity centers on the geographical proximity between the family members and their interactions.

This paper focuses on three dimensions of intergenerational solidarity: normative, affectual, and consensual. Normative solidarity is defined concerning care obligations and norms about family solidarity (Bengtson & Schrader, 1982) and “expectations regarding filial obligations and parental obligations, as well as norms about the importance of familistic values” (Bengtson, 2001, p. 8). The expectation and obligation can take various forms: from older persons considered as the head of the household to the normative obligation and expectation of the younger generation to support the older generation (Kivett, 1991; Mehta, 2007; Noveria, 2014).

Normative expectations of grandparenting vary widely from independence to interdependence across societies. The normative aspects also differ for different groups within the same society—for instance, by ethnicity, educational achievement, marital status, and other characteristics of grandparents (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2012; Silverstein et al., 2006). The normative expectations, obligations, reciprocity, and trust between grandparents, parents, and grandchildren must contend with social, structural, and personal constraints and opportunities. On the one end, grandparents are considered substitute parents, typically in circumstances where parents are absent due to migration or incarceration (Giarrusso et al., 1996). On the other end, normative expectations of independence might constrain the nature of interactions between generations.

Affectual solidarity refers to the exchange of affection and intimacy and the feeling of togetherness among family members, the expression of sentiments, and the evaluation of relationships with other family members (Bengtson, 2001; Bengtson & Schrader, 1982). Emotional ties, bonds, and intimacy between grandparents and grandchildren depend on, among other factors, the personal characteristics of grandparents and their grandchildren, degree of association such as frequency of contact, visits, and interactions between generations (Bates & Taylor, 2013; Davey et al., 2009; Silverstein & Marengo, 2001). The middle

generation (children and children-in-law) plays a crucial role in mediating the emotional closeness between grandparents and grandchildren (Monserud, 2008; Xu et al., 2014). Intergenerational relationships are built and strengthened by emotions, affections, and sentiments (Szinovacz, 1998).

Consensual solidarity is the agreement or conflict between generations of values, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs (Bengtson, 2001; Szinovacz, 1998). It measures the level of consensus among family members' shared ideas and values (Mahne & Huxhold, 2012). It captures the degree of intergenerational unity in ideas and values (Silverstein et al., 1998). The degree of consensus depends on the specific characteristics of grandparents, children, and grandchildren. For instance, the level of consensus between grandparents and grandchildren of teenage parents is generally low (Thomas, 1990).

Similarly, the difference in educational levels and worldviews between grandparents and children could hinder consensual solidarity. And so do the views on the proper and appropriate amount of care that should be given to children, the marital status of children, and the level of involvement grandparents have in their grandchildren's lives (Sun, 2012; Zheng et al., 1997). A consistent finding is that the degree of consensual attitudes, beliefs, and opinions between generations positively impacts the grandparenting experience.

All three dimensions of intergenerational solidarity are characterized by ambivalence. As Connidis (2015) pointed out, ambivalence is a sensitizing concept that has proven helpful in understanding the different dimensions of solidarity. Ambivalence captures both the positive aspects and the confusion, mixed sentiments, and unsettled arrangements in relationships (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). There is debate on whether ambivalence is distinct from the solidarity model or a part of the solidarity model. Bengtson et al. (2002) considered ambivalence not as competing or clashing with the solidarity model, and each of them can be used to understand intergenerational ties. Ambivalence in thoughts, emotions, and relationships is tied to a similar set of factors as solidarity, such as the availability of resources, expectations, level of dependence, and association (Connidis, 2007; Girardin et al., 2018). Ambivalence is also affected by the competing aspects of solidarity, such as the normative expectation of co-residence, for instance, with a desire to live independently and not burden children (Ko, 2012).

The broader research on which this paper is based on set out to investigate different aspects of contemporary grandparenting. This included exploring attitudes and meanings associated with grandparenting, changing grandparenting roles, and how grandparenting shapes older people's identities. A key focus was on how grandparenting affects and shapes intergenerational relationships and solidarity, especially for grandparents who are not co-residing. Co-residing here means that grandchildren are not living in the same household as grandparents. As seen in our sample, many grandparents live with other unmarried children. The research questions were broadly framed based on the literature on grandparenting. In this paper, we present the results related to one domain of intergenerational solidarity from the Bengtson model. This model was chosen as it has proven very useful in the literature in understanding intergenerational aspects of older people's lives.

Method

This study is based on qualitative data collected using semi-structured interviews with 19 grandparents. The first author conducted all the interviews in 2019. The respondents were aged between 58 and 77, and all of them were Singapore citizens residing in Singapore. Out of the 19, 11 were grandmothers, and 8 were grandfathers. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. Three respondents were living alone, four were living with their spouse, and the rest were living with at least one other family member (such as unmarried children) in addition to their spouse. In Singapore, adults typically stay with their parents until they are married. Nearly 80% of residents live in high-quality public housing (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2022). However, single persons below 35 are not eligible to buy public housing flats. The high cost of private housing and rent discourages unmarried adult children from leaving their parental homes.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents Interviewed

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Race	Living arrangement
San	M	74	Indian	Living with spouse
Pooja	F	69	Indian	Living with spouse and one son
Sara	F	63	Indian	Living alone
Irfan	M	63	Malay	Living with spouse and one son
Akshaya	F	77	Indian	Living alone
Lalitha	F	58	Indian	Living with spouse
Bhaskar	M	69	Indian	Living with spouse and one daughter
Kin	M	63	Chinese	Living with spouse
Lola	F	63	Indian	Living with spouse and daughter
Hyna	F	69	Malay	Living with two sons
Amal	M	59	Malay	Living with spouse and two children
Wong	M	59	Chinese	Living with spouse
Vanaja	F	60	Indian	Living with son and daughter
Wang	M	65	Chinese	Living with spouse and one son
Subadra	F	66	Indian	Living alone
Khalid	M	67	Malay	Living with spouse and one daughter
Amina	F	65	Malay	Living with spouse
Khadija	F	59	Malay	Living with spouse and son
Hazeena	F	71	Indian	Living with spouse and son

The respondents included 10 Indians, 6 Malay, and 3 Chinese. Nine of the respondents were working. Two respondents had more than four grandchildren, and all others had between 1 and 4 grandchildren. The average for the sample was 2.8 grandchildren. The respondents were selected starting with the personal contacts and acquaintances of the first author and additional respondents by snowballing. The number of respondents was guided by the idea of data saturation but was also constrained by the practical consideration of the project's scope. Since the sample was built on contacts and snowballing, the sample does not reflect the ethnic proportion of the population of Singapore nor the diversity of experiences from different socio-economic and family contexts.

Semi-structured interviews were designed to collect in-depth information on various dimensions of intergenerational solidarity in addition to information on individual and family characteristics. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before conducting the interviews. All the interviews were conducted one on one and with no other persons present and took place at the respondent's home or in a public place with privacy. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. The interview questions included a mix of direct, indirect, probing, and interpretive questions. These included questions on living arrangements, role conflicts, interactions, emotions, experiences, and feelings toward grandparenting.

Some of the questions that guided the interview included: have you ever taken care of or are you taking care of your grandchildren now? Why did you do it? How did it affect your relationship with your children? What are your children's expectations of you as a family member? All interviews were conducted in English and recorded. Pseudonyms are used in the findings.

The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy. The first author read the transcripts several times to get a good sense of the data. Similar to the approach reported by Sichling (2022), data analyses were based on a combination of deductive and inductive methods. The first author derived the first set of codes based on the literature review of the theories related to intergenerational solidarity presented earlier in this paper. These codes (such as reciprocity and ambivalence) were refined inductively based on the themes that emerged from the data. The limitations of using this methodology, including issues about validity, are discussed in the last section. The findings here are grouped based on the dimensions from Bengtson's theory presented earlier in the literature review.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (COA no: IRB-2018-03-025) prior to data collection.

Findings

Normative solidarity

The normative dimension of obligations, duties, values and expectations as expressed by grandparents during the interviews included the terms: "respect," "love," "closeness," "non-interference," "helping," "care," "listening," and "understanding."

Respondents valued the respect they received from their children and grandchildren and considered this an indicator of their positive relationship with their children and grandchildren. Respect for them included honoring and following their advice, doing things to accommodate their views, and showing understanding and valuing them. This was rarely ever framed in terms of duty but rather in conditional form – respect as something that must be earned but not something to be demanded.

Grandparents saw it as their role to inculcate values of respect and care in their grandchildren. Some grandparents framed normative obligations they expected by looking at them through

reciprocity and emphasizing the contingent nature of obligations. The obligations were not absolute in their view but contingent on how they treated their children and grandchildren. As one grandmother put it: respect, care, and love they receive “depends on how we take care when they were young. We show them the love, then we take care of them [...]” (Vanaja, female, age 60). She explicitly connected her happy relationship with her grandchildren to her loving relationship with her children. This was repeated by other respondents too. As one other respondent observed, the middle generation's continuity and importance were highlighted. Her granddaughters respected her as they were following her parents.

On the Asian normative expectation of intergenerational co-residence, respondents uniformly preferred to live independently, though they acknowledged the potential benefits of co-residence. In the context of the question, co-residence is about living with married children and their son-in-law or daughter-in-law and grandchildren. As much as they cherished their time with grandchildren, they would rather not stay with their married children and grandchildren.

Of course, if you stay together, there is always help around. There are a lot of people to help you. There are a lot of interactions. [...] of course, you don't have much privacy with everybody together. [...] if you are staying alone, you have all the privacy. You can do whatever you want. [...] I forward, I prefer privacy. It's much easier for me to get along without anybody interfering.

(San, male, age 74)

There is a complex mix of reasons for independent living, including the desire for privacy (for all generations). As a respondent said: “You can be yourself if you are alone. You can do what you want” (Sara, female, age 63). A belief that living separately will lead to less conflict and friction, especially in grandparenting “because they are the younger generation, they have their own way of bringing up children. You must allow them to do what they want. [...] So, it is better children stay with their children” (Akshaya, female, age 77). This preference was also tied to their desire to allow their children to experience parenting, the struggles, and joys that come with it, and lead their own life, “learn how is life, how is family life. [...]” (Amal, male, age 59), and giving children the space to bring up their own families.

Grandparents could pursue their interests if they lived alone. Living separately will allow “time to do the thing we want” (Bhaskar, male, age 69). In the context of Singapore, the compact nature of urban space allows families to stay in proximity even if they are not co-residing. Most respondents reported living “reasonably near,” “staying near,” and “quite near.” In the absence of co-residence, grandparents reported that frequent contact leads to thick bonding between grandparents and grandchildren.

Affectual solidarity

As described by the grandparents, the emotional and intimate bonds were about routine activities of going out, having dinner together, traveling, spending time with each other, and just seeing each other. Grandparents actively engaged with their grandchildren in many ways: “we chitchat, not often go out, sometimes go together shopping, play along with them [...] We take care of him, sometimes we teach him also, sometimes we tell a story” (Wong, male, age 59). Several grandparents talked about cooking lunch or dinner and sharing their

experiences and memories as ways of bonding with their grandchildren. The affectual bonds were deeply felt when grandparents could not engage in those everyday activities.

The visit of grandchildren and the time spent with them were cherished and recollected in detail.

I usually invite them for lunch or dinner [...] older granddaughter is very attached to me. She usually wants to sit down with me. She is very interested in drawing. So, I get drawing pencils and colored pencils. She will ask me to draw, and then she wants to color. Sometimes she asks me to play a game, and I say I play ball with her. I have a few toys for her. Sometimes my son, myself, and my daughter-in-law all of us get involved. We played with her and entertained her. Sometimes we bring her to the playground [...] I feel very happy because they are so attached to me even though they see me once a week. The elder granddaughter is very attached. She won't come into the house if she doesn't see me. I must open the door, then only she must come in. she is so attached. [...] I don't feel tired, I really feel sad when they leave, but I can't hold them.

(Pooja, female, age 69)

For most grandparents, such visits occurred weekly, at longer intervals, and for shorter periods. This gave such visits added significance. For some of the grandparents, the period without visits was “extremely quiet,” “empty,” “miss them,” and, at times, “lonely.” This was more so for those whose grandchildren were not staying in Singapore. For these grandparents, the primary source of contact was through phone and online conversations.

Consensual solidarity

Grandparents voiced their desire to maintain good relationships. For them, this meant extending support for their children and grandchildren while not interfering in their lives. In talking about this aspect, grandparents mentioned the changing views on privacy and the desire of the younger generation and their desire to be independent. They framed their actions to accommodate the changing norms.

Non-interference is seen as a critical strategy to maintain consensual solidarity. This is an acknowledgment of the possibility of conflict when grandparents get involved in the lives of their children or grandchildren. Moreover, implicit in it is the view on the primacy of parents and the expectation that the primary responsibility of raising children is with the parents.

I never interfere with taking care of children, even though I am a doctor. If I want to give running nose medicine to my grandchild will call my daughter-in-law and ask her permission. Can I give it? I try my best to follow. In my previous experience, I learned it's the best way. As a grandmother, my job is to be happy with them, play with them, don't want to discipline them. We just want to be happy. If they did anything wrong, I would tell their parents. They must decide what they want to do.

(Sara, female, age 63)

Before they gave birth, I went to take a course for grandmas on how to take care of grandchildren. [...] I don't offer any idea. Your style, I follow you.

I respect the new pattern. Otherwise, you got an argument, no respecting give way, lah. Sometimes they want to do their way. The new generation got a new style.

(Kin, male, age 63)

Grandparents overwhelmingly expressed their desire to maintain healthy relationships with their children, children-in-law, and grandchildren. A vital strategy was not interfering but being available to assist their children when necessary. Non-interference should not be construed as being indifferent but instead as drawing a boundary on what was perceived as the limit of acceptability to their children.

To maintain consensual bonds, grandparents expressed the need to respect the children's and the child-in-law's views. This meant sharing and communicating with them. A respondent mentioned that his daughter-in-law had different opinions and views, and while he found it a "bit difficult," he "left them alone" to avoid disagreements and unhappiness. Another respondent said, "you must allow them to do what they want." Only one of the respondents mentioned that her children "just leave me alone" on matters regarding her caring for grandchildren.

Discussion and conclusion

The paper presented findings related to three dimensions of intergenerational solidarity. Examining intergenerational relationships is of growing importance as many countries in Asia are facing the demographic prospect of rapid aging and societal changes. Investigating intergenerational solidarity sheds light on the changing norms, values, expectations, and experiences surrounding grandparenting. The literature on Asian grandparenting experiences is negligible (Xu & Chi, 2015), and much of the literature is from non-Asian settings. The study adds to the understating of the diversity of grandparenting experiences in Asia (Mehta & Thang, 2012; Thang, 2010).

Examining grandparenting and intergenerational solidarity is necessary because of the demographic transformations of an aging population in Asia and the widespread changes in the family. The economic, gender, and social spheres are reshaping the grandparenting experiences. As Furstenberg (2020) observed, grandparenting helps us to see how older people use their agency to reconceive and shape their aging experience and highlight the role grandparents play in aiding and maintaining relationships between generations.

The findings highlighted the deliberated association between grandparents, parents, and grandchildren, focusing on normative, affective, and consensual dimensions. One result of the study is that grandparents cherish their relationships with their grandchildren, which is a source of happiness for most of them. Similar to Carr and Utz (2020), who found that grandparenting was associated with joy and optimism. The aspects that brought joy and optimism were like some of the themes identified by Mansson (2016): mutual affection, shared activities, and teaching and learning across generations. The grandparents' affection was evident in how they recounted their experiences with their grandchildren. Grandparents actively planned for shared activities, and they considered it their role to transmit values and traditions to the next generation. These findings echo earlier work by Mehta and Thang (2006) and Thang (2016) about the mutual desire for emotional closeness between grandparents and grandchildren and the role of grandparents as transmitters of tradition.

Relationships with grandchildren were positively phrased in terms of affection rather than on notions of duties and obligations. Though grandparents cherished their time with their grandchildren, they expressed ambivalence in staying with their children and grandchildren. While co-residence could increase the duration of contact with other generations, grandparents perceived non co-residence as better for maintaining healthy relationships. This would reduce friction due to close and frequent contact and allow for greater freedom and independence for both generations to pursue their own lives. Ambivalence is the recognition of changing values, norms, and expectations. As Thang et al. (2011) noted, the grandparenting role increasingly competes with pursuing other interests and activities among older people in Asia.

The following finding relates to whether non co-residence undermines the affectual bonds between generations. This does not seem to be the case in our sample of respondents. The affectual bonds were strong even though grandparents were not co-residing. Though intergenerational bonds have weakened in some parts of Asia due to co-residence changes (Hettige & De Silva, 2014; Kohli, 2015; Young & Grundy, 2009), this does not seem to be the case in Singapore. This could be because of the compact and accessible nature of urban space in Singapore and near-universal home ownership through public housing. This makes it easier for grandparents to stay closer to their children and have frequent interactions even if they are not co-residing.

Meyer and Kandic (2017) noted the convergence in grandparent and parenting roles in the west and the intensification of grandparenting for some grandparents. Grandparents in the present study were not involved in intensive grandparenting and did not express negative feelings towards grandparenting. A point clearly articulated by grandparents in the study was the emphasis on the parenting role being done by parents. In the United States, intensive grandparenting is primarily driven by the rise in diversity of family forms from single parents to high rates of incarceration for some racial groups. In the case of Singapore, however, traditional family forms remain predominant and reinforced by norms and structural and policy measures. In addition, the employment of foreign domestic workers to do housework remains common in households with young children. Sun (2012) observed that this mediates the relationship and reduces grandparents' work. In recent years, the broader network of state-subsidized preschool centers has aided in lowering the caring role of grandparents. However, as Teo (2018) observed, based on her work on low-income families in Singapore, care work, including childcare, is outsourced to grandparents. Such care work might be necessary so that parents can continue to work. Also, the competitive education and labor markets might push the middle generation to seek care assistance from their parents (Sun, 2012).

The interviews bring to the fore the social expectation and evolving norm of non-interference by grandparents in the affairs of their grandchildren and children. At the same time, the expectation of being there for them is vital. The grandparents in the study were keen to recount the occasions when they did not interfere, even if they had strong opinions. This norm in an Asian setting is strikingly like "normative talk" of "not interfering" and "being there" documented in the United Kingdom (May et al., 2012). As Thang et al. (2011) suggested, such norms reveal the tension and ambiguities of grandparenting in Asia. Non-interference could be due to the desire to achieve consensual solidarity and the earlier mentioned notion of staying out of matters that are thought of as parental responsibility (Thang, 2012). Overall, the study's findings did not show significant levels of ambivalence. As Hogerbrugge and Komter (2012) pointed out, this could be because the sample was selective (discussed next) or the

ambivalence is not as widespread as is often considered and call for caution in generalizing the findings.

The study findings are limited in several ways. The size of the sample and the diversity of the respondents chosen for the study were limited by the project's scope. To fully understand the intergenerational dynamics presented in the paper would require a more extensive and diverse group of respondents. Such a group could include grandparents doing intensive grandparenting and grandparents whose grandchildren are not staying in Singapore. Most of the respondents in the survey were from minority ethnic groups and middle-class backgrounds in Singapore. The analyses did not investigate the differences across ethnic and class divisions. As the interviews were conducted at a single point, it is possible that respondents did not want to present a significant negative picture of the intergenerational relationship to the researcher. The interview excluded migrant grandparents and grandparents from interracial families. The analysis did not explicitly investigate gender and grandparenting. As with parenting, gender is likely to shape grandparenting roles, expectations, identities, and care work. As noted by Fogiel-Bijaoui (2013), in a different context, grandparenting is gendered, and grandmothers ease the burden of household work, childcare, and domestic care for the younger generation.

The analyses presented in the paper are based on a simple approach that limits the possibility of making firmer conclusions. Drawing more decisive findings would require a much more rigorous and systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data, including coding and testing the validity of the results. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study's conclusions enlarge the understanding of Asian grandparenting.

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