# TRADITIONAL COLLECTIVE VALUES AND IMPORTED INDIVIDUALISTIC CONCEPTS COLLIDE IN TAIWAN: HOW DOES THE GRANDPARENT-GRANDCHILD RELATIONSHIP CHANGE?

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# Declaration

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is all my own work, and it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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# The Abstract:

Care for old people is a particular concern in ageing societies. In Taiwan, traditional collective cultures encourage collective practice, including informal family care of elderly people. However, social change is modifying traditional values and behaviours, leading some commentators identify a western style of individualism on this change. This thesis explores how Taiwanese young adult grandchildren and their grandparents interpret 'collectivism' and 'individualism' and think about or draw on these value systems in familial interactions. This was achieved through in-depth individual interviews with 20 pairs of college-aged grandchildren and their grandparents living in different locations and family households.

The research questions mainly focus on three areas. Firstly, how perceptions of the role, and the attached expectations of being a grandchild construct contemporary grandchildren's understandings of their orientations to their families. Secondly, how grandchildren interpret traditional and what they understand imported individualistic value systems and how these operate on personal and family lives. Lastly, how the two generations, grandparents and grandchildren, perceive transformation of Taiwanese society and family, particularly their views of the effects of domestic-demographics and wider structural changes on the grandparent-grandchild relationship over time.

How grandchildren viewed collectivism and individualism and reported their behaviours towards the grandparent generation was both as expected in terms of the results of previous research and contained some unexpected outcomes. According to the interviewees, being more individualistic is responsible for causing distance between family members, whereas possessing more collective perspectives encourages more communal considerations for common benefit. However, grandchild informants acknowledged benefits of individualistic concepts and use them to rationalise intergenerational flows that do not follow tradition, arguing that personal considerations themselves are able to contribute more collective practices. Interestingly, the expressed views of the grandchild generation reverse commonly

perceived negative impacts of individualistic concepts on collective interests. Critically, the youth in Taiwan still regards themselves as being primarily guided by collective-based doctrines, by indicating how traditional Chinese values are still prioritised. Meanwhile, the concepts of individualism are placed as complementary principles by the grandchildren, although they and their grandparents had identified some negative effects of individualistic-led tendencies in their society and families.

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# 1  CHAPTER ONE: CHANGING TAIWANESE CONTEXTS

## 1.1  Introduction

The increasingly long life expectancy and lower fertility rates across the world have made care of the elderly a crucial concern for both state and family. Ageing societies face the challenges of properly distributing resources and assistance to the elderly. This issue has been investigated in various ways across diverse social circumstances and from different national contexts (Ashton 1996; Bengtson and Putney 2000; Brannen 2006; Brannen, Moss and Mooney 2004; Fan 2006, 2007; Gu and Liang 2000; Hoff 2007; Kivette 1985; Sung 2000). However, there is no clear congruence within these studies to claim what the best way is to distribute care for the older generation. This indicates the complexity of this specific concern.

Writing about Germany, Hoff (2007) seems to reflect a situation found by many authors when emphasising the three-generation family network, pointing out the importance of family exchange and intergenerational support for care for the elderly. Nevertheless, many authors indicate there are significant challenges to the practice of giving informal support to the older generation in the family context suggesting that individualism or the process of individualisation may result in changes to family support. For example, Kemp's article (2004) employs the individualisation thesis to explain the reasons for current young generations of Canadians being less attached to traditional social relationships and value systems since young people re-evaluate their identities with greater individual self-fulfilment and consideration. He also argues that the nature and operation of institutionalised individualism, which involves a focus on individuals rather than groups, could cause tension between the obligation for familial roles and the responsibility for people themselves. In his grandparent – adult grandchild research (Kemp ibid.), the effect of institutionalised individualism is clearly argued on the adult grandchild interviewees, as illuminating the absence of the prescriptive norms within grandparent-grandchild interactions.

Importantly, the similar research findings are well established in the western academia, which argue the influence of individualism and individualisation process in the domestic domain (Kemp 2005) and are also being raised in the context of Asia (Yan 2003, 2006).

Although these terms are somewhat contested, arguably, individualism has progressed powerfully through the twenty-first century; there is far greater pursuit of the individual life and individual interests than before. Meanwhile, the process of individualisation has also reshaped interactions within families and has released many people from prescriptive norms. Accordingly, individualisation and individualism may have a negative influence on communal co-operation. Therefore, the potentially detrimental impact what individualism and individualisation could bring to family mutuality is clearly a matter of concern. How people simultaneously manage the pursuit of their own interest and the demands of love and caring for other family members has become a matter of sociological interest (Roseneil and Budgeon 2004). Taken in combination, the incompatibility for individuals in contemporary society between self-interested personal consideration and solidarity with others or in-group mutuality has been consistently emphasised in relevant scholarship.[1]

Correspondingly, this study was initially motivated by concerns about the care of the elderly in a Taiwanese context where collectivism and individualism as core values collide. It is set up to explore the reasons and experience of grandparents and grandchildren, in terms of their relationships, especially grandchildren's assistance towards their grandparents.[2] Taiwan society was chosen for consideration in this field because of its specific cultural and social environments, which fit into the aforementioned complexity between collective practices and individualistic interests. Stating it like this, Taiwanese culture can be characterised as somewhat based on traditional Chinese values that adhere to collective preference and interpersonal assistance; hence, family domestic support for the older generation is primarily taken for granted. However, social change is gradually modifying these cultural values and

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[1] For more information, please see Chapter Two.
[2] The reason for focusing on these two generations will be discussed in more detail in the later sections. For more information, please see Chapter Three.

the behaviour of family members, and some scholars and commentators even identify a Western style of individualism and individualisation, which emphasise individual interest and self-fulfilment (Croll 2006; Yang 2003, 2009). Consequently, people within a family or group may become more individualistic-led in their behaviour, possibly having a negative effect on their communal interactions. Within the controversial context stemming from these seemingly contradictory Taiwanese cultural and social phenomena, people's domestic interaction in this specific country deserves further explorations.

Following Cheal (2002) who noted the salience of cultural diversity and social contexts for family complexity, I shall discuss these dimensions separately to offer overall information on the historical, social and domestic backgrounds of Taiwan. The discussion will concentrate on the cultural, social and domestic transformations over time, to highlight how this society has changed, as well as on the reasons for and consequences of these changes, in order to explain the rationale of this study.

In relation to Taiwanese culture, I shall explain the connections between Taiwan and China and why, ultimately, Taiwan tends to look to Chinese values. Meanwhile, the childhoods of the grandparent participants in two geographical contexts will be presented. One dimension encompasses the lives of the grandparents who grew up in China; the other one highlights the circumstances of those grandparents who were raised in Taiwan. This approach is adopted because the study includes four grandparents participants who experienced different national and social contexts during their childhoods in China, bringing to light the different conditions of their upbringing compared to that of their 16 counterparts who grew up in Taiwan.[3] Accordingly, the effects on family interactions of the grandparents' different social environments during childhood may be drawn on. Next, I shall focus on the transformations taking place on Taiwan Island, emphasising the difference between the past and the present social environments, to highlight the rapidity of social change in Taiwan over time. This process will illustrate how the society has changed and what the potential consequences are for family interaction and relationships, in

3  More information, please see Appendix 1.

order to argue for the relation between society and family. Lastly, attention is drawn to the transformations taking place within the family, especially regarding family construction and family labour distribution, to examine in detail how different family members arrange their family lives in comparison with past practice, and the associated outcomes on family relationships.

### 1.1.1  Cultural and political contexts

The island of Taiwan, located to the east of China (see Appendix 2), is approximately 400 km long and 145 km wide. It was mainly inhabited by Taiwanese aborigines up to the 17th century, when a Dutch colony established in Taiwan. Importantly, the truly significant association between Taiwan and China began when the Qing Dynasty of China conquered Taiwan and made Taiwan a province of China (Roy 2003), subsequently governing it until 1911. In a critical development, Dr. Sun, Yat-Sen, the National Father of the Republic of China and founder of the Kuomingtan (KMT), overthrew the Qing Dynasty of China and freed this country from the imperial system from 1912 onwards. However, the 1911 revolution did not bring lasting peace, the social conditions of mainland China and Taiwan were both tough, but in very different conditions. This is because that, on the one hand, China was controlled by the Nationalist Party- KMT and a number of national and civil wars made the country rather unstable. On the other hand, as an outcome of China's suit for peace in 1895 after the First Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan and the Penghu group were ceded to Japan by China in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, initiating Taiwan's nearly five-decade colonisation under Japanese rule.

In the coming sections, I shall discuss the reasons for and nature of these instabilities in China and Taiwan respectively, in order to promote a clearer understanding of Taiwanese history and its connection to China.[4]

China

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4  Please see Appendix 3.

In China, after the 1911 revolution, the whole situation during that period was difficult, due to a series of wars. Firstly, there was the Chinese Civil War, from 1927 to 1950, between the forces of the KMT and the forces of the Communist Party of China (CPC), both of which claimed to be the legitimate government of China. Following the 24-year conflict, the KMT surrendered to the CPC, and the KMT's armed forces and government retreated to Taiwan, along with their remaining soldiers. Meanwhile, the newly formed CPC stayed in mainland China, took over sovereignty from the KMT, and began to govern China. During this period the second Sino-Japanese War, merging with World War Two, was also going on in mainland China, from 1937 to 1945. Influentially, the Japanese invasion of mainland China happened in 1937 and temporarily ended the conflict between the KMT and the CPC, forcing these two parties into an uneasy alliance. However, the Japanese military still succeeded in pushing the Chinese back and capturing Shanghai, Nanjing and Wuhan, which were very significant locations in Chinese politics. Subsequently, the Nanjing massacre took place under the Japanese occupation, an estimated 20,000 Chinese lost their lives to the Japanese victory. Finally, the Japanese invasion ended in surrender at the conclusion of World War Two in 1945.

Without doubt, the period was not easy for the young, newly established Nationalist party- KMT. Internal division, communist revolution and World War Two had created tough national and social conditions during this tumultuous period in mainland China. Recurring violent conflicts failed to offer people stable lives, and in these circumstances the lack of sufficient resources could be foreseen. In contrast, it is notable that people inhabiting Taiwan in the same period, and subject to Japanese policies, had rather different lifestyles.

Taiwan

The situation in Taiwan differed from that in mainland China during this period, because of the Japanese occupation. Taiwan was under Japanese rule until 1945, when Japan returned Taiwan and the Pescadores to the Republic of China (R.O.C.), as part of their surrender at the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In order to 'integrate Taiwan's economy into Japanese Empire (Long 1991: 28), a number of

developments were planned and introduced in Taiwan, with all their immediate advantages accruing to the Japanese government (Roy 2003; Rubinstein 1999). For instance, there was investment in agricultural productivity, the systems of irrigation, transportation and communication were significantly improved (Hermalin et al.; Long ibid.), the telegraph lines and postal facilities were extended, and the bank of Taiwan was founded (Wang 1999). As a result, the import-export trade between Taiwan and Japan outweighed that between Taiwan and China, illustrating the salience of Taiwanese resources for the Japanese Empire at the time (Long ibid.). Not only did the gross production of agriculture surge by 3.4 percentages per annum between 1901-1905 and 1936-1940 (Ho 1968); also, the cultivated area increased by 38 per cent between 1905 and 1940 (Hermalin et al. ibid. 1994). Moreover, education was extended, in that the male enrolment in elementary school grew from less than 5 per cent in 1905 to 40 per cent in 1920, and to 81 per cent in 1940 (Tsurumi 1977; see Hermalin et al. 1994). Importantly, all these investments were made for the sake of fully supplying Japan, but Taiwan was also to benefit from the plans through the associated processes of modernisation and democratisation (Roy ibid.; Rubinstein ibid.).

Under fifty years of Japanese governance, because of the well-planned developments instituted by the Japanese government and the lack of civil wars in the territory, people were more secure both financially and socially, compared to those who were in mainland China. Alongside these impressive improvements in Taiwanese society, it is worth mentioning that it remained highly labour-intensive because tools and machinery were insufficiently improved to allow agricultural progress. Thus people experienced a burdensome way of life (Wang 1999), plus political suppression and second-class citizenship under the Japanese government (Roy 2003; Rubinstein 1999). In brief, these developments implemented by the Japanese government during its colonisation all had a strategic influence on later processes that benefited Taiwan (Roy ibid.; Rubinstein ibid.).

The complexity of the Taiwanese situation did not end with the return of Taiwan by the Japanese to China in 1945. Critically, consistent conflicts occurred between

Taiwanese people and the Chinese administration (the Republic of China), which made the governance of Taiwan more challenging. Moreover, the influx of Chinese people into Taiwan, led by the KMT government, occurred four years later, followed by the defeat of the KMT in civil war. Internal conflict continued and became even more severe, although the arrival of the Chinese led to the establishment by the Republic of China of an independent nation on this island – Taiwan.

After the takeover of Taiwan from Japan, and before the retreat of the government of the R.O.C. into Taiwan, political and social conditions there were in a state of upheaval. At that point, reintegration of Taiwan into China was a more complicated process than simple liberation from Japanese rules, in terms of political, social and economic developments during 1895-1945, mainland China and Taiwan had nothing in common. In particular, the failure to improve Taiwan under the Qing Dynasty,[5] plus the positive economical aspects of the colonial experience, created increasing tension between the provincial administration and the local population in Taiwan. Eventually, in 1947, this tension exploded into the 228 incident.[6] Taiwanese local people initially took control of the island, only to be massacred by the military force coming from mainland China, which illustrated how severe the conflict between the Nationalist government and the inhabitants of Taiwan was. This uprising also augured the failure to assimilate and reintegrate Taiwan into China.

After the retreat from mainland China to Taiwan in 1949, disharmony persisted between, on the one hand, the administrative elites and the privileged military from mainland China, and, on the other, the local inhabitants of Taiwan, both mainlanders and Taiwanese. This situation led to the imposition of martial law (also called 'White Terror') and forging a politically repressive state in Taiwan, to cease the internal conflict. Although the loss of political democracy was criticised, the Nationalist

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5 The Chinese government showed no interest in controlling Taiwan. At the start, Taiwan was a place for the government to send illegal immigrants, pirates or the people who rebelled against the government politically or militarily. In addition, the officials sent to Taiwan were corrupt and failed to improve the island (Roy 2003).
6 The 228 incident consisted of anti-government activity, which was violently suppressed by the KMT (the Nationalist government). This historic event saw the massacre of Taiwanese citizens and is seen as the critical point in the initiation of martial law (Edmondson 2002).

government concentrated its effort and energy on economic transition (Wang 1999). In brief, this section functions as a prequel of past Taiwanese history, not only to facilitate discussion of what Taiwan was like and the relations with the mainland China, but also to provide basic knowledge of the childhood of the grandparent participants.

Post-War History

The post-war period from the 1950s to the 1960s in Taiwan was a crucial stage of transition in domestic affairs, in that a number of economic reforms were brought in by the government. For instance, promotion of the textile, plastic and rubber industries was the main official project in the effort to transform an agricultural economy to an industrial one; but agriculture remained substantial (Hermalin et al. 1994; Wang 1999). Nevertheless, after the 1970s, the pathway to an industry-based Taiwan became clear, as new technologies and new crops were introduced, additional industries were promoted and the agrarian economy lost its dominance on the island. (Rubinstein 1999). Meanwhile, school attendance at junior and senior high school level markedly increased because of the initiation of nine-year compulsory education in 1968 as a means of leading this country into more knowledge-intensive industries (Hermalin et al. ibid.). In the 1980s, Taiwan shifted its orientation from labour-intensive to knowledge-intensive, due to the heavy investment in education in the 1970s and the earlier developments in social infrastructure. Except for a series of improvements in Taiwan, in 1986, just before the lifting of martial law, political reforms had been introduced and the implementation of constitutional democracy became a crucial goal from that moment on, as Taiwan made the transition to a democratic country (Chou and Nathan 1987). With the improvements in the economy, the educational system and society, the demand for an end to martial law grew stronger, leading finally to its abolition in 1987 by President Chian Ching-Kao.

Moreover, in present-day Taiwan, people of Han extraction form 76.9% of the population, Hakka people 10.9%, and immigrants from China about 10%, the remaining 1.4% being composed of indigenous people and other minorities

(Government Executive Yuan 2009). This demographic asymmetry and the history of Taiwan and China underpin the fact that the most prevalent language nationally is Chinese and the core values and traditions of Taiwanese people are heavily based on Confucianist-Han Chinese culture (Government Executive Yuan 2008c). To an extent, Taiwan can justly be perceived as a 'Chinese nation', as its society is guided by Chinese principles in both domestic and societal domains, in terms of its political and cultural contexts. This cultural background influences various aspects of life of Taiwanese people, especially familial systems (Lu et al. 2006; Tu et al. 1993). Correspondingly, Chinese culture mainly embodies two fundamental principles: filial piety and collectivism (Hsieh 2004; Jordan 1986; Nuyen 2004; Park and Chesla 2007). Filial piety is seen as the root of humanity in Confucianism; it primarily emphasises the principles that regulate how respectfully and responsibly the younger generation should behave towards their seniors (Fan 2006). With respect to collectivism, the Chinese Confucian moral doctrines are mainly built up in collective processes as 'part of a person's historical tradition' (Nuyen ibid.: 443).

Taking filiality in combination with collectivism, the Taiwanese cultural milieu helps illustrate to what extent traditional Chinese values have cultivated people within a culturally collective principle. In this collective-based society, care for the elderly should not be an issue, because familial assistance is supposed to be provided where it is needed – according to traditional Chinese rites. However, this society has changed consistently as an effect of worldwide technological progress and other improvements, so that maintaining its traditional values unchanged seems impossible. More importantly, the extent to which Taiwanese traditional collective culture has changed and the associated consequences for the domestic sphere, which is relatively crucial, will be discussed in the coming section.

## 1.1.2  Social context

Inevitably, Taiwanese society has been brought into a rather different world from that of its past, as a consequence of the various developments mentioned above.

However, the way these historical and societal changes have affected its social landscape, especially in regard to the interaction within families, turns out to be a substantial question for this study.

Accordingly, we should consider various developments in Taiwan that began at the end of World War II, transforming post-war Taiwan into an industrialised country (Chiou 2001; Lu et al. 2006). As a result, the expanding manufacturing and service-producing industries replaced the important traditional industries, such as agriculture and textile industry. Take agriculture as an example for further discussion, according to official statistics in Taiwan, the distribution of labour in agriculture fell from over 30 % before 1960s, to 15% in 1987, and again to 5% in 2007; however, the proportion employed in the service industry over the same 20-year period increased from 40% to 52% and then 58% (Government Executive Yuan 2008a). More importantly, we shall focus on what happened in the family as a result of these social transformations. Arguably, Taiwanese people now interact differently when cooperating with others, leading to a less domestic and collective mode of working, following the transformation from an agriculture-based community to an industry-led society.

Take agrarian economy for example, an intensive labour force was a fundamental requirement for seeding and harvesting, given the lack of agricultural tools and machinery (Wang 1999). Moreover, in the Taiwanese past, labour-intensive work, such as agriculture industry, was mainly based on family units. Under such a circumstance, frequent interaction of family members and relatives was required for the purpose of efficient productivity. By contrast, service industries are not inherently oriented towards labour-intensive familial solidarity, a quality which is more typically found in agriculture or the textile industry. Such technological- or knowledge-intensive solidarity is needed in technological and service industries. Therefore, as a result of these industrial developments, the family is no longer seen as a working unit and the need for collective labour among family members has diminished.

As for changes in the domestic sphere, apart from shifts in population distribution from traditional agriculture to industry, people have had to leave their home towns and villages and move into larger cities in search of better jobs or promotion, as an outcome of industrialisation. Consequently, people in Taiwan have been compelled to alter their original family format from the traditional three-generation household to the nuclear and conjugal one (Government Executive Yuan 2006b, see Appendix 4; Government Executive Yuan 2004; Tung et al. 2006). The information in Appendix 4 indicates that the distribution of three-generation households decreased from 17% to 15% between 1988 and 2004, whereas the percentage of other types of family is rising.[7] With reference to national statistics, it is argued that industrial developments in a country can change the formation of families; the processes involved can also be hypothesised from these data. Moreover, it is worth considering how family members would interact with each other if they lived in different family formats. Greater geographical mobility between relatives is perhaps a factor in the level of frequency of family interaction (Harwood and Lin 2000; Kivett 1985). Family members who live relatively close to each other, or in the same neighbourhood, may experience greater interaction, because of the absence of the obstacles presented by long-distance travel, than those who live far from other family members.

In brief, the phenomena of these industrial transformations and family reconstructions seem to suggest that collective ties and the need for cooperation from family members are decreasing as life in contemporary Taiwanese society may be based on more personal independence, rather than collective interdependence (Cao 2009; Lu et al. 2006). This possible tendency, as discussed in existing research, may be a detrimental factor with respect to the expected domestic resources for care within family members, in that the requirements of the elderly population are more likely to be regarded as less important. Family support, hence, may be facing a crucial challenge today. In this vein, I shall look into the context of the family, in

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7  As for the index for the nuclear family, although it shows a declining trend during the same period, the amount of nuclear families in fact did not shrink. This drop is attributed to the increase of diverse family types. For example, the increase of single parent and conjugal families is due to the rising rates of divorce and childfree lifestyles. Paradoxically, although the ratio appears to have decreased, it does not consider the preference for the decrease in nuclear families.

order to explore further possible changes in family interaction in relation to the aforementioned transformations of social industry and family structure.

### 1.1.3 Family context

As highlighted in a number of studies, the transformation seen among social developments and family formats in Taiwan has had consequences for family members and domestic life. Under this circumstance, the interactions between family members may be less concerned with traditional role protocols because the expectation of the familial roles is more varied.

For instance, the demand for female labour, which is a product of industrial development, changes family dynamics. In Taiwan, more and more women are leaving their families, in order to devote themselves to working, especially the women who have high education qualification (Ochiai et al. 2008). As a consequence, women are more independent from their families because of their better financial autonomy and competition. According to government statistics, men make up 56% and women 43.9% of all employed people in 2012, compared to the equivalent proportions in 1992 of men in the labour force was 62.3% and women was 37.6% (Government Executive Yuan 2012a). The male labour force participant rate was 66.85% and the female one was 50.19% in 2012 (Government Executive Yuan 2012b). Moreover, the percentage of women of working-age in the Taiwanese labour market in 1982 and 1992 was 39.3% and 44.8%, respectively, rising to 49.44% in 2002 (Government Executive Yuan 2008b). Both the rate of women's labour force participation and their proportion of all employed people shows the substantial participation of women in Taiwan labour market and also an increase over time. Over this time, the women's responsibility has increasingly being seen as work for self-fulfilment, over and above the traditional female role of mainly looking after the home, in terms of the time distribution for family and job. The increase in female employment apparently offers women a chance to expand their daily lives beyond the domestic arena. This transformation perhaps indicates that the current role of women in Taiwan is based on more personal considerations than those of their

counterparts in the past, with the attendant increase in employment opportunities outside the family.

As a result, female employment has altered the way the family functions, although gendered division of housework remains, with women in charge of it. In Taiwan, married employed women still spend more time than their partners in meeting the needs of their families; specifically, they spend about 2 hours more on household chores on a daily basis (Government Executive Yuan 2004). However, the increasing rate of women's participation in labour market undoubtedly affects family interactions, but what could these possible effects be on family functioning while women devote themselves to their jobs?

For example, the need for childcare arises when mothers have to be away at work, so that temporary babysitters are called for, highlighting the provisional replacement of women's position in the family (Government Executive Yuan 2002). Under such circumstances, the family cannot function in the same way as in the past. Critically, the issue is less about mothers' absence from home than about who is to replace them in children's lives and what the best solution is in terms of the children's welfare. As mentioned, in some national contexts, grandparents are often considered the best resources for meeting this demand, by looking after their grandchildren in double-income families (Fergusson et al.2008; Government Executive Yuan ibid.). In this situation, the way grandparents become involved in the lives of grandchildren, and whether the arrangement is provisional or long-term, are substantial issues for family life. Supposedly, the grandparent-grandchild relationship changes and the family function alters.

By and large, from the transformations in the country's industry, to the change in traditional family composition, along with the diverse and more individual role expectations and performance of family members, the degree of closeness or distance between family members has become more fluid and uncertain. Paradoxically, the trend to greater independence of family members seems to weaken the roots of the collective principles. Correspondingly, this study is to determine how people tackle

this dilemma, whether to pursue greater individualistic independence or maintain the stable collective interdependence of family life, especially in Chinese-based societies. In the following section, I shall discuss a few studies which have explored the interplay between these two seemingly antithetical values and its effect in the domestic sphere in Taiwan. The section basically, but only preliminarily, shows how people resolve such a conflict and find a solution that meets both their collective and personal needs.

## 1.1.4  A transformation of Taiwanese families

As has been highlighted, Taiwan is certainly regarded as a society grounded on collective principles, but, as current social phenomena can demonstrate, this situation is not solely a reflection of its historical background.

Crucially, Chien and Yi (2001) identified that family units in which parents live with their married adult children or within a three-generation family as a distinguishing feature of Asian countries compared to Western nations. According to official statistics, although extended families in Taiwan have collapsed, the three-generation family accounts for slightly more than 15% of all households (Government Executive Yuan 2006; see Appendix 4). In comparison to the distribution of household in the England and Wales, where the three-generation family only represented 1.6 per cent of all households in 2001 (Glaser and Gessa 2012), the distribution of three-generation family in Taiwan is significant. Additionally, Tung, Chen and Lin (2006) further propose that the concerns of filial piety in Taiwanese society can contribute to the decision of married children to co-reside with their parents. In this vein, the three-generation family format could be regarded as an expression of filial piety that represents traditional collective practices.

More importantly, as for establishing three-generation families, the reasons in contemporary society differ from those of the past, when consideration was given to economical interdependence and benefits. A new phenomenon in current society towards individualistic preferences is emphasised in Taiwanese family format– the

neo-extended family– explored in Tung et al's research (2006). In this research, the new mode of living means that people have 'frequent contact with at least one non-co-residing close relative who lives nearby' (p 129). The advantage of this arrangement allows for the individuals to pursue personal freedom and space while maintaining the traditional values of helping family members. Thus the family member in this specific living arrangement has more privacy, and, at the same time, can take care of other family members with less proximity and more independence (Hu 1995; Tung et al. ibid). By the same token, Tseng, Chang and Chen (2007) analysed a database called Panel Study of Family Dynamics in 2004 and derived from 2,121 married adult children throughout Taiwan, and then some phenomena were concluded. The authors suggest that the persistence of three-generation households in Taiwan may be understood in terms of the grandparent generation's possession of household property and their care for the third generation.

In terms of the above-highlighted arguments, traditional collective values and family labour for communal benefit are not the only concern that are to the fore while people establish their families in contemporary Taiwanese society. Instead, more diverse reasons and purposes have been underlined to account for the decisions of forming different households, even the construction of three-generation family, which could be seen as a traditional Chinese family structure. Correspondingly, the phenomenon of establishing 'neo-three-extended family', which allows Taiwanese to pursue their individual interests while retaining their traditional ideas, strongly suggests that people seek a balance between individualistic and collective considerations in the family structure. This neo-three-generation family composition crucially represents how people reconcile their personal needs and familial concerns, bounded by collective values and individualistic concepts alike. As mentioned, it articulates how individualistic-led preference, such as personal freedom and privacy, and collective values such as staying close to and caring for kin, play an important role in influencing how people interact with the other family member from a very basic aspect – living arrangements. Moreover, it also illustrates the fact that Taiwanese society is no exception to global trends in being affected by individualistic concepts. However, what exactly these individualistic ideas

implemented in individuals' lives and their societies are will receive more discussion in depth in Literature Chapter. Here, I would like to pause for a while and go on to underscore what positions the grandparent and grandchild generations stand in this research.

## 1.1.5 Grandparent-grandchild interaction matters

Why does the research focus fall down on grandparent-grandchild interactions? There are various reasons for this. One reason is that the three-generation family and the neo three-generation family are an important phenomenon, as representing a feature of Taiwanese society. Moreover, the grandparent–grandchild relationship occupies a very substantial but easily ignored place, especially in this ever-changing society in which family bonds can be seen as extremely fluid. With regard to current social circumstances, there is controversy over how the grandparent-grandchild relationship has changed. There are two extreme possibilities happening in grandparent-grandchild relationship, which seem to be contradictory for developing their relationship. On the one hand, in accordance with the social and domestic transformations mentioned above, this particular relationship would be expected to be more distant because of reflecting recent changes in society and family composition mentioned in the previous sections. On the other hand, because of female employment, grandparent assistance towards their grandchildren seen as a substantial resource may strengthen the quality and contact between grandparents and grandchildren (Government Executive Yuan 2002). Yet intergenerational relations become less certain in terms of the fluidity of grandparent–grandchild relationships in the context of diverse cultural, social and familial factors, changes and demand.

Moreover, the grandparent-grandchild relationship is not included in the protective umbrella of law, but to a greater extent is protected by social morality. Therefore, the uncertainty of this particular relationship is expected to facilitate the exploration of how cultural and social values can affect family interactions. To sum up, the need for more empirical evidence for current grandparent-grandchild relationships, in order to

further explore the various factors that both encourage and limit grandparent–grandchild interactions, is on call. For instance, it is not known whether the idea of a neo-extend family encapsulating both collective and individual considerations, which comes from intermediate generations, applies to the grandchild generation. It is worth an exploration to understand whether, on what occasions or to what extent grandchildren in Taiwan today have such thoughts of reconciling collective and individualistic ideologies in interactions with their grandparents. To conclude, this relatively small-scale study basically aims to investigate the perceptions of the grandchildren about their own families and the responsibilities attached to their roles in those families, as well as the interplay between cultural background, social context and familial orientation with respect to grandparent–grandchild interactions and relationships.

## 1.2    Research aims and questions

This section focuses in detail on the research aims and questions surrounding grandparent–grandchild relationship issues. Before describing the research setting, I discuss the research title 'When traditional collective values and imported individualistic concepts collide in Taiwan: how does the grandparent-grandchild relationship change?' in order to offer a better understanding of the research aims and questions.

The question highlights how Taiwan is seen as a country embodying Chinese collective values and how this traditional principle has been challenged by industrial transformation, family reconstruction and domestic change. Approval of traditional collective values collides with a new social concept of individualism, which offers people the possibility of being more individually-oriented, free from the constraints of collective doctrines. As a result, this study chiefly explores how people face these two seemingly antithetical notions, interpret the values and their associated explanations, and how they draw on these in discussing their expectations.

The terms 'traditional collective values' and 'imported individualistic concepts' are itemised in the title of the study to highlight any potential debate about the roles of collectivism and individualism in shaping people's behaviour. Traditional collective values represent collective-based ideologies – filial piety, collective practice and in-group interests – whereas imported individualistic concepts represent self-centred orientation, personal considerations and individual benefit. The latter concepts are deliberately posited as 'imported', in accordance with the opinions revealed in existing research (Croll 2006; Fan 2007; Yan 2010) and the accounts of both the grandparent and the grandchild interviewees. [8] In this respect, the individualistic-related concepts are not regarded as being original or developed through traditional Chinese cultural considerations. They are perceived as being imported– or introduced– into Taiwan by means of the current educational system and various forms of new media. As a result, the use of the terms 'traditional collective values' and 'imported individualistic concepts' were chosen to express the contents of collective and individualistic characteristics.

## 1.2.1 Aims

This study aims to enrich knowledge in grandparent–grandchild-related fields, in order to deal with the knowledge gap. [9] There is a growing body of literature on grandparent–grandchild relationships in Western countries. Although a number of research outcomes have explored the role, attached responsibility and expectation of grandchildren in western societies (Ashton 1996; Hoff 2007; Kemp 2005, Kemp 2004, Kivett 1985, Robertson 1976), the research which bases on eastern societies is expected to show different stories, in terms of discrepant cultural and social contexts. However, studies exploring Taiwanese grandchildren's roles, responsibilities and assistance towards their grandparents, and addressing unique Taiwanese characteristics in cultural, social and familial contexts, are seldom found.

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8  For more information, please see Chapter Two and Chapter Five.
9  For more information, please see Chapter Two.

Significantly, 'role' in sociological studies has social connotations attached to particular social positions and entails institutionalised normative rights and obligations for a specific cluster of people. Moreover, it is often a partner-based concept in that all expectations are set within interpersonal interactions in a group, an organisation, a society or a nation. For example, the role of a mother is supposed to correspond to the role of her children – in that the essential and the preliminary expectations of being a mother are established for taking care of children. With reference to the concept of role, it could be a good start to understand how and why grandchildren construct or reconstruct their family orientations and provide assistance for their grandparents.

Apart from exploring grandchildren's role from a domestic facet, cultural and social factors are intertwined into this study because of the aforementioned characteristics and transformations of cultural and social environments of Taiwanese. Therefore, this research also aims to investigate how grandchildren perceive the meanings of and the potentially conceptual contradictions between traditional collective and imported individualistic values. Besides, how they reflect these ideologies within their families is also concluded. Lastly, the alterations in social, economic and familial conditions in these two generations is considered important for investigating the differences between being a grandchild in the past and being a grandchild in the present. As a result, a clearer picture of 'how the doing of being a grandchild' has transformed over time is expected to shed light on the influence deriving cultural and social changes within domestic scope, triangulating the interactions of these three domains on human beings' behaviours.

## 1.2.2 Research questions

This research aims to understand multidimensional phenomena that exist between grandparents and grandchildren in Taiwanese society, while emphasising the influence of cultural and social values on their family lives. Therefore, this study conducted in-depth qualitative interviews[10] as the best approach for unfolding the

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10 For more information, please see Chapter Three.

profound meanings and complicated perceptions of what it is to be a grandchild and to gain insight into the attached expectations and actions of that role.

Based on the research aims described above, nine major research questions were devised. Although the questions, as specified below, were fundamental for conducting the interviews, the contents of conversations with the participants were not strictly limited. The research questions were as follows:

I. How does the grandchild generation perceive its orientation to their families? What factors potentially influence the perceptions of the grandchild interviewees?

II. Do the grandchild interviewees see the changes in the roles of grandchildren across generation?

    a. If yes, what reasons do they give for the changes?

    b. If no, how do they rationalise the maintenance of being a grandchild?

III. Do the grandparent interviewees suggest any transformation in the role of grandchildren, assuming that being a grandchild has changed over time?

    a. If yes, what explanations do they give for the transformations?

    b. If no, how do they explain the stability of the role of grandchildren?

IV. How do the grandparent and grandchild interviewees regard social and demographic transformations between the two generations and the subsequent influence on grandparent-grandchild relationships?

V. How do the grandparent and grandchild generations interpret traditional and imported (non-traditional) values?

VI. Do the grandparent and grandchild informants employ their understanding of traditional and imported concepts to explain the grandparent-grandchild interaction and potential changes thereto?

    a. If yes, in what ways do they argue concerning the influence of these social concepts in respect of their interactions with their grandparents/grandchildren?

b. If not, what sort of descriptions do they provide to rationalise the transformation of intergenerational flow?

VII. Is there any incompatibility in the informants' narratives in discussing the effects of traditional values and imported concepts on intergenerational interactions?

a. If yes, what are these incompatibilities? Which aspects?

b. If not, how do the participants understand the interplay of these two value systems? Which aspects?

VIII. In terms of the understanding of the grandparent and grandchild interviewees, are there any dilemmas/strengths affecting grandparent-grandchild interactions?

IX. How do the grandparent and grandchild interviewees see grandparent-grandchild relationship developing in the future?

# 2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to depict the contours of this research by relating it to previous research findings on grandparent–grandchild relationships. Relevant research findings will be discussed and the basic body of knowledge in this particular field will be presented to promote better understanding of the research interests. In addition, the insufficiency of past research will be outlined since this study is keen to close the gaps in existing knowledge and enrich the academic field of grandparent–grandchild relationships. I shall also introduce a few important terminologies during the course of this study, in order to clarify some fundamental conceptual issues and highlight the theoretical basis of this research.

On the basis of the main research questions, I shall start by reviewing previous research that investigates how collective and individualistic values have been evaluated for their effects on people's attitudes and behaviour. The discussion is about more than just two different sets of values; it is a discussion of ideologies, which rationalises their conceptual influence on people's feelings, thoughts and behaviour within a specific realm affected by the two concepts. Subsequently, I shall focus on the role of responsibility in the domestic arena, in order to explore how family members articulate the connection between their responsibilities and their role enactment. In addition, in this section, the factors which potentially affect the functions of responsibility in the family will be discussed; following which, the section will articulate the different attitudes towards responsibility. Next, I shall explore grandparent-grandchild relationship because closer relationship perhaps has stronger sense of family obligation. Therefore, investigating how this intergenerational intimacy affects their practical interaction is focused. In this respect, the review will facilitate understanding of how conceptual strength can trigger practical behaviour, as demonstrated by previous studies.

Critically, bear in mind that these statements, excluding discussions about traditional collective and imported individualistic values, primarily rely on the resources from western academia, because there is a lack of similar research from eastern scholars. This is because the parent-child relationship is more highly emphasised in Asian academia, while the effect of individualistic concepts on family-related issues has not received mature focus. As an outcome, it can be said, to some extent, that western-based research data mainly lead the discussion within this literature review. Although these western scholarly resources cannot fully represent the oriental situation, they help to describe a basic framework for a better understanding of research into grandparent-grandchild interactions.

## 2.2    Traditional collective values and imported individualistic concepts

In this study, in terms of the effects coming from Chinese cultures, traditional collective values emphasise collective values and prioritise communal advantages, mainly with respect to collectivism (Hsieh 2004; Jordan 1986; Nuyen 2004; Park and Chesla 2007). Collectivism relates to groups that 'bind and mutually obligate individuals' (Oyserman et al. 2002) and societies that 'exist, and individuals must fit into them' (Oyserman and Lee 2008); and it 'highlights the idea of conformity' (Lee et al. 2010). On the other hand, imported individualistic concepts are basically focused on individualism, in which the character of personal considerations is highlighted. Accordingly, individualism relates to individuals being 'independent of one another' (Oyserman et al. 2002) and societies that 'exist to promote the well-being of individuals' (Oyserman et al. 2008), and it 'embraces the attitude of autonomy' (Lee et al. 2010). Briefly, the descriptions of these two value systems seem to argue their incompatibility in behaving for personal or communal interests, highlighting the possible dilemma caused between collective consideration and individualistic preference.

Following this vein, it has been argued that Taiwanese society no longer retains its traditional Chinese characteristics as the only principles leading its people. As highlighted in the Chapter One; this is because of social and familial transformations, and current circumstances. In present, Taiwanese social context is regarded to be a blend of traditional collective values and western individualistic concepts, which presents a totally different environment from the past (Cao 2009; Lu et al. 2006). With regard to the aforementioned transformation, if it is certain, this change surely affects family relationship and interactions. People would be less likely to put family interests in the first instance and place more emphases on personal consideration as if traditional collective values do not maintain its position where it once was.

However, what kind of society is Taiwan heading to while few commentators have highlighted the transformations of its social context? Until now, there has been no clear articulation of the contemporary Taiwanese social environment; the interplay of collective values and individualistic concepts in the domestic sphere is also a puzzle. However, a number of studies have explored possible conflicts under the circumstance where collective values collide with individualistic ideas. Therefore, the discussions about the researched outcome are coming along in the next section, in order to provide a rather basic sense of the possible circumstances in which collective values have interacted with individualistic concepts.

## 2.2.1  Debates between collective and individualistic values

How important, in past research, are collective and individualistic values for exploring people's behaviour? How are these two sets of values operationalised, in order to form associations with types of human behaviour? How are these values understood as different perspectives affecting people's interaction with one another, in terms of personal or in-group interests? In the coming section, all these questions will provide substantial bases on which to conduct debates between collective and individualistic concepts.

Straightforwardly, in attempting to understand how people construct their idea of self and their resulting behaviours and beliefs, Kashima et al. (1995) argue that the orientation of collectivist and individualist is an important initial path of enquiry. In their research, they employed five questionnaires to explore whether people are more independent or interdependent, by asking how people deal with conflict between personal and in-group goals, how far they emphasise the emotional relatedness of the self and other persons, how they relate themselves to other groups and how they measure the similarity between themselves and their friends. The results of this study identified cultural differences, and mainly the collective and individualistic value dimensions, as forming the most critical basis of self-construction. This approach is supported by Oyserman et al. (2002) who indicate that collective and individualistic dimensions facilitate understanding of the diversity seen between individual people's behaviours. Accordingly, the feature of collectivism and individualism seems to be considered one decisive rationale to predict human beings' interactions, with regard to personal or communal interests.

After acknowledging the evaluations of these two sets of concepts in regard to people's behaviour, the coming section will mainly pay attention to how collective and individualistic values are conceptualised and operationalised in that behaviour, especially in the domestic domain. Subsequently, the impact of collectivism and individualism on the interactions and mutuality between family members becomes the focus. Firstly, Pyke and Bengtson (1996) categorised two different family types found among their interviewees, in term of the participants' responses concerning family ethnicity, contact, closeness, and intergenerational interaction. As a result, collectivist and individualist families were framed. Individualist families tended to express ideas about independence, self-sufficiency and loose family bonds, which characterised their family orientation. By contrast, collectivist families tended to express values of family commitment, interdependence, and intimate family ties. Critically, the authors are of the opinion that both concepts are significant for causing people to have different responses and obligation beliefs towards their family members. Accordingly, those who are inclined towards individualism think care-giving of the elderly is 'a burdensome labour' (p 389). In contrast, people who

tend towards collectivism regard such care-giving as 'a labour of love' (p 389) and a means of tightening their family bonds, believing that superfluous cares were provided for the elderly. To an extent, being more collective or greater individualistic could be seen as an important feature to predict that people being more positive about providing care for the elderly may be more supportive to their senior, although it is not causality.

In addition, Coleman, Ganong and Rothrauff (2006) suggest a possible connection between different ethnicities and care for the elderly when exploring intergenerational assistance, including provision for daily living, housing and financial support. Accordingly, the differences in providing help for the elderly among African- Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos and White European-Americans are attributed to their cultural differences, in particular as regards individualistic and collectivist features. Thus, White European-Americans offer less help towards the older generation than other ethnic groups, which highlights their stronger tendency towards individualism. Moreover, the authors in this research even argue that being individualistic is possibly detrimental to family mutuality.

Moreover, Connidis (2009), looking into the effect of race on support and exchanges between older parents and their children, argues that White people are more likely to provide care on their own than Black individuals. This difference mainly stems from the fact that the need for personal support is considered more important by people of White ethnicity. As a result, she suggests that people in individualistic families have lower expectations about providing care for the elderly; whereas family members in collectivistic households offer more support to their seniors. In the statements made by Connidis, it shows, again, different family tendencies of being more individualistic or collective are associated with family behaviour on the care for the elderly.

With reference to the aforementioned studies, a conclusion seems to be drawn that individualists provide less assistance to other family members in that they agree

more with being responsible for themselves. Conversely, people living in collectivistic environments share resources more readily with one another, because they appreciate the importance of communal benefits in the first place. Moreover, how these authors conceptualise these two sets of values and operationalise them, in order to categorise their features in relation to their possible association with people's behaviour and beliefs, is also worth discussing. In general, as I agree in the present study, interdependence, high-level commitment to family, the priority of communal goals, and close family ties are conceptualised as features of collective values. In contrast, the ideas of independence, self-sufficiency, a high degree of responsibility for the self, and loose family bonds, are seen as features that operationalise how individualistic concepts affect people. In brief, conceptualisation and operationalisation of collective and individualistic values are rather substantial because of the practical employment of these sets of ideologies in empirical research.

In line with these observations, the propensity towards being more individualistic or collectivistic is hypothetically linked with the amount of support family members would like to offer in this research. This connection might look rough and oversimplified at this phase as people's behaviour is more complicatedly produced than being understood by collective/individualistic preference. In any aspect, I am aware of the potential simplification of linking collective/individualistic preference with people's support towards their families. However, it still could be a good initial to investigate how collectivistic and individualistic concepts affect family interaction while Taiwanese society faces the collision of collectivism and individualism.

Accordingly, the provision of grandchild help to grandparents is substantially explored under the discussed circumstance, which Chinese collective value has lost its authority of leading people how to behave and individualistic idea has brought its influence into Taiwan in this research. Moreover, what extra value may this research contribute to current scholarships? I would like to point out that this study differs from previous one which the majority of it was conducted in settings that involved various ethnic groups, and the authors mainly distinguished the different outcomes of being more individualistic or more collectivistic on family supports. Critically, this

research eliminates the potential tendency of bring greater individualistic or more collective, which derives from different ethnicities. It primarily explores what happens within the Chinese context, focusing instead on the reasoning behind young Taiwanese people's domestic behaviours with their grandparents and the potential challenges caused by these two seemingly antithetical ideologies.

## 2.2.2 Traditional collective values

In this section, I shall provide an overview of Chinese collective values as a cultural orientation, in order to convey the salience of this cultural feature in people's lifestyle, and shall discuss how and to what extent this particular value occupies a place in people's lives.

Although the effect of Chinese values in Taiwan is no longer dominant, its influence is still profound in everyday life. This discussion examines precisely what Chinese traditional values mean in contemporary Taiwanese society – what they mean to individual family members and in what ways they effect intergenerational flows. These issues are discussed in the following sections to enhance understanding of how such values function in Taiwan.

### 2.2.2.1 Content of traditional collective values

What are these traditional values? Filial piety and collectivism are primarily representative of traditional Chinese culture (Hsieh 2004; Jordan 1986; Nuyen 2004; Park and Chesla 2007). First, the concept of filial piety is constantly underscored with respect to the link between the care of older people and the level of people's degree of filiality in previous research (Fan 2002; Fan 2006; Herr 2003; Jordan 1986). In other words, the more filial attitudes a person has, the more he or she will care for the elderly. In brief, the degree of filiality can predict the level of assistance offered to seniors. Additionally, collectivism is another paradigm through which to understand social interactions in groups. Collectivistic ideologies are assumed to result in greater collaboration between members of a community. Miller and Makela

(2005) propose that 'a central notion of collective moral responsibility is moral responsibility assigned to a collective as a single entity' (p 634). This spells out the dispensable status of 'collective responsibility' in people's behaviours within groups, whereby the outcome of a joint action is the moral responsibility of each member of the group. By and large, these two core characters of traditional Chinese values illustrate how people function with one another in a collectivistic approach within traditional society. Furthermore, according to traditional Chinese values, lineage is salient in the family, highlighting the relations within every generation. This intergenerational link between individuals and family history, or between individuals and the ancients, provides a conceptual means of belonging to the family. Arguably, this spiritual connection is rather important for family members, as it could be seen as a source of the filial and collective impulse. People are expected to sustain their family lineage by supporting the family, thus reflecting concern for blood relations.

The 'Five Relationships'[11] is another central component of Chinese culture. It exemplifies how filial and collectivist notions work within people's daily lives in a Chinese-based society. First of all, the Five Relationships in Chinese-based society form the most essential principles of self-orientation and entailed responsibility, underscoring the norms and the rites within humans. People's interactions, in the context of this concept, are simply divided into five categories, emphasising the vertical relations between superiors and inferiors (Hwang 1999; Markus and Kitayama 1991). A hierarchical distinction is at the root of the Five Relationships (Hwang ibid.; Ralston et al. 1999), which are detailed below:

1) Sovereign and subordinate.
2) Father and son.
3) Older brother and younger brother.
4) Husband and wife.
5) Friend and friend.

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[11] It is also translated as the 'Five Cardinal Rules'.

These cardinal rules relate to dyadic relationships, and serve to regulate interpersonal interactions; three of these rules are exercised in the family, conceptualising family members as one body- family lineage (Jordan 1986). Moreover, excluding the relationship between friend and friend, they are all based on hierarchy, emphasising vertical disparities between the two parties in each pair.[12] Attached to these positions, people have inescapable 'given' responsibilities, from the top to the bottom, and vice versa. The governance of higher positions and the conformity of the lower ones are expected within this system. For instance, children should obey their fathers and mothers, and parents have to look after their children. Younger siblings are supposed to show respect to their older siblings, and older brothers and sisters are supposed to help the younger ones as necessary. In brief, the Five Relationships regulate interpersonal interactions is through people being settled in particular social and familial positions, in which they are assumed to behave in terms of where they are.

Combining duty and obedience, the Five Relationships in Chinese cultures are indispensable for maintaining collectivist practices and communal interests. They are seen as an integral part of a society in which it is presumed everyone knows their role, commits their obedience and fulfils their obligations. With reference to these premises, the function of the Five Relationships is verified by the embodiment of interdependence within the family and the community (Fan 2002; Park et al. 2005). In practice, interpersonal interactions contain more complexities and the relationships between people are normally interwoven with other factors and are multidimensional. Nevertheless, the purpose of describing the Five Relationships here is to give some insight into people's expectations of their interactions in Chinese cultures, even though it somewhat simplifies their behaviours.

Moreover, as far as family relationships are concerned, I would suggest that the rites of parent–child interactions can be extended into grandparent–grandchild relationships, because they share very similar functional patterns. Jordan (1986) argues that 'filial feelings should also be experienced and filial behavior exhibited towards grandparents… and all higher lineal ancestors' (p 85). Therefore, in this

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[12] Chinese society is patriarchal, whereby the status of a wife is lower than her husband.

study, the possible influence of traditional values on the parent–child relationship also reasonably applies to the grandparent–grandchild relationship.

## 2.2.2.2 Dissemination of traditional collective values

Importantly, how and why are these traditional values still so profoundly rooted in Taiwanese society if, as some research suggests, there is such a powerful influence from the West (Wu 2004; Yu and Miller 2003)? What explanations are there for their maintenance and prevalence in Taiwan?

Meyer (1988), Hsieh (2004) and Jordan (1986) articulate that traditional Chinese concepts constantly exist and strongly influence the early education of children in Taiwan – not only at home, but also at school. The government intentionally implements the classic textbook of Confucian notions – *Analects* – which is taught to children at primary school (Hsieh 2004), although western scientific trends seem to have become mainstream in Taiwan (Fan 2007). As a result of the compulsory educational syllabus in elementary schools, teaching Confucian Chinese values is now routine. This may explain the immense influence of traditional culture on the public in Taiwan, and its pervasiveness and profundity. As Taylor and Arbuckle (1995) suggest, the most effective and fundamental way to spread values is by incorporating it in education by governmental policies. The result of this specific approach of cultivating collectivist values may explain why a number of cross-cultural studies show Taiwan to have a higher level of collectivism and a lower level of individualism compared with other countries (Ali et al. 2005; Chiou 2001, Oyserman et al. 2002).

However, despite the influence of Chinese culture on Taiwan, the effect of the western nations has been referenced by several scholars (Cao 2009; Lu et al. 2006); they believe this influence has created a situation in which people's interactions with each other are no longer simply interpreted or understood in the context of traditional

collective values. These imported ideas, particularly for individualism, challenge the dominance of the traditional values as described in the existing research.

## 2.2.3  Imported individualistic concepts

In the following discussion, emphasis is placed on the concepts and potential influence of individualism, individualisation and individualistic-related issues. In this study, the word 'imported', as attached to individualistic concepts, primarily implies that ideas associated with individualism are considered 'western' notions. This generalisation does not reflect oversimplification of the complexities of Eastern and Western culture, but is a conclusion based on previous relevant studies and the accounts of the researched participants. First of all, in existing research, individualism or individualisation is more strongly associated with western societies and individualistic social perspectives have embraced western philosophies. (Oyserman et al. 2002; Lee et al. 2010). Accordingly, the authors suggest that individualistic values are more profound and representative in western societies, whereas collective notions are more common in eastern countries, indicating individualism as an imported concept in eastern countries. With reference to previous relevant studies, individualistic concepts are temporarily itemised as an 'imported value' coming from western nations in the research settings for this Chinese-based country.[13]

What is individualistic-related language? Basically, individualistic values are conceptualised as being independent, autonomous, agentic and separate; these features lead the processes of individualisation (Oyserman et al. 2002; Oyserman et al. 2008; Lee, Beckert and Goodrich 2010). Even more, a number of diverse explanations of what individualism emerge; in the main, it seems to be regarded as a 'breakdown' of tradition. In a book entitled *Individualization* (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), the authors discuss how 'individualisation is understood as a

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13 Bear this decision in mind, I was cautious about introducing the relevant concepts to my interviewees, in order not to mislead my participants by the research settings. For more information, see Chapter Five.

historical process that sees people increasingly question their worlds' and how 'it tends to break up traditional rhythms of life' (p 88). Moreover, Mill (2007) also discusses the 'root of individualization' is a 'cyclical process of detraditionalization or dissolution of collective structures' (p 62). Yan (2010) also concurs with this point of view, since he elucidates how Chinese societies follow a path of detraditionalisation as they develop towards individualism. Taken in combination, individualism, as a conceptual value and intrinsic attribute, emancipates people from their former fixed customs and brings individuals into the process of individualisation. Importantly, in the relevant research, the contents of individualism and of individualisation seem not to be specifically distinguished; a distinction between them, however, would perhaps facilitate understanding of how they affect people's behaviour and perspectives.

## 2.2.3.1 Individualisation and individualism

Individualisation is commonly deemed a social process through people become able or more likely to attend to personal interest than communal benefit, to individual considerations than collective concerns and to self-priority than in-group mutuality. It is also an ongoing process of disengagement from traditional norms and formulation of new principles to fit 'individual-based' circumstances. Individualism mainly refers to a philosophical stance which emphasises the conceptual emancipation of individuals from existing constraints, as well as a set of ideologies based on the appreciation of individuals rather than of groups (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Chang and Song 2010; Yan 2009).

Discussion of the relation or distinction between individualisation and individualism may seem somewhat redundant. Generally, individualisation is simply understood as an implement of individualism, or the two terms are used interchangeably to indicate greater self-centredness in people's interactions with other individuals and societies. However, is it really accurate to conceptualise individualisation and individualism in this sense? Is their relation truly as simple as the difference between the practical and

the ideal? Does their connection consist only of the subordination of individualisation to individualism?

Interestingly, in China and Taiwan, in both the past and the present, it has been common for people living in the countryside to leave their families, communities and villages and move to bigger cities or urban areas to seek their fortune. Then they would post their earnings to other family members at home, providing a helpful source of finance for collective benefit. Apparently, leaving home, family constraints, and traditional norms, and acquiring private space, personal freedom and individual liberty are definitely counted as substantial signs of the individualisation process. However, financial commitment to the family is undoubtedly an expression of collectivist values. Critically, the above example does not fit into the crude but typical understanding of the relations between individualisation and individualism. Within this 'imperfect situation', what individualisation and individualism exactly entail ultimately deserves more thorough consideration, prior to entering into detailed discussion of the role these concepts play in the lives of families and individuals.

In this section, I shall illuminate the distinctions between individualism and individualism in depth, in order to further clarify their impacts on individuals' feelings, thoughts and behaviour and their potential consequences within individuals and societies. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) claim that "individualization will be displayed in this sociological 'sense' of institutionalized individualism" (xxi). Accordingly, these authors elucidate the view of individualisation as an approach expressing the institutionalised individualism whereby state welfare practice at present confers benefit on individuals, rather than groups. In order to qualify for these state-based advantages, people are increasingly expected to be responsible for their own behaviour and lives. Hence, the process in which people organise more and more of their own circumstances and individuals disengage from previous norms is called individualisation. Significantly, this is not merely a difference between practical action and the ideological concept of remaining in a 'person-based' phase; it further extends to a dual-level distinction between social process and personal

attributes, or society and individuals. This statement can be made clearer by the empirical evidence presented in studies by Yan (2009) and Chang and Song (2010).

Yang (2009), in his Chinese-based research, proposes that individualism and individualisation in current Chinese society can be understood through the highlighted term 'individualization without individualism'. He claims that Chinese people do not widely acknowledge the concept of individualism, insofar as it is comprehended simply as utilitarian individualism or selfishness. At the same time, they have constantly undergone processes of and been influenced by individualisation, which is promoted and managed by the party-state for economic and development purposes.[14] Here, Yan articulates how a social process of individualisation has been carried out by the government only in the current Chinese environment, with only application of the concept of selfish individualism to the practical stage.

In addition, two Korean scholars have demonstrated that the situation underlined in Yan's research – individualisation without individualism – is occurring in South Korea, but under very different national and social conditions.[15] According to Chang and Song (2010), the fact that women in South Korea are held responsible for deferral of marriage, declining fertility and increasing divorce, is evidence that individualisation is shaping their lives and has taken place in their lives. Nevertheless, women in South Korea still place family-centredness over individual benefit while being asked to prioritise both family and personal welfare. By the same token, it is claimed that South Korean women remain at a very practical phase of individualisation which does not engage with the ideals of individualism.

In brief, practicality, as a social process, and ideality, as an individual attribute, can basically be seen as distinguishing features which respectively carry out the operations of individualisation and individualism (Chang and Song 2010). However, practicality and ideality do not apply only to the individual-based realm, but also to

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[14] For more information, see Chapter Eight.
[15] For more information, see Chapter Eight.

the relation between social process and individual ideology. It is noteworthy that, as has been argued through the empirical data of the aforementioned Asian-based research in China and South Korea, individualisation and individualism are not causal. Individualisation does not rely on the concept of individualism to cultivate the process and reinforcement of individualisation.

Nevertheless, individualisation and individualism can co-operate or co-exist in a more complicated way to explain some social and human transformations. Correspondingly, the characteristics of individualism or individualisation combined are usually employed to explain the fluidity of family practice in some of the aforementioned research (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Chang and Song 2010; Yan 2003, 2009). In this vein, both western and eastern authors suggest that individuals are less likely to be attached to family roles, responsibilities and expectations when exposed to the autonomy and liberty they obtain from individualism or individualisation. Therefore, individual considerations are strengthened and family function becomes less reliable, while group collectivity supposedly becomes secondary to personal individuality. Under this transformation, what comes after?

## 2.2.3.2 Evaluations of individualistic prospects

Actually, the concept of individualism and the consequences of the processes of individualisation themselves evoke a rather strong debate. The concept of individualism and the consequences of individualisation are underlined below to present diverse interpretations of individualism and discuss the consequent effects on human beings' behaviours.

On the one hand, the values of individualism can be understood from its advantages to the groups being highlighted. Durkheim (1933; Marske 1987; Santore 2008), who coins the phrase 'moral individualism' in his work, suggests an unprecedented interpretation of the term that explains how individualistic features can be beneficial

to a community. Durkheim underscores the salience of equality and justice within people's interactions, whereby people show more respect for others if they really understand and appreciate the meanings of 'being individual', thus demonstrating their collective consciousness. Attitudes favouring this egalitarianism stimulate concerns about people's needs and demands. Within such an environment, individualist imperatives matter to every member of a group and potentially reinforce the sense of belonging, thus linking them together more closely. 'Respect' occurs among individuals who are aware of the importance of being individual, and who know that they have to care about other people because they desire the same things. Through these observations, Durkheim proposes that individualism operates positively in groups and strengthens the bonds between people, thus supporting its advantages to groups. Furthermore, Giddens (1991), while focusing on the influence of individualisation on intimate relationships, claims that the positive outcome of individualism has been underscored by gender equality, accompanied by the balanced division of household labour and economic burden between partners. Additionally, Triands (1995) illuminates the fact that individualism is not only about 'individuals', but also about the equal relationships between 'the self' and 'other individuals'.

With regard to the emphasis on empathy for others or equality between individuals, persons are expected to pay attention not only to their own benefit, but also to that of others. In keeping with these equal or balanced values of moral individualism, the processes and consequences of individualisation seem to bring balanced relationships within individuals and considerations for each other.

On the other hand, individualism and individualisation can be interpreted from a rather different standpoint. In the course of individualisation, people undergo a process of moving away from duty to collective units, while individual interest and self-centredness are gradually prioritised. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) conclude that individualism renders human beings very individual and self-centred. They argue that becoming more individualistic in one's lifestyle causes one to be less faithful to the commitments of love and coupledom. Meanwhile, putting

self-reflection or self-consciousness to the fore while undermining the values of collective practice results in solo-living. In these circumstances, individuals are removed, to an extent, from their family roles. Similarly, Pyke and Bengtson, in describing self-fulfilment as a significant factor in individualist families, state in their research that 'there is less emphasis on duty to family members and greater emphasis on self-sufficiency' (1996: 382). They further suggest that practising individualism within the scope of the family has reduced the degree of mutual assistance. Moreover, individualisation has radical implications for individual identities and family life, as people are liberated from taken-for-granted roles and cut loose from traditional securities (Heaphy 2007: 125). In like manner, Yan (2010) summarises the works of Bauman, Giddens, and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim on individualism. He ultimately articulates that the norms and duties of the family role are not considered as important as they once were due to the influence of individualism on family responsibilities. Krebs (2006) also examines the moral dispositions of humans and describes how selfish individualism can 'induce individuals to behave in a way that gives them the best chance of maximizing their immediate gains' (p 136). In this case, people do not want to pay something back, so that giving and receiving do not balance out; the idea of reciprocity has no force and self-interest is prioritised.

Moreover, unlike western academia arguing individualism and individualisation from two seemingly contradictory perspectives, the eastern studies seem to support the view of individualism and individualisation as a kind of self-priority. Research conducted with the Chinese young generation and South Korean women consistently points to the disproportionately negative effects of individualism and individualisation on family interactions in the nations. Yan (2009) highlights young people's relentless quest for bridewealth in relation to their parents and younger siblings, regardless of the financial difficulty of the family. This sort of selfishness, which insists on personal rights and ignores others' burdens, is seen as implementing the idea of individualism. (Yan 2009: 169)

At this stage, individualisation and individualism are apparently regarded as malignant factors that weaken the values of communal solidarity and family duty.

People are set free from traditional constraints and no longer bring in-group responsibility to the fore, having obtained personal liberty through the process of individualisation. As a result, individuals are more likely to pay attention to 'self-interest' and 'self-fulfilment' than to the 'common good' of a group. On the basis of these arguments and perceived outcomes of individualisation, we can see how some people generally view individualism in a negative light, emphasising its detrimental effects on interpersonal ties and communal aims, and pointing to its potential incompatibility with collective interests. In brief, the above articulations place individualism in opposition to traditional collective values, stressing the damage done by the former to the latter. That account seems to argue that being individualistic must necessarily accompany separation from traditional and in-group constraints.

Viewed from this perspective, are the ideas of individualism and the process of individualisation totally responsible for imbuing people with such a self-centred ideology as to damage the interconnections among the individual, other people and society? Or, as proposed by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), is individualisation negatively criticised through 'collective bias'? Alternatively, as questioned by Brannen and Nilsen (2005) and Smart (2007), have individualism and individualisation been over-extended to explain contextual, social and familial changes? The question of the role played by individualism and individualisation today has no certain answer, in the face of a great variety of cultural, social and familial circumstances.

The debate surrounding the consequences of individualism/individualisation is still ongoing in western scholarship. Critically, the way individualism is introduced, the processes through which individualisation is spreading, and the kind of effects it has produced in Taiwan, a Chinese-led environment, could be a source of even more intense debate. However, the relevant studies can hardly be found in the literature, rendering the present research independent. In terms of this research background, the phenomenon of individualism and individualisation is very limited, so the knowledge about individualism and individualisation seems to be left a question mark in

Taiwanese academia. Is Taiwan undergoing the similar condition of processing individualisation without individualism, as China and South Korea? Or, do Taiwanese people have more liberty to embrace various concepts of individualism and individualisation as there is no individualisation intentionally managed by the government (Yan 2009)? Or, do individualism and individualisation have more obstacles of being implemented in Taiwan since Chang and Song (2010) have articulated that Taiwanese women have strongest sense of familism than their counterparts in Japan and South Korea?

Having discussed various statements about how individualism/individualisation affects people's behaviours, the debate has not got an answer. However, compared to either stigmatising or being optimistic about the consequence of individualism and individualisation, I would like to extend freedom to the interviewees to interpret and evaluate the issue on their own. By this procedure I can produce Taiwanese-based data about individualism/individualisation, and then discuss where they stand in this specific society, in terms of the perspectives of the researched.

## 2.2.4 Where is Taiwan?

The profound impact of collectivism in Taiwan is understood and highly represented in the culture (Park and Chesla 2007). Taiwanese society and the people are still inclined to be more collectivistic than individualistic, even though it is now a technology-intensive society, showing a tendency towards individualism during the last few decades (Cao 2009; Lu et al. 2006). However, what is the more precise attitude of Taiwanese people whilst facing these two value systems collided?

Arguably, Rozman (2002) considers that globalisation is eroding Confucian ideas in Taiwan. In addition, Wu (2004: 96) indicates that 'Taiwanese society is gradually transforming into one nation that emphasises individual needs more and collective needs less'. This statement suggests that the increasing significance of individualistic values in Taiwan and highlights that Taiwanese people are now heavily weighing

autonomy in their lives, followed by order and obedience, as the effects of being individualistic. More importantly, Wu (ibid) keeps articulating that the growth of individualism has not caused collectivism to disappear – rather, it survives and co-exists with modernity in Taiwanese society. Croll (2006) introduces the idea of 'co-existence' of collective and individualistic values in family interaction and then describes how generational contracts in Chinese families work. This intergenerational contract within family members has been renegotiated and reinterpreted because of the influence of western values, which relate to people being more individual, but the concern for familial interests remains.

In brief, the statements above seem to suggest that the influence of tradition-based values in Taiwanese society is diminishing, while the tendency towards individualistic concepts is becoming more determinant of people's interactions with others. More importantly, what should be investigated and paid attention to is how Taiwanese people's contact with individualistic ideas has led to individualistic outcomes. How has this ideology spread throughout an environment based on Chinese collectivism?

In fact, his inquiry is focused on a few specific areas. Mainly, the effects of the education system and mass media are highlighted in this discussion of being less traditionally collective and more individualistic in order to describe the pathways of imported concepts (Fang 2009; Triandis 2004). According to the function of education and mass media, Fan (2009) also claims that the current educational system has brought the ideas of being individualistic in Chinese society, replacing statutes of filial piety and family values. In terms of this change in the context of education, traditional values lose some of their potency. Apart from education, there has been a proliferation of mass media, which has also reinforced the influence of individualism. Triandis (2004) argues that idiocentrism increases when a person has been greatly exposed to western mass media or has been acculturated for a long while to a western culture. Other than the statements from previous research, education and the mass media also account for the prevalence of newly imported

values in Taiwan, which is revealed in the material obtained from interviewees.[16] In brief, the approaches of education and mass media are considered influential medium affecting people's lives as they are extremely prevailing in the lives of modern humans.

To conclude, based on the findings of past research, the interplay between collectivism and individualism in Taiwanese society seems to be adopted in people's behaviours. How this situation influences grandparent-grandchild interactions is an important consideration because of the light it sheds on the position of the current grandchild generation. According to the concept of generation, I assume during the course of this study that the grandchild generation, compared to the parent and grandparent generations, is less familiar with traditional Chinese values and closer to western concepts. This is because this specific generation is taking on the current western-led living environment, in terms of the substantial exposure to education and media. One might question how this blended set of circumstances affects them and their behaviour within the family, and how they perceive and react with the intentions of collectivism and individualism in their families. Furthermore, how do they deal with any ambivalence caused by the collision of collectivism and individualism in their lives, if it exists?

In order to explore grandchildren behaviours within families, understanding how grandchildren perceive their familial responsibilities may be a good point to start. In this vein, family responsibility is certainly an idea coming from collective or communal perspective since responsibility always comes with expectations.

## 2.3    Role of responsibility in grandchild's assistance

The term 'responsibility' seems to suggest a compulsory concern that requires people to perform certain tasks, with little room for negotiation. Importantly, current

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[16] For more information, please see Chapter Seven.

western academia takes a different view, regarding family responsibility as more likely to develop more fluidly. Accordingly, the bonds among family members are argued to be more flexible (Brannen et al. 2004; Croll 2006; Finch 1989; Finch and Mason 1993; Gillies 2005, 2008; Rodger 1995). Nevertheless, family ties in Taiwanese society have a more obligatory character because of their traditional Chinese context, which differs from the western framework of social and cultural features. In such a different context, does the familial sphere provide any room for more flexible responsibilities and, if so, to what extent?

In examining this aspect of responsibility in this present research, attention is given to the narratives of grandchildren interviewees, to explore their perspectives on role-fulfilling responsibilities, and grandchildren's assistance towards their grandparents. Through this process, the influence of cultural and social values on grandparent–grandchild relationships may become clearer and more illustrative of the condition of Taiwanese society. However, what does responsibility entail? Why is responsibility important while discussing the provisions from grandchild generation for their grandparent group? The coming sections will explain the crucial position of responsibility in family support.

### 2.3.1   Definition, significance and challenge of responsibility

'Responsibility' is a complicated concept. According to one definition in a sociological dictionary, when people feel responsible, they accept a duty to be in charge of something. Something *has* to be done because it is regarded as legally and morally right – it is a duty. The terms 'responsibility', 'duty' and 'obligation' are similar and interchangeable for the purpose of describing people's perspectives when they fulfil their moral and legal rights.

Piercy (1998: 110) claims that 'responses of family members to an older parent's need for help are guided by their definitions of the nature and the extent of personal

and familial responsibility'. In other words, the way and degree to which people understand their responsibilities determines the extent of their commitment to providing assistance for their seniors. Moreover, Brannen, Moss and Mooney (2004) suggest that the interpretation of responsibility relates to human beings' moral and personal identities, which can shape the assistance they give to others. With reference to the importance of comprehending responsibility, the idea of translating 'responsibility' into practical action seems to be helpful in understanding the extent to which people support their family members. Critically, what does responsibility consist of? Brannen et al. (2004) consider that responsibility emerges through interactions between individuals, negotiated concretely in various situations and having a moral dimension. On this matter they state:

> *'Decisions about responsibility … contain a complex mix of ethical, relational and contextual considerations' (pp 81–82).*

According to this description and salience of responsibility, it can be argued that decision-making about being responsible is multi-dimensional, involving relations within individuals, between the individual and society, and among the individual, society and the cultural context. Therefore, I shall discuss the difficulties people encounter while doing their responsibilities from two angles: personal struggle and interpersonal negotiation.

What challenges would people meet when assessing their responsibility for family members and the community? First of all, a critical relation between individual responsibility and the promotion of personal choice has been suggested in Rodger's work (1995), which explores the declining function of the family. In terms of the pre-eminence of individualism in political policy, 'the explosion of right to welfare and state in the 20th century at the expense of developing an equal stress on responsibility and obligations of the person to the communities within which they live and work' (pp 16, 17) is underlined. Rodger subsequently articulates that the privileged right of personal choice within the family in contemporary western societies is regarded as one reason for the decreasing value placed on obligation to other family members (ibid.). In relation to the statements above, the emphasis on the

personal right to choose, at either the political or individual level, seems to impair the sense of responsibility required for family unity.

Correspondingly, Gillies (2005) highlights that 'the rapid changes in contemporary family relationships and a perceived decline in traditional values of duty and responsibility are viewed as making good parenting increasingly difficult' (p 75). While personal liberty is prioritised, the growing rate of parental divorce or separation and other family changes emerges as a 'consequence'. Therefore, family-based benefits are not as dominant as they were when personal rights were not so highly appreciated. The author points out how the concept of liberty affects family responsibility, especially parenting, and later articulates that 'parenting has been pushed to the centre of the policy stage, in line with a neo-liberal emphasis on family, community, and personal responsibility' (2008: 96). To clarify the concepts in Gillies' works (2005, 2008): freedom from obligation is employed to rationalise why parents are less attached to their family responsibilities, but there are still multiple structural factors which could cause the functioning of family and parenthood to decline. Therefore, she associates the efficiency of current family policy, which encourages parents to 'act morally' in the sphere of obligations to family and community, with the problem of parenting deficit. Although Gillies' work mainly is to discuss the potential drawbacks of current political policies on family support, the connection between being less attached to family responsibility and being more liberal has been made.

As regards the impact of liberal values, appreciation of personal choice and rights may produce ignorance of group responsibilities, with family bonds no exception. Correspondingly, the concepts of 'moral regulation' (Rodger 1995) and 'moral responsibility' (Gillies 2005, 2008) have arisen to meet this specific challenge. Critically, in this phase, the challenge of family responsibility is portrayed as an 'ethical struggle', in that essential personal rights are somewhat constrained by the recognition of moral demands. With reference to this struggle, family responsibility has already been confronted with challenges at the personal-essence stage, involving individual choice and rights.

What's more, family responsibility meets challenges at the level of relations among the individual, other people and society. Significantly, solidarity within families and responsibility assumed by relatives seem to be looser because of the increase in people's space for negotiating with others (Finch and Mason 1993) and for pursuing their own desires (Cheal 2002); together with the freedom and egalitarianism introduced to societies (Bornat et al. 1999). It may be that certain traditions have been replaced by personal negotiation (Finch and Mason 1993; Kellerhals et al. 2002). What is highlighted above is that people are now unlikely to be given specific and definite role responsibilities; or, in other words, that this solid obligation attached to role orientation may not remain. Applying this understanding to the family sphere, the fact that the responsibilities of offspring are less forcibly imposed when traditional constraints are relaxed is taken as indicating a decrease in the authority of the older family members (Mason et al. 2007). Taken in combination with others, this circumstance does not mean that responsibilities have disappeared; on the contrary, it emphasises the fact that responsibility within families comes from personal willingness and from various familial discussions.

There is one more concern as to how family responsibility might meet the challenge; it lies in the notion of extended dependency. At present, higher educational qualifications are required for access to better jobs, so young people stay at school longer to meet this condition, and may also postpone marriage. As a result, complete independence may be achieved much later in life than was the case in the past. In other words, people delay the transition to adulthood longer than formerly, through undertaking more prolonged education, late marriage, and so forth. Therefore, a number of changes in family relationship and family responsibility can be sharply observed as dependency is prolonged and the associated burden on the original family grows heavier (Furstenberg 2010; Irwin 2009). In this respect, responsibilities between family members become more complicated, in that the parent generation must carry on longer and bear greater financial and emotional responsibility for their children, as highlighting extended parenthood role. Meanwhile, the expectations

placed on the filial generation, regarding responsibility for seniors, seem to be less certain and very conditional.

Although concern about delayed adulthood may pose some challenges to family responsibility as between parents and children, grandparent–grandchild relationships seem to suffer less harm from these circumstances. The extended dependency within the intergenerational interactions examined in this research may affect grandchildren's provision for their grandparents, but the influence could be very limited because the parent generation is the main source of support for the youth. However, in view of the considerable uncertainty and vagueness surrounding the effect of extended dependency on grandparent–grandchild responsibility, I shall instead look at both my interviewees' narratives to see whether they express concern about this specific circumstance.

Whether we stress personal rights, the negotiation of the individual's orientation or extended dependency, such factors provide different explanations of how people exercise responsibility, especially in the family domain. Accordingly, the grandparent–grandchild interaction seems to be more uncertain currently because of the more diverse and complicated dynamics behind the participants' role enactment and mutuality. However, we can ask: what has existing research explored regarding the responsibilities involved in the grandchildren's role? In the coming sections, more empirical evidence are presented which can help in discussing how grandchildren's responsibilities have been studied and how various grandchildren perform their roles. In terms of these data, I shall first seek to understand how grandchildren regard their responsibilities and to find out whether they assist their grandparents; and shall then investigate explanations for the provision they make for their seniors.

Because of the insufficiency of relevant data based on eastern societies, the literature mentioned below comes mainly from western academia. Although western-led research materials may depict rather different pictures of grandparent–grandchild interactions, significant features of grandchildren's responsibility and assistance to

grandparents, as found in western studies, provide a basic framework for this research into how the Taiwanese grandchild generation perceives its role and associated tasks. Furthermore, through these studies we might see more clearly how this grandchild generation embodies its concept of responsibility in practical action.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that, as the only researcher in this study, I did not take for granted a fixed definition of responsibility when conducting the interviews, but rather investigated more broadly the possible meanings and interpretations of responsibility as they emerged from the interviewees' discourses regarding interactions within their families. Through this approach, the problem of whether intergenerational provision of assistance is linked to a particular 'given' notion of responsibility, or whether it relates to some other factors, is left open to discussion, which may accompany richer data.

## 2.3.2  Grandchildren's responsibility

After reviewing grandparent–grandchild relevant studies, grandparent–grandchild research shows the existence of disproportionality between the research that measures grandparental help in caring for their grandchildren and those that measure the grandchildren's help provision to the elderly. The assistance from grandparent to grandchild includes a wide range of dimensions, with financial, emotional and practical aspects (Ashton 1996; Brannen et al. 2004; Hoff 2007; Passman and Blackwelder 1986; Passman and Tomlin 1989). However, the positions and responsibilities of the younger family members have still left researchers with a puzzle to resolve (Brannen et al. 2004). It might be that nothing is expected by the elderly from the younger generation because they want to pursue their own independence without being regarded as burdens by their descendants' (Brannen 2006). It might also be explained by the fact that the older generation are consistently deemed to have a responsibility to transfer their resources to the younger family members (Cheal 1983). Cheal (ibid) describes a positive connection between greater

capacity and better fulfilment of carrying out responsibility in order to explain why the older generation is expected to offer more for their families than their juniors. Cheal comments:

> *'The fulfilment of obligation is contingent upon the availability of transaction capacities' (p 811).*

If this is so, then grandparents are now more able to see their grandchildren reach adulthood, due to their longer expectancy (Kemp 2004; Monserud 2008; Reitzesand and Mutran 2004). Cheal's emphasis on the association between transaction capacities and responsibilities can, at present, be extended to young adult grandchildren who are capable in adulthood.

As for the concern of grandchild's help provision for their families, it is not only about the grandchildren's physical capacity, but also their willingness towards mutual support of their seniors. The grandchildren's commutation to family support has been confirmed in various studies in which it is clear how willing grandchildren are to undertake family responsibilities (Kemp 2005; Kennedy 1990; Ross et al. 2002). For instance, Kennedy (1990) recruited 704 college students to his study in the USA and concluded that the majority of college students strongly agreed that they had responsibilities to provide love, company and assistance to their grandparents when needed. Moreover, in Kemp's (2005) interviews of 37 grandparents and grandchildren in southern Ontario, the research revealed that grandchildren understood their obligations towards their grandparents and felt guilty if they did not fulfil them. *'I feel bad for grandparents, because they've given so much to their family, and sometimes it seems … I don't feel like I'm giving enough back to them'* (p 169). Similarly, in their British-based research, Ross, Hill, Sweeting and Cunningham-Burley (2002) argue that grandchildren do feel obligated towards their grandparents. In addition, the grandchildren, in Streltzer's research (1979) conducted in the USA, showed that they tried their best to be supportive within the family, and were curious about what they could do for their grandparents. With reference to the outcomes of these studies, it highlights a general appreciation of

being responsible for supporting their seniors, in terms of the perspectives of the researched grandchildren.

In the research mentioned above, a sense of responsibility among grandchildren causes them to consider what their grandparents need, including both their mental and physical requirements. With reference to this, I propose that grandchildren's assistance and support can be seen as ways to convert their ideas of responsibilities into practical measures. Briefly, what exactly do grandchildren do for their grandparents in order to fulfil their responsibilities? What kind of assistance do they offer them?

### 2.3.3   Grandchildren's responsibility: Putting ideological ideas into practice

Firstly, ninety-nine participants aged 65–94 years were recruited by a compact area-cluster sampling strategy by Kivett (1985) in south-eastern USA. This study showed that the most common sort of help received by grandfathers from their grandchildren was yardwork or transportation (approximately 20%), followed by provision of care when they fell ill (reported by 18% of grandfathers). Moreover, Ashton (1996) conducted research consisting of 116 black and white grandmothers living in the New York area, with one grandchild aged 18 or older. In the study, the grandmothers reported that they had received help from that grandchild with monetary assistance, household chores, and care when they were ill, confirming the received assistance from their grandchildren. In this research, it also emerged that black grandmothers were given more frequent assistance from their grandchildren than white grandmothers, which reflects other cultural differences and illustrates the potential importance of ethnicity in grandparent–grandchild interactions. In relation to these two studies focusing on the perspectives of grandparents, household-related assistance and the care for ill grandparents are the two main dimensions of grandchildren's support for their grandparents.

Secondly, how about the understandings of grandchildren's assistance from the viewpoint of grandchildren? A study conducted in the UK by Kemp (2004) showed greater obligations and responsibilities in the testimonies of 19 adult grandchildren. 'Giving back' and 'helping out' are important issues for adult grandchildren. As Kemp states: 'Being sources of pride and spending time with grandparents were among the most common ways of returning' (p 515). Grandchildren regarded their achievements with pride, wanting to please their grandparents, and they thought spending time with them was an inevitable obligation. These adult grandchildren also felt a normative expectation of respect and reciprocity in their family roles. The majority provided assistance with household chores in their grandparents' supportive networks. This sort of helping out is deemed to be a 'wider obligation and contribution to family life' and 'an act of reciprocity, respect and appreciation for the elder generation' (p 518). Kemp also examined the types of support given by grandchildren, and found that their provision of assistance involves doing household chores, providing transport and helping with banking.

In contrast, Hoff's (2007) research turned out to show a very different story about grandchildren's assistance from the previous research (Ashton 1996; Kemp 2004; Kivett 1985). The author investigated grandchildren's support from the grandparents' perspective in Germany in 1996 and 2002, drawing on the data of the first and second waves of the German Ageing Survey, targeting people aged 40–85 years in 1996 and 46–91 years in 2002. This study revealed that mutual exchanges between the grandparents and grandchildren were nearly non-existent. Although the author did not further explore the reasons why grandchildren's provision for their grandparents is statistically non-significant, the lack of grandchildren's assistance towards grandparents in Hoff's research indicate that grandchildren's assistance towards the elderly cannot be taken for granted.

In brief, a congruency of grandchildren's support in existing research is shown, in terms of both grandparent and grandchild sides. Helping with household chores and supporting unwell grandparents seem to be the most common types of assistance provided by grandchildren. It is probably because these activities are strongly related

to daily events, whereby the grandchildren can provide their help and support more easily and with less inconvenience if needed. It is worth mentioning that that financial support is rarely mentioned within existing studies. Logically, it can be supposed that the lack of monetary help by grandchildren is accounted for by their young age and their current occupation as a student, as relating to their limited resources. Bearing in mind their limited monetary capability, the flow of money cannot be the main way of helping out. If the limitation of personal resources is deemed as a barrier to intergenerational transfer of all resources, what other factors play a similar role?

### 2.3.4  Factors influencing grandchildren's assistance

The question of how and to what extent grandchildren assist their grandparents does not yield a consistent answer, mainly due to the different focuses of the research settings. In this section, I discuss some features that are dominant in affecting grandchildren's help for their grandparents, with reference to the research interests and aims. The ages of grandchildren and the proximity of grandparents and grandchildren will be examined in the following discussion.

*2.3.4.1 Age of grandchildren*

While exploring how much grandchildren can offer their grandparents, most research has emphasised that young adults are the most suitable participants because of their capacities and resources (Ashton 1996; Hoff 2007; Kemp 2004; Kivett 1985). The age of the researched grandchildren is therefore a significant factor when exploring transferral of resources from the grandchild generation to the elderly members of their families (Cheal 1983; Kivett 1985).

In Kivett's study (1985), the amount of assistance provided by older grandchildren was nearly twice that offered by younger ones (aged 16 and under). In this research, the author primarily focused on the material resources the grandchild generation had

to offer their grandparent counterparts. In addition, there is another perspective from which to explain assistance given by older grandchildren to their grandparents; namely, that related to the mental maturity of older grandchildren. This factor is addressed in Kemp's study (2005), in a statement made by a 23-year-old grandson which demonstrates the more mature concerns of someone his age:

> *When you were a child, you kind of know your grandparents, but don't know them as a person, you know them as a grandparent. Now I am an adult, I have definitely been able to know her more as a person, as we've both matured (p 170).*

This interviewee identified his grandparents as people who were as important as himself, rather than as symbols or mere occupants of the family. In this study, nearly one-third of adult grandchildren accepted obligations towards and expected to assist their grandparents, an attitude underpinned by the positive effect of knowing each other as individuals. Therefore, mutuality between grandparent and grandchild groups is necessary to this outcome.

Furthermore, Hoff's research (2007) examined the prerequisites of grandchildren's assistance from a different standpoint, offering a new arena for the relevant research. He looked not only at the capacities of older grandchildren, but also at the needs of older grandparents. His approach better explained increased intergenerational transfer in older grandparent-grandchild interactions, in that the older the grandparents are, the more help they need – which is predictable. Hence, when more assistance for older grandparents is called for, their grandchildren may face considerable pressure to meet the demand.

In brief, the age of grandchildren is considered in the present research also because of my interest in the fact that adult grandchildren are regarded as having greater capacity to reflect on their family role orientation. Moreover, they are more likely to be able to acknowledge the effect on their family behaviour of cultural and social values, with reference to collective considerations vs individualistic benefits. In line

with these criteria, adult grandchildren, especially undergraduate and postgraduate students, were selected as the grandchild participants in this study.[17]

## 2.3.4.2 Grandparent–grandchild proximity

Apart from the possible influence of grandchildren's age on their assistance to grandparents, the distance between grandparents and grandchildren is also underlined here. Proximity is consistently regarded as an important factor in the interaction between grandparents and grandchildren, with respect to contact, relationship and mutual assistance. Ashton (1996) highlights the salience of proximity as influencing the way grandchildren and grandparents help one another. This study reveals that geographical distance has the strongest effect on mutual help, followed by the grandchild's kin placement and gender, respectively. A study by Kemp (2004) also supports this

as proximity between the two groups. More significantly, family composition, as perhaps identifying deeper family interaction and values, better illustrates the way specific family construction is determined. Therefore, I further explored the connection between different family types and their family interactions on the basis of family composition, rather than of geographical distance between grandparents and grandchildren.

To achieve greater understanding of grandchildren's family support, what needs to be acknowledged after grandchildren's responsibility and its potential impact on their claim, by showing how geographical proximity affected the degree of grandchildren's involvement in their grandparents' supportive networks, the next strongest factors being birth order and gender of the grandchild. Thus, the relationship between geographical distance and support provided by grandchildren for grandparents can be upheld.

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[17] For more information, see please Chapter Three.

Although the effect of proximity on grandchildren's support for their grandparents is positively demonstrated, this research pays more attention to family construction than to physical distance. Family format is as influential on grandchildren's assistance to grandparents assistance to their grandparents? In answer, I shall move on to the grandparent–grandchild relationship, to look at grandchildren's provision for their seniors from another perspective.

## 2.4    Grandparent–grandchild relationship

Talcott Parsons (1943, see Cheal 2002) articulated that family relationships are like an 'onion' in that the relationship between family members is like a series of layers. People who lie further out, in the outer layers, have a weaker relationship with the person at the centre. Cheal (2002) continues to state that this onion model is helpful for conceptualising family relationships and family obligations, as characterised by less contact and mutuality between members in the inner and outer layers. The more distant the relationship suggests there is less responsibility between family members. Thus, the concept of a connection between relationship and responsibility is conceptually fundamental to this research, and indicates the influence of intimacy on practical interactions between grandparent and grandchild. Accordingly, looking at the influence and extent of the grandparent-grandchild relationship is crucial when exploring intergenerational flow from bottom to top, but plays a different role when considering the concept of responsibility. Within this argument, family responsibility could be seen as an explanation for family support, with family relationship viewed as an incentive. As Kivett (1985) argues, the quality of the grandparent-grandchild relationship influences the grandchild's perceptions of his or her responsibilities. Taking responsibility and relationship in combination, and considering their positive connection as they affect grandparent–grandchild interactions, what seems to be argued here is that the closer the relationship between grandparent and grandchild, the greater the grandchild perceives his or her responsibilities to be.

Correspondingly, the focus of the coming discussion will shift to the factors involved in the grandparent–grandchild relationship, which reflects the aims and the purposes of the present research. These factors discuss the potential influence on this intergenerational relationship and how they cause diversity in this intergenerational relationship. They are the gender and the age of the grandchild, the proximity and amount of contact between the two generations, and the influence of the parents.

## 2.4.1    Gender of grandchildren and grandparents

Predictably, the gender of the grandparents contributes to the type of contact and relationship they have with their grandchildren. In general, grandmothers are more likely to participate in their grandchildren's lives than grandfathers (Taylor et al. 2005); this applies to entertainment activities and ritual activities and so on. The finding is supported by the research of Reitzes and Mutran (2004), who explored the factors influencing the frequency of contact between the generations, and the role satisfaction of grandparents in terms of self-processes and their backgrounds. The data were obtained from 203 middle-aged grandparents in the UK. Not surprisingly, the result showed that grandmothers have more frequent contact with their grandchildren, although grandfathers do have regular interactions. The reason grandmothers have more contact with their grandchildren can be understood because they are regarded as 'keepers of the family'. Women generally have more familial responsibilities then men, and they are inclined to be 'kin-keepers' (Eisenberg 1988; Kemp 2005), with a greater likelihood of arranging family activities and 'piecing' family relatives together. By and large, grandmothers, in comparison to grandfathers, have more and deeper involvement in domestic affairs, including childcare of the grandchild generation, taking care of other family members, and maintaining relationships within families.

Similarly, the gender of the grandchild affects the relationship with his or her grandparents, but research is inconsistent as to whether women are more deeply engaged than men. Some studies have demonstrated that female adolescents are

likely to confide in their grandmothers and to foster closer relationships with female grandparents (Baranowski 1982; Kennedy 1990). Hyde and Gibbs (1993) recruited 91 adult granddaughters and student nurses in the UK for their study, the results of which mainly suggest that granddaughters have a closer relationship with their grandmothers than they do with their grandfathers; this is especially so with their maternal grandmothers. Significantly, these studies argue how influential the grandchild's gender might be to the grandparent–grandchild relationships, especially female grandparents and grandchildren. On the other hand, the research of Clingempeel et al. (1992) shows a different outcome; this suggests that the gender of the grandchildren has no statistical effect on the grandparent–grandchild relationship. This was gauged from the analysis of 186 families in America and proposes that female and male grandchildren have an equal chance of having a good relationship with their grandparents. Additionally, the research by Eisenberg (1988), which comprised 120 young adult grandchildren in Texas, seconds that gender has no effect on the closeness of the relationship.

Noticeably, the influence of grandchild gender on grandparent–grandchild relationship is relatively variable according to the aforementioned empirical studies, which are based on western societies. However, the role of grandchild gender in eastern countries represents a more substantial effect. I have highlighted in an earlier discussion how gender bias is a dominant feature in traditional Chinese cultures,[18] in that males and females are expected to perform in different ways. In contemporary Taiwanese society, women still have a significantly weaker position in the family and shoulder more responsibility for looking after their families. Although men contribute more time and labour nowadays towards household chores than their historical counterparts did, the women still primarily take charge of most domestic tasks (Government Executive Yuan 2004). Jackson, Liu and Woo (2008) describe how women in Taiwan are consistently more responsible for their families in domestic tasks, even if they are employed, and they claim that the phenomenon of gender inequality still exists. With regard to the cultural characteristics and current gender bias in contemporary Taiwan, it is not clear whether such unequal domestic

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[18] For more information, please see Chapter Two.

expectations are passed down to the grandchild generation. A better understanding of gender issues in grandparent–grandchild relationships is required to judge whether grandsons and granddaughters function differently or whether there are different expectations of male and female grandchildren. This degree of uncertainty suggests the salience of gender difference or even inequality when looking at grandparent–grandson and grandparent–granddaughter interactions and mutual assistance.

## 2.4.2　Age of grandchild

In this section, I shall move on to the factor of grandchildren's age to see whether different grandparent–grandchild relationships might be found between different-aged grandchildren and their grandparents. The majority of previous research found more evidence that focuses on the connection between the age of the grandchildren, or their capacity, and the degree of interaction with their grandparents. It is likely that only focusing on age or capacity when exploring their relationships and interactions with grandparents limits the outcomes. Age, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, is a critical factor in the grandparent–grandchild relationship, not only because of physical development and maturity, but also because of 'the interplay of the biological and the social, the relationship between persons and social change and the intersection of biology and history, through a sociological approach' (Finch 1989). Significantly, the impact of cultural or social factors is critical when investigating how people behave and interact with one another. With regard to this, this research employs the sociological concept of generation, or age, in terms of shared generational cultural and social values on grandparent–grandchild relations. As for utilising the concept of generation, I discuss more about the research setting in the Chapter Three, providing more detailed information about the research settings.

The age of grandchild generation is explored to understand how they regard their intimacy with their grandparents, with some emphasis on the grandchild's capacity. An American study by Kahana and Kahana (1970) shows that younger grandchildren

have closer relationships with their grandparents than older grandchildren; this was based on 85 grandchildren ranging from 4–13 years of age. In another study (Baltes and Smith 1999) the grandchildren appeared to have different relationships with their grandparents depending on their developmental cognition. These authors showed that when grandchildren are in their twenties, they tend to spend more time building their relationships with their peers; therefore, there is decreased contact with their grandparents which probably explains why older grandchild are less close to their family members. Conversely, Kemp (2005) illustrated the perspectives of grandparent–grandchild relationships by conducting life-history interviews on 18 grandparents and 19 grandchildren. The research concluded that the grandparent–grandchild relationship 'often grows more profound and meaningful as grandparents and grandchildren age through the course of life, and experience life events' (p 161). In other words, older grandchildren may have a greater chance of having a better relationship with their grandparents.

What is more, some research has shown that age of the grandchildren is not a relevant factor in the grandparent–grandchild relationship. Clingempeel et al.'s research (1992) involved two cohorts of grandchildren; one of 9–10 year-olds and the other of 11–13 year-olds, from a total of 186 families. These results showed that the age of the grandchildren had no effect on grandparent–grandchild relationship. Further research conducted by Creasey and Kaliher (1994) in America found that 'age difference were absent for perceived affection for grandparents' (p 420). This was based on 169 questionnaires completed by grandchildren.

In brief, there is no true consensus about the significance of the grandchild's age in the research; whether younger or older grandchildren have better relationships with their grandparents is still an unresolved issue. However, rather than emphasising the difference of age and capacity of the grandchildren, this research has selected undergraduate and postgraduate students as the adult-grandchildren and pays more attention to their common cultural and social environments. This facilitates investigation into the extent to which this young generation is affected by changing

cultural and social values. This will allow more precise understanding about the ability of these cultural and social values to affect people's lifestyle behaviours.

## 2.4.3 Proximity and contact between grandparents and grandchildren

Geographical distance is regarded as another key factor in the grandparent–grandchild relationship (Harwood and Lin 2000; Kivett 1985). Kivett recruited 99 grandfathers in south-eastern USA to determine whether increased association of grandparents and grandchildren can be attributed to closer geographical distance. This view is shared by Harwood and Lin (2000) who found that a short geographical distance predicts better grandparent–grandchild closeness. In contrast, however, Taylor et al. (2005) consider that proximity does not affect the relationship. Their study included the perspectives of 70 grandchildren of many nationalities, studying at a university in the USA. The participants reported that they still maintained satisfactory relationships with their grandparents and were influenced by them, although the contact between them was decreased because of the distance between them. In brief, the strength of the connection between proximity and grandparent–grandchild contact lacks robust data.

However, I am inclined to attribute the different outcomes of these studies to the differences between their participant groups. The results that showed that proximity between grandparents and grandchildren was important for their relationships were obtained from grandparent reports, whereas the statements that showed that proximity did not matter were obtained from grandchildren reports. Grandparents may be limited more by proximity because of their lower mobility, and they are more likely to have more negative feelings about distance and how it affects their intergenerational relationships. Compared to the grandparent cohort, grandchild cohort seems to have fewer difficulties in dealing with geographic inconvenience.

Furthermore, the positive relation between frequency of contact and the strength of relationship has also been confirmed, whereby more frequent contact perhaps predicts a better relationship (Baranowski 1982; Clingempeel et al. 1992; Creasey and Kaliher 1994, Eisenberg 1988, Mueller and Elder 2003). The study by Clingempeel et al. (ibid.) indicates that 'children's emotional and physical involvement with grandparents is an interdependence' and that 'more frequent contact with grandparents may promote closer emotions, and emotional closeness may foster more frequent contact' (p 1410). This viewpoint is also highlighted by Baranowski's research (ibid.), in which a reduction of the interaction between grandparents and grandchildren is regarded as the most critical factor in their relationships. In accordance with these findings, the significance of the frequency of contact between grandparents and grandchildren is well known.

According to previous research findings, the influence of geographical distance and frequency of contact between grandparents and grandchildren on their relationship is well established. Critically, the studies cited above were all based in western nations; however Taiwan is not as physically large as some western countries, such as the U.S., which might explain the lower a lesser effect of geographical distance on the grandparent–grandchild relationship. As for the effect of physical distance between grandparents and grandchildren, I shed more light on family structure in Taiwan to explore whether grandparents and grandchildren with different family formats have different interactions, rather than merely focusing on proximity alone in this study. To this end, family type of the interviewees is divided into: grandparent and grandchild who live together; grandparent and grandchild who live in the same city; and grandparent and grandchild who live far away from each other. Through this classification, the influence of proximity and frequency of contact can be determined in more concrete setting. Moreover, in these different types of family distribution, the intermediate generation (parent generation) has a role in affecting the grandparent–grandchild relationship.

To summarise, a review of existing research presents the conceptualised features of collective and individualistic ideologies and shows how these characteristics are

operationalised. Accordingly, it illustrates the relations between these two sets of values and argues for their potential effects on people's behaviour and beliefs. Moreover, discussion of family responsibility is focused on understanding how responsibility might matter in terms of communal assistance and family support. At the same time, a few factors are highlighted to suggest possible challenges which could weaken the strength of responsibility in contemporary society. Lastly, attention is paid to the grandparent–grandchild relationship, which illustrates the connection between family responsibility and family relationship. Then, the effect of domestic relationship on interactions among family members shows that its influence is conditional on a variety of circumstances.

Overall, insufficient information about the relevant topics in Taiwanese academia is revealed. There is a big scholarship gap in the field of grandparent–grandchild relations that needs to be enriched, especially because the few research debates are built on western data. It is almost impossible to find data to depict the situation in eastern or Chinese-based nations. It is worth discussing the nature of grandparent–grandchild relationships and interaction in eastern societies, or more specifically in Chinese-or-collectivist circumstances. The different cultural and social backgrounds of people in western and eastern societies could generate very different outcomes of research on the same topics, thus illustrating the salience of cultural and social features on family relationship. According to the research aims and purposes on gaining concrete understandings of grandparent–grandchild interaction, I believe the present study can contribute greatly to scholarship in the field of grandparent–grandchild relations. The research can not only build up further academic resources, based on the unique cultural and social context of Taiwan, but it can also introduce sociological concepts to familial issues. To sum up, the literature provided in this chapter provides fundamental background to this study, and helps to establish the research settings, including setting up relevant questions, employing implementation procedures and resolving outstanding issues.

# 3 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses all the methodological issues affecting the research, including the underlying theoretical approaches, research settings, process of recruiting participants, method of data construction and analysis, and concerns related to research ethics. In terms of the study's aims and questions, the qualitative method was selected to explore in depth whether and, if so, to what extent, the collision of traditional collective values with contemporary individualistic concepts has influenced grandparent-grandchild interaction in Taiwan, especially regarding grandchildren's provision for grandparents. Accordingly, members of the adult grandchild generation and their grandparents were invited to participate in separate semi-structured interviews. In data construction, thematic analysis was utilised to investigate the totality of the researched materials, within the clear research aims set out at the beginning of the research. Moreover, the concepts of intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson and Roberts 1991) and reciprocity (Marshall 1972) are employed to conceptualise and rationalise the data, bringing the research findings to a higher theoretical level in a synthetic system for better understanding a possibility of theoretical generalisation (Mason 2002). In the last section, the validity and confidentiality of the research and the reflexivity of a researcher are addressed to explore the study's potential ethical issues.

## 3.2 Epistemological and theoretical positions

In view of Hoff's claim (2007) that young people are considered an important resource for elderly care, the way the young generation in Taiwan appreciates this expectation and the extent to which it decides to engage in assistance to grandparents are at the centre of this study. Nevertheless, the influential concepts of traditional

culture and ongoing social ideology, in particular the seemingly incompatible values of collectivism and individualism, complicate the situation in regard to where contemporary young Taiwanese people stand on family support. However, the way I understand how reality is built up and the way how I acknowledge how knowledge is shared come out at the beginning for the data construction.

'Reality is socially constructed as people's experiences occur within social, cultural, historical and personal contexts' (Hennink et al. 2011: 15), as the illumination of reality is subjectively established. In line with this subjectivity, the approach to understanding reality in this research does not fit the positivist paradigm; instead, the interpretive approach predominates in the data analysis. I believe that exploring people's own perspectives on their experience offers the most direct path to understanding the dynamics of their behaviour, although some limitations and considerations may inhibit people from expressing what they really have in mind. At the same time, I do not claim that interpretations and explanations of the research topic as they emerge from interviews are true or certain facts, but rather I seek to prioritise and bring to the fore the insider or 'emic' perspectives of the interviewees themselves (see Hennink et al. ibid.).

Acknowledging perceived reality within such a subjectivity-led logic, the individual is treated in this study as an active agent constructing his/her own behaviour in terms of various considerations and interpretations about the things and people they encounter, rather than as a passive medium of social forces and transformations generating action ( Lofland and Lofland 1995). Therefore, collecting data from the narratives of the grandchild and grandparent generations is considered the most appropriate means of answering the research questions, including the question of how participants locate their family roles, acknowledge the attached responsibilities and commit to family support.

In addition, two theoretical approaches are highlighted below, to offer opportunities for using the data from this study to interrogate existing research. At this stage, related theoretical discussion is to provide a way to conceptualise the findings of this

research at a synthetic level, rather than within the limits of an individual study. With this purpose in mind, the concepts of intergenerational solidity and reciprocity in the domestic sphere are employed to advance the research data towards a more synthetic and conceptualised presentation.

## 3.2.1  Intergenerational Solidarity

Intergenerational solidarity also plays an important role in this research, by explaining how family cohesion and mutual interactions between relatives are strengthened and maintained (Bengtson 2001; Bengtson and Oyama 2007; Bengtson and Roberts 1991; Mill 1999; Monserud 2008). A very famous account of solidarity comes from Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society*, from 1893; in this text, the ideas of 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity' are underscored in order to explain how people cooperate with one another to fulfil different requirements in order to maintain a functional community for social development (Munch 1994). Bengtson and Roberts (1991) further developed solidarity into intergenerational solidarity and they applied the ideas of solidarity during investigations of the sentiments, attitudes and behaviours of family members. With respect to the contexts and the contents of intergenerational solidarity, there are six dimensions that serve to elaborate on family cohesion and interaction:

(1)   *Associational solidarity*: the frequency and pattern of interactions in various types of activity in which family members engage.

(2)   *Affectional solidarity*: the type and degree of positive sentiments held about family members and the degree of reciprocity of those sentiments.

(3)   *Consensual solidarity*: the degree of agreement on values, attitudes and beliefs among family members.

(4)   *Functional solidarity*: the degree of helping and exchanging of resources.

(5)   *Normative solidarity*: the strength of commitment to performance of family -obligations (familialism).

(6)     *Structural solidarity*: the level of opportunity that exists in intergenerational relationships, reflected by the number, type and geographical proximity of family members (Bengtson and Robert *ibid*: 857).

These six dimensions describe the diverse associations between family members and consider different mutuality between family members in a thorough way (Bengtson et al. 2002). Although the concept emphasises parent–child interplay in the first instance, the scope of the concept is extended to the grandparent–grandchild bond, and has been wide applied in recent research (Bengtson 2001; Bengtson and Oyama 2007; Monserud 2008). Intergenerational solidarity is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct that is reflected in the diverse interactions between family members and their complicated relationships. For instance, the frequency of contact between grandparents and grandchildren is included in the dimension of *associational solidarity*, which relates to how often grandparents and grandchildren interact with each other and why they do so. The grandparent–grandchild relationship can also be understood through the dimension of *affectional solidarity*, whereby various types and levels of grandparent–grandchild affections are explored. The level of exchanges between grandchildren and grandparents are strongly related to *functional solidarity,* which highlights how resources flow between family members and the explanations for the exchanges. Ggeographical proximity is embodied in the *structural solidarity* dimension, which is concerned with how family conditions affect familial interactions. *Consensual* and *normative solidarity* expound the effects passed down from historically cultural and social contexts and further reveal how people are immersed in, and influenced by, their particular backgrounds.

Taken in combination, these dimensions of intergenerational solidarity attempt to rationalise people's domestic behaviours, in terms of the consideration for communal cohesion and advantages. How this consideration for family solidarity might function, and which type of solidarity is considered the most important element for binding the family, are discussed with the researched data later; whether solidarity operates differently in Taiwan – a collective-based society – will also be addressed.

### 3.2.2 Concept of reciprocity

The significance of reciprocity is acknowledged for maintaining stable relationships and solidarity (Marshall 1972). The concept of reciprocity illuminates the need to maintain stability and collaboration within a society or community. According to Finch and Mason (1993: 34) it 'refers to the way in which people exchange goods and services as part of an ongoing and two-way process'. Basically, there are three types of reciprocity, which explain people's interactions in terms of different motivations. There is *balanced reciprocity*, which emphasises the need for equal giving and receiving; *negative reciprocity* stresses the importance of receiving something with less or not giving in return; and *generalised reciprocity* occurs in an asymmetric and unconditional manner, whereby donors have little or no expectation of getting anything in return. In brief, these types of reciprocity can stabilise mutual provisioning, or they may keep interactions continuous, depending on the situation. In the domestic situation, generalised reciprocity can be attributed to relationships; relatives are willing to contribute their help to other people, for instance, facilitating provision from seniors to juniors. Apart from generalised reciprocity, balanced reciprocity is more likely to have a role in the flow of help provision from juniors to seniors, in that the younger generation was the first recipient. Thus it is that later, in terms of the growing capabilities of young people, grandchildren might want to pay back the parent and grandparent generations in order to pursue a state of balanced reciprocity. This sort of reciprocal dynamic between givers and recipients is regarded in this study as a major reason behind the grandparent–grandchild interaction.

Importantly, the theoretical approaches used in this research are all taken from western academia; any concerns about applying these theoretical concepts to eastern-based societies should be paid attention to, in order to highlight potential disparities between the two different contexts and thus avoid inappropriate generalisations or interpretations.

## 3.3　Participants

### 3.3.1　Samples

### *3.3.1.1 Why grandchildren and their grandparents?*

Throughout the world, care for the elderly is becoming increasingly significant within the domestic arena and political policy. With longer life expectancy and lower fertility rates, the decline in potential support from younger generations poses a challenge to people in regard to providing adequate help for the older generation. In these social circumstances, help from grandchildren to grandparents is receiving greater attention, since grandparents and grandchildren have a higher possibility to spend more time together because of increasing life expectancy (Piercy and Chapman 2001). With regard to these demographic changes, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren develops a substantial issue, which demands a further academic study, in order to understand in detail the dynamic of their relationships.

### *3.3.1.2 Why grandchild and grandparent 'generations'?*

Accordingly, the main participants chosen for this study are the young adult grandchild generation and their grandparents. The focus on this specific generation of grandchildren is based not on their age, but on the aim of exploring the influence of cultural and social background on the family perceptions and behaviour of the grandchildren of this particular generation (Brannen 2006; Elder et al. 2003; Mannheim 1952; Pilcher 1994).

First, this research draws on the facts that young adult grandchildren are mature enough to reflect back and look forward, and that their grandparents are still alive. Compared to the younger grandchild generation, the interviewees recruited from colleges and universities are expected to maintain active interactions with their grandparents, besides having their own points of view from which to interpret the position of grandparent-grandchild relationships in their lives (Ashton 1996; Hoff 2007; Kemp 2004; Kivett 1985). In addition, a decision was made to only recruit students, rather than having a mix of other people of the same age in the group. Limiting the sample to undergraduate and postgraduate grandchildren related to their specific family and social conditions. On the one hand, students are still dependent on their families, either living with their families or receiving financial support from their parents, for instance. Therefore, the influence of domestic authority on this generation in the family system is powerful, so a student grandchild group might be expected to show a greater level of obedience to seniors. On the other hand, one of the effects of education on grandchild generation is to bring people to a more independent world.[19] In this situation, as underlined in the literature review, people who are more educated seem to be more familiar with the concepts of individualism and independence. Therefore, student grandchildren are more likely to confront the difficulties this presents, with respect to how independent they could be under the complicated circumstances set up by their family's tradition and current social tendency. As a result, there is a tension between the need for family dependence and the need for self-development in educated young people, and that is why only undergraduate and postgraduate students were recruited in this study.

More importantly, from a sociological perspective, the function of 'generation' here is to facilitate in-depth understanding of the impact of Traditional collective and ongoing individualistic values on the behaviour of the selected interviewee generations. This research standpoint is derived from Mannheim's articulation, which is that people from the same generation share a 'certain definite mode of behaviour, feeling and thought' (1952: 291), and are predisposed towards common interpretations and actions because of their 'generational location', wherein they

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[19] For more information, see Chapter Two.

conceptualise various features for themselves in distinction from the other. Thus, the idea of generational location emphasises that individuals occupy 'a common location in social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experience' (Mannheim ibid.: 291). Furthermore, the term 'generation' in Mannheim's theory involves both a 'qualitative nature', underpinning the particular social or historical experience people have encountered in their generation, and a 'quantitative feature', indicating different stratifications of age or life course. However, Glenn (1977, see Pilcher 1994), highlighting concerns about possibly complicated definitions of 'generation', further proposes the uses of 'cohort' and 'generation' to avoid confusion. As Glenn articulates it, 'generation' is a term which involves meanings of kinship and attachment, while 'cohort' refers to a group of people who encounter similar or the same social experiences or events within a specific time period (ibid.). In the same vein, Pilcher (1994), read as a follower of Mannheim, suggests the usages 'social generation' when referring to the cohort attached to social events and phenomena, and 'generation' when referring to kinship, in order to avoid confusion arising from the complex implications of 'generation' when used in empirical research.

Apart from the grandchild participants, the grandparents of this grandchild generation are also informants in the present study, to mainly enable investigation of the grandparents' perceptions of the transformations of grandparent–grandchild relationships over time. This procedure will reveal how they regard grandchildren's orientations and expectations in different time periods, and might explain the potential discrepancies, across generations, in the experience of being a grandchild. Furthermore, during comparison of grandparent and grandchild interviewees' narratives concerning that experience, the procedure will help to determine the dominance of cultural and social factors in the grandchild's performance.

Noticeably, as for the concept of 'generation' as employed in the present research, its application to the grandchild participants refers to their kinship location in resonance with the position of their grandparents. At the same time, the term 'generation' here also contains a 'quantitative feature', namely that its members belong to the same

'cohort' in Glenn's sense (1977) or 'social generation' in Pilcher's sense (1994), since they were born within the same social environment and cultural context and have experienced the same historical and social events. A distinction is that 'generation' when applied to the grandparents here merely refers to their kinship stratum in relation to their grandchildren. Notably, they do not belong to the same cohort since some of the grandparents emigrated from China in 1949 with the retreat of the government[20] while others grew up entirely in Taiwan. Because of the different conditions of their childhood and adulthood, the term 'cohort' for the grandparent generation raises complications. In brief, the effect of different cohorts co-existing within the grandparent generation will be discussed when the grandparents address the discrepancy between being a grandchild in their own era and in their grandchildren's time.[21]

Moreover, although the grandchild and grandparent generations may be of varying socio-economic status and experience diverse living conditions, which in Mannheim's work (1952) raises a perceived concern as to how people can share the same generational actability without experiencing the same generational phenomena. In other words, being of the same generation does not ensure homogeneity in all other dimensions. Therefore, the impact of different financial conditions within the interviewees' families was considered in the research settings. Correspondingly, this investigation helps to reveal the kind of role played by socio-economic resources in grandchildren's assistance and how dominant these resources are.[22]

### 3.3.1.3 Generation: the interplay of history, society and individual

Finch (1989) illuminates the implications of generation, which is the 'interplay of the biological and the social, the relationship between persons; and social change and the intersection of biology and history, through a sociological approach', to explain why

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[20] For more information, see Chapter One.
[21] For more information, please see Chapter Six.
[22] For more information, please see Chapter Four.

members of a particular generation share common perspectives (see Pilcher 1994: 482).

Brannen (2006), in her research, articulates that '[I]ntergenerational transfers occur in historical time. Historical conditions may affect the availability of resources to different historical cohorts in a particular period: through the influence of economic cycles and employment rates, systems of social stratification, and welfare provided by the state. Historical conditions may also shape the cultures of giving and receiving' (p 137).[23] However, apart from this conditional capability, Brannen (ibid.) also claims that family members may construct a pattern of giving and receiving intergenerational support within generations over time, in terms of family histories and personal experience. On the one hand, transfer and exchange among family members are shaped contextually across generations, with the culture of giving and receiving apparently inherited across generations in a family (Brannen 2003; 2006). On the other hand, people who have more difficult lives, for instance, or are expected to be independent and take personal responsibility, are less committed to family mutuality once asked to rely on themselves in such family circumstances (Brannen 2006). With reference to this suggestion about family tradition and personal experience, representing the highlighted collision between collective and individualistic concepts in Taiwan society, is the source of potential tension surrounding intergenerational mutuality in this study, and thus a topic for investigation.

In line with these accounts, the use of 'generation' in this research is meant to help clarify how, and to what extent, the factors and features of particular cultural and social circumstances might affect the targeted generations with respect to their familial interactions. Moreover, I assume that exploring two generations from the same family can help to understand, for the purposes of this research, the extent to which the culture of giving and receiving is a very generational phenomenon on a personal level, or whether long-standing family custom regarding intergenerational

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[23] It is worth noting here that Brannen's articulation on 'historical condition' emphasises the 'quantitative feature' in Mannheim's theory (1952), the 'cohort' in Glenn's perspective (1977) and the 'social generation' of Pilcher's account (1994).

transfer plays a more dominant role in family mutuality. Similarly, the employment of the concept of generation can connect with the idea of 'cross-contextual generalities' in Manson's work of 2002. Cross-contextual generalities are produced by comparing understandings of focused explorations in selected time periods and contexts. Again, if discrepant cultural and social dynamics are identified in the narratives of different generations, it perhaps highlights how influential cultural and social contexts are on grandparent-grandchild relationships and interactions. In addition, the above-mentioned advantage explains the research setting in which two different perspectives, from the grandchild and own grandparent generations, on the relevant issues of their interactions are collected.

### 3.3.1.4 Why multiple perspectives?

In fact, gathering multiple perspectives from grandchildren and their grandparents is more complicated than comparing the two groups' different narratives on family support, in terms of their different cultural and social contexts. There are a number of reasons for collecting more than one voice in family research: for instance, obtaining a more complete picture of the research topic, being able to compare or contrast the responses of the interviewees, or trying to provide a clearer family context (Harden et al. 2010). In this research, except for the above-mentioned advantages of investigating two generations from the same family, what else can the collection of multiple perspectives contribute?

In terms of this study's interests and questions, different perspectives across generations as they inform role dynamics, orientation and grandchildren's expectations, provide a better understanding of family practice. From narratives of grandparent and grandchild in the same pair, I did gain a clearer picture of how members of that family operate within it. For example, Cindy told me how she and her nuclear family were expected to maintain a strong connection with the wider family by visiting her grandparents according to a very frequent pattern. The interview with Cindy's grandfather correspondingly confirmed this specific

expectation. From the grandfather's perspective, this solid association among family members is regarded as a rather critical family/traditional value. Thus, double confirmation of the same family phenomenon is helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of the interviewees' families. Beside this, as mentioned above, diverse social factors were outlined during the interviews to explain why being a grandchild at the present time differs from that condition in the past.[24] Therefore, the potential transformations over time of the grandchild's position in the family were apprehended from the multiple perspectives of different-generation interviewees.[25] Taken in combination, the implications of multiple perspectives within the same family are considered to provide the most valuable approach for data collection and data analysis.

As aforementioned, the multiple perspectives of the grandparent and grandchild generations were used to yield a richer picture of family relationships and family interaction and to create opportunities for identifying similarities, discrepancies and contradictions. Crucially, discrepant standpoints from different individuals were also expected (Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2003); raising a concern, however, about how to treat different information offered by grandparents and grandchildren respectively (Harden et al. 2010). In this situation, does this research give 'equal consideration' to grandparents' and grandchildren's data, weighing the data as equally important? If not, what can explain disproportionate discussion of the information collected from the grandchild and grandparent generations?

In terms of the settings of the whole project and the research materials, the accounts of the grandchild generation turned out to be the main resources for data analysis. Exploration of the assistance offered by grandchildren to their grandparents is the core of this study, together with investigation of the effect of cultural and social factors and transformations on the behaviour of family members. Hence, the data of the grandchild generation receive greater weight. The material derived from the grandparents was focused mostly on comparison with the understandings of the

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[24] For more information, please see Chapter Seven.
[25] For more information, please see Chapter Six.

grandchildren as to how cultural and social factors affected their grandparent-grandchild interactions and relationships. As a result, the investigation of the transformations in family support and grandparent-grandchild relationship over time was attenuated. Except in the case of the research questions, the inadequacy of the resources derived from the grandparent generation further explains why their narratives were discussed as much as the information received from the grandchildren. For example, the data of the interpretations of traditional collective values and ongoing individualistic tendency is very limited from the grandparent generations. The grandparent interviewees were reluctant to discuss this seemingly profound terms during the interviews because they were concerned about their lack of being well-educated.[26]

In brief, the information offered by the grandparent generation is substantially complementary to the data discussed by the grandchild generation, as making a great number of critical comparisons with or intensifying statements of the data of the grandchildren. However, although discussion of the data from the grandparent and grandchild generations is differently distributed, their contrasted perspectives are equally valued in the data analysis.

## 3.3.2 Sampling

Sampling is a critical stage in recruitment of research participants, as the selected sample needs to be representative of a wider population for the purpose of generalising the research findings (Mason 2002). In keeping with the research setting, college students were targeted as interviewees for this research, so I visited universities and colleges throughout Taiwan to recruit my potential participants. However, gatekeepers are crucial during the participant recruitment stage. Since my educational background was all based in Taiwan, I was able to rely on help from my former directors and supervisors and from lecturers with whom I was comparatively well-acquainted. Firstly, the close relationships I had formed with my Master's

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[26] For more information, please see Chapter Five.

supervisors when acting as a teaching assistant enhanced my chances of gaining access to potential research participants. Therefore, I visited my former university, Fu-Jen Catholic University, to search, with these supervisors' approval, for possible volunteers for the study. Furthermore, there were other opportunities to contact lecturers from other universities on the strength of referrals from my former supervisor; in this way I was introduced to other potential participants all around different cities in Taiwan by networking. Apart from the students I had recruited from different classes, some of my classmates working in the administration departments of universities and colleges also provided opportunities to contact suitable students directly.

As a consequence, this assistance from my supervisor, lecturers and classmates meant that the process of sampling went smoothly, so the samples were recruited confidently and with very few problems.

The basic database of interviewees in the study therefore comprised twenty grandchildren volunteers, along with one grandparent who was willing to take part in the research. By setting no limiting criteria at the very beginning, I recruited a large number of volunteer respondents and I reduced this substantial number into a suitably sized group of final interviewees. To do this, various standards were applied and the selection criteria related to the purpose and interests of the study. The demographic information form for each potential grandchild interviewee obtained information on the gender of the respondents, as well as their living arrangements, any history of ever having lived with their grandparents, the frequency of grandparent–grandchild contact, and the ways in which they contacted each other (see Appendix 5).

The information form for the grandparent interviewees (see Appendix 6) was slightly different in that it lacked questions concerning gender; this was because the gender of grandparent could not be a selection criterion because they were freely introduced to the study by the grandchildren. Moreover, the question of family financial condition was too excluded because of the consideration of that older generation

could be more sensitive about discussing this so-called family privacy. Therefore, in order to avoid any unpleasant feelings of the grandparent participant, they did were not asked for answer the question of their family finance. Notably, because of the uncertainty of the grandparent participants, the selection process was governed by information provided by the grandchildren's self-evaluated materials.

### 3.3.3 Demographic information of the data

Eventually, nine granddaughters and eleven grandsons (aged 18 to 30 years, with a median age of 23.6 years) and seven grandfathers and thirteen grandmothers (aged 63 to 84, with a median age of 76.4) comprised the final sample. These twenty pairs of grandchildren and grandparents represented five family types, as distinguished by the living arrangements of both grandchildren and grandparents. These were three-generation families (25 per cent); grandchildren living in the same city with their grandparents (25 per cent); grandchildren living far away from their grandparents (25 per cent); grandchildren in a lone-parent family living with their grandparents (15 per cent); and grand-family (10 per cent). The actual numbers of participants in each family type were five pairs, five pairs, five pairs, three pairs and two pairs, respectively.[27]

### 3.4    Data collection

### 3.4.1  Qualitative approach

In describing the strengths of utilising a qualitative approach, Miles and Huberman (1994: 10) elaborate that 'the possibility for understanding latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues is strong'. Hence, interviewees' diverse perceptions, personal

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[27]  For more information, please see Appendix 1.

experience and some unexpected valuable resources are more appropriate for examination by qualitative means. Current and historical information can also be outlined using qualitative methods (Creswell 2003). Moreover, through the process of interviewing, meaningful facial expressions or physical gestures of interviewees can be recorded in the field note, which may provide additional sources of data for broader analysis and deeper reflection. Compared with conducting interviews, quantitative methods are expected to provide more abundant data from more research participants, but the depth of the study is a concern (Miles and Huberman 1994). With reference to the research aims of this study, where very little data exist from previous research, the depth of information yielded by exploring grandparents' and grandchildren's thoughts and reported behaviour is considered to be more important than the breadth obtained by generalising the results of the study. This is why a quantitative approach is not used.

The in-depth interviews in this study lasted between one and one and one-and-a-half hours. The language to be used in the pre-pilots studies, pilot studies and formal fieldwork was Chinese – the official language of Taiwan. However, because of the limited grasp of Chinese of some of the grandparents, I anticipated using Holo[28] to enable fluent communication. The interviews were to be conducted whenever possible within the houses of the participants. However, the final decision regarding the location of the interview was negotiated between the interviewer and the interviewee, to respect the wishes of the interviewees. This meant that coffee shops were also potential venues.

## 3.4.2  (Pre)-Pilot study

Owing to the limited amount of Taiwanese literature with relevance to the present research, there were no basic perspectives on grandchildren's help provision for their grandparents, or on the relation between cultural values, social concepts and family

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[28] Holo is spoken by nearly a third of people in Taiwan. Although Mandarin is the official language of Taiwan, Holo is used within homes and in informal situations (Government Information Office 2009), particularly by elderly people.

interactions. These issues were still unclear when this research began. A pre-pilot study was therefore conducted to collect precise and rich data from Taiwanese grandchildren and to enable a better design of the interviews to follow. A focus group was employed as an appropriate approach for the pre-pilot study, because group discussion is effective for the generation of ideas (Morgan 1996). At this stage, the gender and age of the interviewees was not considered because these personal factors have little bearing on the ability to generate new ideas. In the pre-pilot study, open-ended questions and general ideas about grandparent–grandchild relationships and intergenerational transfers were discussed. The resulting data were used to create and revise the content of the questions for the interview guides to be used in the pilot study and formal fieldwork.

Subsequently, a couple of pilot studies were conducted to test the time, process, instruments and interactions between the interviewer and interviewees. This information enabled improvements to be made to the design of the formal interviews. In addition, the pilot studies provided an important opportunity to practice my interviewing skills and to get a greater sense about how to conduct the interviews. A number of uncertainties were addressed and made more reliable and concrete as a result of the interviewees' narratives. In this way, the interviewer was also able to revise inappropriate parts of the form and adapt instruments of the research, providing an opportunity to test the study aims. By processing the results of these test procedures, the final interview guide was produced for use with both grandparents and grandchildren (see Appendices 7 and 8).

### 3.4.3 Data analysis

In the process of constructing data, firstly, all interviews (plus field notes) were transcribed, following which every interview was treated as an individual account, but also explored as a whole, for different stages of the data analysis. Critically, the choice of analytic approach depends on the research design, based on the researcher's view of how reality is established. As highlighted at the outset of this

chapter, knowledge is socially constructed by individuals within their different cultural, social and personal circumstances (Hennink et al. 2011), which suggests an interpretive world. In line with this approach to understanding reality, therefore, exploration of the ways people interpret their family lives, and examination of the reasons offered to explain their own behaviour and ideas, provide this study with the means of answering the research questions and achieving the research aims.

In addition, in this research, the process, from designing research to conducting interviews and analysing data, primarily addresses the question of whether and to what extent the relationship and interaction between grandparents and grandchildren have been affected by Taiwanese cultural collectivism and/or imported individualistic ideologies. Given the study's clear aims, questions and interest-arousing potential, applied thematic analysis was chosen as an appropriate analytic approach with which to fulfil the research purposes.

Patton (1990: 382) claims that 'a classification system is critical; without classification there is chaos'. Mainly, three data sets in this study were focused on during analysis of the researched materials. These are narratives from the grandparent and grandchild interviews, plus the field notes taken by myself. Firstly, I organised these three data sets into various thematic categories related to the research interests and questions. At this stage I paid more attention to the information shared directly by the interviewees. I classified within a consistent system explicit issues such as the perceptions of grandchildren's role, the enactment of being a grandchild, the interpretations of traditional values and so on, which were generated as main headings of the research findings. For example, 'perceptions of grandchildren's role' is a substantial code encompassing every concept of what a grandchild should be like, what the feeling of being a grandchild is and what duties this specific family orientation entails.[29] This sort of classification of more direct and explicit narratives is the main task at this phase.

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[29] For more information, please see Chapter Four.

After this preliminary thematic catalogue of all the data was established, the text-based materials in each category remained very broad and bland. Therefore, with the aim of shaping or theorising the non-explicit ideologies, I subsequently identified similar or related features of materials falling within the same categories. The numerous codes produced were grouped into different layers to allow further classification, along with greater elaboration of some categories. At this phase, some codes were combined for better analysis, while some were dropped from the material, leading to upgrading of the process to 'focused coding' (Lofland and Lofland 1995). As a result, the development of the thematic analysis was carried forward to the interpretative or conceptualising stage. In this level, lineage consideration emerged in this phase as one explanation of grandchild assistance provided to grandparents. Statements such as 'I am responsible (for assisting my grandparents)' and 'I have to help and be obedient (to my grandfather)' are grouped to confirm the power of 'lineage consideration' as it affects the emotional or practical aid offered by the grandchild generation to the grandparent generation. The explicit expressions of responsibility and have-to are not the terminal reasons for grandchildren's support; rather they reflect consideration of traditional lineage.[30] By this process I have turned descriptive information into interpretative discussion.

More critically, in the last two stages, that is, the sets of grandparent and grandchild participants and my interview field notes, were analysed thematically and individually. Lastly, I examined every code and tried to identify any possible links that were present for the purpose of deeper exploratory and productive analysis as a strategy for cross-sectional coding (Mason 2002). The analysis here is no longer limited to one data set, but interrelates all sets in order to identify similar, different, or even contradictory narratives of the researched interviewees. Hence, another substantial task of data analysis at this stage is the investigation across different codes, in order to generate more sophisticated arguments concerning the research contributions. For instance, the connection between the explanation of grandchildren's help for their grandparents and the understanding of traditional and imported concepts reveals – on the basis of material obtained from grandchild

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[30] For more information, please see Chapter Four.

interviewees – that the cultivation of traditional culture encourages grandchildren to support their seniors. In other words, the grandchild informants, when offering ideas about traditional values, shared stories about how they had supported their grandparents' generation.[31] Although these thematic analyses were not actively introduced by the interviewees, they are embedded within the related extracts, beyond the explicit words.

In brief, during the process of data construction, I first thematically analysed the data individually to see how the interviewees portrayed their grandchildren's orientation, carried out their role responsibilities and explained their role enactment. The unique parts of each interview 'glue' the personal, societal and cultural aspects together. Second, after each single interview was considered as an independent event, a series of cross-case analyses was conducted to sort the whole data into diverse categories, in terms of the aims and questions of the research. Subsequently, more rigid and constructive categories or sub-categories were generated from these first-step codes, thus bringing this data construction to a more interpretive and discursive stage. Lastly, a cross-sectional and cross-thematic analytic strategy was employed to discern any similarities, differences and unique features of these interviews as compared to the others. In this process of data organisation, implicit connotations and connections between different themes were argued for, in order to explore the research as a whole. Through these strategies, multi-dimensional data analysis has added many of the research findings to the existing body of relevant knowledge.

## 3.5    Validity, confidentiality and informed consents

This section emphasises a few of the ethical issues encountered during the course of the interviews and the research design. In qualitative research, 'there are no straightforward tests for validity' and 'there are no absolute rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what

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[31] For more information, please see Chapter Six.

the data reveal by the purpose of the study' (Patton 1990: 372). As the only researcher in this study, I was confident that I was presenting the original data without bias or excessive subjectivity in my analysis of the interviewees' narratives, and could thus attest the accuracy of the method and interpretations.

Moreover, as for the validity of the data construction, generalisation of empirical data is not a concern in qualitative research – which does not imply limited generalisability. The criterion of sample size cannot establish the weakness of generalisation in qualitative research (Patton 1990). Strategic selection of samples and connection of the sample to a wider society in the research process is much more important, as indicating that the empirical population is statistically representative. Critically, the main focus of qualitative research is directed towards 'depth, nuance and complexity, and understanding' of selected issues (Mason 2002). As for the method of generalising the research to a certain population level, I shall emphasise the strategy of 'theoretical generalisation', rather than 'empirical generalisation' (see Mason ibid.). Accordingly, application of the empirical data of the present study to a wider body of knowledge is of the greatest use in establishing the validity of this study, in that it articulates the salience of theoretical generalisation.

'Interviews are interventions' and provide 'a chance for a short period of time to try to get into another person's world' (Patton 1990: 355, 357). When interviewers delve into interviewees' routines and seek to obtain information from them, there are certain ethical concerns. These concerns are vital to every piece of research because neglecting ethical issues can adversely influence the interviewer and the interviewee –as well as the results. The interviewees in the present study were all adults, who are not generally regarded as vulnerable people (in the way that children are). However, the different backgrounds of the interviewees needed consideration, to ensure that any ethical concerns were addressed. For example, the grand-families, which are mainly led by grandparents, and lone-parent families looked at in this study illustrate some specifically extreme cases. They are not so-called intact family types, and are somewhat viewed negatively in Taiwanese society. Hence,

confidentiality of the all interview documents and the use of pseudonyms[32] were considered to be critical for protecting the interviewees' personal information and privacy, and to promote their willingness to take part in the study with no qualms. The content of the interviews were kept private – even the grandparents and grandchildren were unable to access their counterparts' narratives. Only the interviewee and the interviewer have access to the data.

With respect to ethics, complete informed consent (see Appendix 9) and permission for the voice-recording were required in the initial stage of the research. Agreement was obtained from everyone who was to be interviewed. Such measures minimise the likelihood of any ethical issues, especially because informed consent is regarded as a central component of ethical practice (Crow et al. 2006). Additionally, a research information sheet (see Appendix 10) was also offered to the interviewees, in order to give them more information about what the research was about before they were interviewed. Informed consent mainly involved providing information about the backgrounds, aims and procedures of the study, the need for recoding and the nature of the interview, while making it clear that participation was entirely voluntary and that the interviewee had the right not to answer the questions if they did not want to. Although this study was not an overly sensitive exploration, informing the participants completely about the context and the purposes of the research was still a challenge. Interviewees might neglect their rights in the process if the researchers do not concretely and precisely assert them in the consent form, which might lead to arguments and ethical issues. However, the interviewees agreed with the interview process and showed their understanding by signing their names on the consent form.

Another potential concern is raised by the Chinese-English translations of the research documents. The interview guide, informed consent and research information sheet were first produced in English and then translated into Chinese. Then a part-time interpreter who had graduated in Studies of Translation from the University of Edinburgh translated it back into English to ensure that the same meanings were expressed in both versions. Also, a Chinese–English bilingual friend helped to sort

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[32] The English names of the grandchild generation are pseudonyms.

out certain translation issues of this research. The expected difficulties in translating from Chinese into English were minimised in that we went through the more troublesome interview transcripts together, in order to determine the best translations of the reported information that would avoid any misunderstanding or over-interpretation. This precaution of translations of the relevant research documents adds even more validity to the original interviewees' materials.

In brief, the accuracy of the method and of interpretation of the data analysis, the confidentiality of the research documents and of information provided by the participants, and the translation issues, are all considered in this research with reference to research ethics.

## 3.6    Reflexivity as a researcher

From the start and throughout the process of conducting this research, my personal experience of being raised by my grandmother has played a critical role. In terms of the use of past experience, I am emotionally as well as academically involved in this research since my personal story offers me an opportunity to be closer to the participants and familiar with the issues raised. On the other hand, as highlighted in Harden et al.'s article, 'the perspectives of the researcher inevitably form part of the interpretation' (Harden et al. 2010: 446). This researcher subjectivity also brought some challenges during the interviews as well as in the process of analysing the data.

In fact, familiarity with grandparent-grandchild interaction did distract me from the stories shared by the grandparent and grandchild interviewees because I brought myself into their stories to understand their experience. In other words, I intensified my personal views while analysing others' stories, which might have generated inaccurate analysis in the data construction from the outset. Because of my experience, I was over-confident of my ability to understand and interpret the data of the grandparent and grandchild participants. Hence, I sometimes neglected implicit

connotations or substantial meanings beyond the explicit words used by the participants. In the first instance, this excessive awareness of familiarity with grandparent-grandchild issues led to rather crude data analysis. However, the above-highlighted technical side-effect was relieved by constant supervision and revision of data analysis, reminding me throughout of the value and depth of the original researched materials, so that I did not simply describe what I was told by the grandparent and grandchild interviewees.

Nevertheless, this familiarity with grandparent-grandchild interaction raised other issues for the research process. For example, interacting with the researched participants was more challenging than dealing with the research data. At the beginning, I assumed that interviewing grandchildren would be an easy job for me because of our similar ages and educational background. Against these comparable backgrounds, we might have friendly talks in a relaxed atmosphere. On the other hand, it seemed that conducting the interviews with grandparents would be more difficult because of the gap of two generations and the expected need to provide more explanations as a result of their lack of education. As predicted, I noticed the difference between interviewing the grandparent and grandchild generations, or, I should say, I was expected to play different roles. What surprised me was that the dynamics of the interviews with the grandparents and grandchildren went in different directions once the interviews really began. In fact, conducting the interviews with the grandchildren turned out to be more challenging than with the grandparents. Although I was seen as a researcher by both groups, I was treated as a semi-expert by the grandchildren, but as a grandchild-like Ph.D student by the grandparents. In light of these different reactions, I found I was farther removed from the younger interviewees, and experienced greater intimacy with the seniors. I shall offer some examples below to illustrate these perceived challenges and explain further.

In the interviews with the grandchildren, the atmosphere was relatively serious and formal, since these informants clearly knew that my personal and academic background had given me considerable experience and knowledge of grandparent-grandchild relationships. Therefore, during discussions with the

grandchildren, I was asked for advice about a number of conflicts with their grandparents which they potentially faced or were facing. Obviously, I was seen not only as a researcher, but also as a semi-expert in relevant grandparent-grandchild relationships and interaction, probably based on my academic and personal experienced combined. Take Kevin as an example. In the course of sharing conflicts that he had with his grandfather, he asked about my personal experience and my reactions as to whether I had felt too involved with my grandmother. I was very apprehensive that my responses might be perceived as professional solutions, so I made it clear from the start that the way I dealt with these problems was entirely personal. I told Kevin that I was raised completely by my granny, so that we were almost like parent and child and thus, during the time we spent together, experienced more conflicts than normally arose in grandparent-grandchild relationships. I fought the so-called authority possessed by my grandmother, and performed very badly on my school's achievement tests as a means of showing my dissatisfaction with her strict and what I saw senseless discipline. Subsequently, I also let Kevin know that I later regretted these reactions, but it was too late for me to appreciate my granny's attempt to engage with my life. Moreover, I clearly explained to him that conditions and interactions could be very different in every family, and that I understood his own problems and reasons for concern about his grandfather's over-involvement in his life.[33] However, I believed as I told him that, when it seemed as if the tension with his grandfather was going to explode, it was always good to step back a bit and return to tackle the problem later, in order to avoid impulsive decisions or actions.

Critically, it seemed inappropriate to withhold any reference to my personal experience or views, but I did not want to share too much, because I did not want to influence the interviewees by showing too much my personal attitude about grandparent-grandchild relationships. In this situation, I was concerned that my answers and supposedly expert advice might produce unanticipated outcomes for the grandparent-grandchild relationship. This concern arose because I am mainly a researcher, not a professional counsellor and the need to be both close and distant to

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[33] It was his grandmother who participated in this research, so the comparable data coming from his grandparent counterpart could not be obtained here.

the data at the same time. Thus, no direct advice was given in any of the interviews, although I understood that the grandchild interviewees might have expected more from me. In general, my attitude when conducting the grandchildren's interviews was a considered one, since I was cautious about my behaviour and responses on the whole – giving very neutral answers to questions raised by the grandchildren, and maintaining the role of a professional researcher.

Differently, the atmosphere of the interviews with the grandparent generation was generally more relaxed paradoxically; I felt that the distance between me and them was smaller than that between me and the grandchildren. I am not even sure yet whether it was because I called the grandparent participants 'granny' and 'grandpa' or simply because I was in a more formal yet intimate relationship with them – like a grandchild – that we grew closer. To an extent, I would conclude that this sort of close interaction was not expected by the grandparent interviewees because of their view of the professional PhD research process. This impression stems from the interaction between the researcher and the participants at the beginning of the interviews, which was always more formal, and the fact that they addressed me as 'Doctor'.[34] However, I sensed that the dynamic of the conversations changed after the chatting began and they started to call me by my name. In thinking about these differences, I take into account, again, my experience of being raised by my grandmother when seeking to explain the closer interactions and smoother progression of the interviews with the grandparent interviewees. My personal background may also explain why I am sensitive to the difficulty of recognising possible connotations of their actions and narratives.

For instance, Amber's grandmother did not share her viewpoint when traditional values of family life were being discussed. She simply answered 'I don't know' and 'I have no idea'. At the beginning, I was not sure whether she was concerned about discussing the collapse of, or negative perspectives on, traditional doctrines within her family. Therefore, I tried to encourage her to share her views, explaining that

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[34] I did explain very clearly that I was only a Ph.D. student and was still working on my project, which represented a 'strategy' of reducing the distance between them and me by emphasising that I was 'only' a student, like their grandchildren.

every viewpoint was very welcome and nothing would be considered inappropriate. However, the conversation did not make progress until she later answered 'I don't really know [about traditional values] because I was less educated'. At this moment I realised that her reluctance to discuss traditional values stemmed from concern that her academic limitations might cause her embarrassment. After receiving this response, I stopped pushing her on this topic, as I realised it might create unpleasantness, and instead brought up some more life-related topics, such as family outings. In brief, I think I would have missed the fact that discomfort over her lack of education was the reason for her silence on the issue of traditional values if I had not spent so much time with my granny and other elderly relatives. This incident provides an example of how my personal experience can enable me to relieve potential tensions whilst conducting interviews.

Except for this experience, I also faced a few difficulties in practice when conducting the grandparent interviews. I tried not to challenge their arguments, which might have embarrassed them and caused them to stop talking because of sensing my academic advantage. Take Nothing's grandfather as an example: he explained that one reason why people were less filial nowadays was that they had been formula-fed, and argued that people who had been breast-fed were more committed to their families. I did not comment on his theory, but instead asked him to explain it. He argued that breastfeeding is the first close connection that occurs between human beings, so that the child obtaining milk from his/her mother would acquire a collective outlook, having already experienced the advantages of mutuality. I was not in accord with him and my educational knowledge did not support this idea, but I would never have embarked on a discussion of the scientific evidence. I tended to be more careful and to show greater understanding during conversations with the grandparents, which could involve matters beyond my knowledge, and to appreciate the logic of their thinking, as this was the purpose of the study.

Basically, I preferred to let them talk about whatever they felt like sharing rather than to exchange ideas or knowledge with them. Therefore, most of the time, I would say that I was a listener, but within the boundaries set by the interview interests. It

happened too often that a number of the grandparents missed the focus of my inquiries, but most of the time they could share their ideas as long as I kept rephrasing the sentences or highlighting the main research interests. Of course, there were still some limitations and gaps in their responses;[35] nevertheless, the discussions with them made a considerable contribution to this research.

Apart from the skill in conducting interviews that my own story gave me, I would like to underscore how it helped in generating the data construction. For instance, the relation between individualistic concepts and collective practice, based on the perspectives of the grandchild respondents, is a representative illustration of how my personal experience took the data analysis forward. At first, I assumed that being individualistic and offering family support were contradictory concepts, because individualistic issues and effects were negatively interpreted by the grandchild respondents with reference to communal advantages. In terms of the data, people placing greater value on individual interests might downgrade the obligation to assist their families. However, in my own experience, although individualistic considerations receive great weight in my lifestyle, they do not diminish my sense of obligation to my family. At this stage, an inconsistency between my personal experience and the interviewees' stories became evident, causing me to wonder where exactly individualistic ideas might be placed in relation to family support.

With regard to this problem suggested by my own past, I went back to the transcriptions to look more deeply into the question of whether the grandchild participants, from a perspective similar to my own, were both individualistic towards themselves and obligated towards their families. What emerged was that, according to the grandchild interviewees, the quality of the grandparent-grandchild relationship and the desire for reciprocity provided the two main explanations for their assistance to their grandparents.[36] To an extent, the focus on interpersonal intimacy and mutuality in the grandparent-grandchild interaction could be categorised as very individualistic concepts. These points emphasise the salience of personal

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[35] For more information, please see Chapter Five.
[36] For more information, please see Chapter Six.

considerations and equality in collective practice. With reference to the statements of the grandchild participants, I propose that individualistic values can, in fact, encourage collective practice, in contradiction to its commonly perceived detrimental effect on in-group benefit. Again, I might not have made the connection between individualistic concepts and collective practice if I had not experienced this apparent conflict between my pursuit of personal liberty and my contribution to family needs.

In brief, this research context has offered diverse challenges, including the researcher's personal experience of grandparent-grandchild relationships, interviewees' various family stories, and the unanticipated interactions between the researcher and the researched. All in all, I still value highly my personal experience of the grandparent-grandchild relationship for its effect on all stages of the research process, although over-confidence, because of my background, in my ability to understand grandparent-grandchild dynamics did introduce a few difficulties in conducting the interviews and constructing data, in terms of cultivated, or, as I might put it, internalised capabilities. Overall, my experience was of benefit to the whole research process, from selecting the topic to conducting the interviews and analysing the data.

# 4 CHAPTER FOUR: BEING A GRANDCHILD

## 4.1 Introduction

The role of grandchildren in contemporary Taiwanese society arguably differs from what it was in the past because of various transformations that have taken place in the society, as regards family formation, economic conditions and social industry, for example. Therefore, this chapter initially discusses the meanings and substance of being a grandchild, primarily by addressing the grandchildren's orientation to their families and the explanations for grandchildren's behaviours and assistance towards their grandparents. In this regard, the chapter examines the how, what and why of the grandchild–grandparent interactions, based on the narratives. *How* indicates the role and meaning of being a grandchild, and the understanding of the grandchildren about their orientation as a grandchild. *What* indicates the things grandchildren do for their grandparents, which may or may not follow the 'hows' in the execution of their roles; it reveals the interactions between grandparents and grandchildren from the grandchildren's point of view. *Why* explains the grandchildren's behaviours and provision of help towards their grandparents, with the reasons that lead them to perform the roles associated with grandchildren. In brief, the primary findings of being a grandchild and the explanations for the assistance they give their grandparents, respectively, centre on three categories that were generated during data construction to clarify the grandchildren's role orientation and enactments in the family.

It should be borne in mind that, because of the research settings and interests, the discussion in this chapter is only based on the narratives of the grandchild participants. As highlighted by the research aims and questions, assistance from grandchildren to their grandparents is a significant object of investigation in this study, within which role orientation, role enactment and the explanation for family support are focused upon, in order to understand the interrelations among these three domains. Therefore, the data construction in this chapter is generated by the

narratives of the grandchild generation. Indeed, the way the grandparent generation understands grandchildren's assistance and rationalises such behaviour might reveal rather substantial issues. Grandparents, as the recipients, might make assumptions about the reasons underlying the aid offered by their juniors, their account of the phenomenon might convey different viewpoints from the perspectives provided by the grandchild generation itself. However, the data obtained from the grandchildren, as the givers, are considered more concrete and precise, and thus more helpful for investigating the connection between the dynamics of family support and the effect of cultural and social concepts. In regard to this aspect, the researched materials in this chapter mainly rely on the accounts of the grandchild interviewees.

## 4.2    Perceptions of grandchildren's roles

Being the sole interviewer, I started each interview by requesting some basic family information, such as the number of family members and the frequency of grandparent–grandchild contact. This informal discussion helps to easily start an interview in a casual conversation for both the interviewees and the interviewer. The next question was: 'How do you feel about being a grandchild?' This open-ended question served to initiate the main discussion.

Exploring how grandchildren perceive their roles in the domestic arena is helpful for understanding grandparent–grandchild interactions and relationships. Although the interviewee responses were varied, the majority of discussions primarily centred on three dimensions of the data analysis, each expressing the importance of the roles of grandchildren: a) passing down family lineage; b) being someone who is loved and cared about, and c) being a resource of family assistance. Remarkably, the meaning of being a grandchild was interwoven and multidimensional in that a few interviewees fell within more than one category when explaining their roles as grandchildren; others mainly employed one idea to underline the meaning of being a grandchild. Take Cindy as an example. She mentioned both the concepts 'being

somebody valued by her grandparent' and 'being a resource for assisting her grandparent', to express how she felt as a granddaughter. By contrast, Tommy paid attention to lineage inheritance as the key aspect of being a grandchild, without sharing any other reasons. By pointing out this difference in how grandchildren explain the meaning of their family roles, I mainly wanted to clarify that none of these understandings of being a grandchild are absolutely dominant or sufficient to explain grandchildren's roles. It depends more on how the grandchild interviewees looked at their family position and considered their role orientation of being grandchildren, in terms of different domestic circumstances.

## 4.2.1  Passing down family lineage

An emphasis on lineage frequently emerges in discussions about the meaning of being a grandchild. It implies a traditional way of thinking. Remarkably, I noticed in the preliminary interviews that discussions about the grandchild's role were more likely to refer to a notion of lineage heritance – a symbolic position. I state it like this because the informants' responses focused more on their 'fixed roles' as grandchildren – their given role – and the titles of their family members. They considered that their positions symbolise the immortality of their families, passing down family traditions to the coming generations. In their situations, the bloodlines of their family would continue into the future and the family lineage would live on.

Tommy described the grandchild role starting with his remote relationship with his grandparents. However, this distant relationship did not matter to him as a grandchild since the function of his family position was not affected. He highlighted the continuity from his grandfather, to his mother, and then to himself, as keeper of the family lineage.

Example 4.2a

Interviewer:        *Why don't you say something about how you feel as a grandchild?*

Tommy:             *I think I am not very close to them and they speak Taiwanese, at which I am not proficient. It is a language barrier. However, I am their grandchild and*

*they are my mother's father and mother. I think this is what family are and where I am in the family. There is a rule in our family guiding our behaviours, even if there is a distance between us. This is the way I regard what being a grandchild means. This is our way, because of where we come from and how we interact….. We are passing down our family.* (Grandson, 28, living in the same city as his grandparents)

At the beginning, Tommy described the connectedness between him, his grandparents, and his mother, highlighting the existence and vitality of lineage continuity. Although his grandparent–grandchild relationship contained a communication difficulty, the meaning of being a grandchild was not heavily influenced. Accordingly, the precise way in which he interacted with his grandparents seemed not to be antecedent to how he conceived his role as a grandchild, prioritising family lineage to the grandparent–grandchild relationships. It is also worth mentioning that Tommy pointed out later that his family had a rule guiding the behaviours of its members, which he followed because he was one of the members. Apart from elucidating his symbolic position as a grandchild, he thus emphasised the dominance of the existing familial norm in his family, which governs how people behave. As for this statement of underscoring how family norms function in the domestic arena, it is clearer in the context of his explanation for grandchildren's assistance. I will come back to this later.

Jason's response makes the connection between family continuity and the meaning of being a grandchild in a more precise way.

Example 4.2b

Interviewer: *What does 'being a grandchild' mean to you?*

Jason: *I am here because of my father, and my father exists because of my grandfather. This is natural. This is a tradition and culture.* (Grandson, 28, living distant from his grandparents)

Again, Jason seemed to put biological continuity to the fore in that his existence was attributed to his grandfather's existence – a necessary fact for a grandchild to exist, which further argues the salience of lineage inheritance. He later underscored the

importance of the effects of tradition and culture on grandchildren. Recalling the processes and tracing back through the field notes of Jason's interview, I observed that the affirming attitude he had during the interview supports the idea of inheritance of lineage, which is related to the traditional values he had about being a grandchild. More than once during his interview, he stressed that his family is definitely traditional, and that his grandfather still leads the family, even though their stem family is divided into nuclear families. Influenced as a member of that family, he would pass down his grandfather's manner on subsequent generations. His narrative seems to argue that the biological bond can hardly be separated from the context of tradition and culture, which was also revealed in Tommy's interview where he highlighted the concept of a 'family norm'. Again, the argument about the connection between the reported family norms and traditional culture values will be discussed later in the section that explains the giving of assistance to grandparents, with a more complete understanding of the enactment of grandchildren's role.

Briefly, by collating the relevant points of view, passing down codes of morality or continuity of family lineage is a vital aspect of being a grandchild, based on the responses of the grandchild interviewees. Critically, the symbolic meaning of grandchildren's orientation to their families, linked with the attached norm of traditional values, seems to be addressed to underscore the relation between being a grandchild and traditional culture. Moreover, the statements of the grandchild respondents about how this family morality predominates in people's lives helps to explain what is expected of the family or family members in this study. Accordingly, a rather straightforward argument emerges, which emphasises that the family is deterministic, while this group of grandchild respondents confirms that such a family orientation is natural and that they were born to adhere to what was passed down in their families. It seems to be the case that what the family should be or how it should behave is set down according to certain circumstances and standards. Although these natural prescriptions may not be spelled out explicitly, the idea is shown by the terms employed in the conversations of the interviewees.

Furthermore, I suppose that these family norms and symbolic meanings represent the

family as a whole, rather than the different individuals who form the family, so that these principles do not satisfy everyone or suit every situation in the domestic domain and then a few conflicts between family and individual may be arisen. Correspondingly, I shall discuss this perspective in details in the Chapter Five, where more information is given about how the grandchild interviewees interpreted the meanings of and effects on traditional values in their lives, in that we can see how some disagreements arose and how solutions were found to end the tensions within families.

Additionally, there seemed to be a gender difference regarding lineage. The data on the importance of lineage do not draw attention to the closeness or concrete interactions between grandchildren and their grandparents, while recognising their roles as a grandchild. The interviewees who suggested this kinship–inheritance perspective were predominantly male. With reference to discussions of gender differences in the literature, it can probably be asked whether gender issues, to some extent, affect the perspectives of being a grandchild in this research. However, the data are not detailed enough for confident analysis. I shall, in later sections, return to this issue of how gender might influence the grandparent–grandchild relationship of the interviewees.

## 4.2.2  Being somebody loved and cared about by grandparents

This dimension is quite different to the one that relates the meaning of being a grandchild to the family. This individual and personal theme is recognised as a meaningful aspect of being a grandchild. In this discussion, the grandchild respondents basically felt that the affection or affirmation they received from their grandparents made them feel important within their family, implying there is a higher familial position of grandchildren. Depending on the 'love and care' of their grandparents, the grandchildren weighted their existence as less inferior compared to their counterparts in the past. Cindy, for example, described her position as a granddaughter in an emotional tone when talking about herself:

Example 4.2c

Cindy:  *I think it is good to be a granddaughter. I feel happy because you know you are cared about by someone. You know you are… hmm… important.* (Granddaughter, 24, living distant from her grandparents)

Unlike Tommy and Jason, who were mostly concerned about the continuum of their family lineages, Cindy paid more attention to what she has gained from her grandparents to describe the meaning of being a grandchild because of her grandchild position. She seemed to regard this pleasure as the most vital feature of being a grandchild. Amber seconded Cindy's perspective in that she also discussed how well her grandparents treated her while articulating the meaning of being a grandchild. She gave meaning to her position in her family by talking about the way her grandparents tried hard to get involved in her life. Part of her account is presented below:

Example 4.2d

Amber:  *I know both my grandfather and grandmother treat me very well. For example, I feel they sometimes don't know how to communicate with me, but they try hard. In this case, I realise how important I am to them. My importance in their lives.* (Granddaughter, 22, single-parent family, living with her grandparents)

She sensed her importance to them because of the effort her grandparents made in order to communicate with her, highlighting that she is 'somebody' to them. In all of her narratives on what being a grandchild means, the emphasis she placed on her crucial grandchild position make it obvious this was how she felt about being a grandchild. A similar attitude is also shown in Wednesday's interview:

Example 4.2e

Wednesday:  *Sometimes, I am not as obedient as expected and I fight for my own voice with them. Then you can see how tolerant they are to you because he [referring to her grandfather] does not punish you. He just stands back from his traditional values and listens to you. He just shows his respect for your opinion and that makes you feel you are 'somebody'.* (Granddaughter, 22,

living in the same city as her grandparents)

Wednesday also indicated that her grandparents tolerated her disobedience and described the way her grandfather listened to her opinions, which highlights her valued position as a granddaughter in her family. It is clear from her discourse that she was also arguing for increasing grandchildren's status in the family, when she used the term 'somebody'.

That the grandchild respondents realise that their importance is increasing in their families is one of the main arguments I want to make in this section. It suggests the development of a less unbalanced grandparent–grandchild relationship, which means that the grandchild generation can voice their own opinions, and are tolerated, are loved and are respected by their grandparents. Interpreted like this, it seems that the role of grandchildren is not merely an appendage of the family nowadays. In the past, the position of the grandchild generation was barely seen as salient because of how the hierarchy functions in the domestic arena (Thornton and Lin 1994). The increase of balanced grandparent – grandchild relationship seems to argue that the function of hierarchical rite drops. Moreover, the interviewees' confirmation of feelings of being 'somebody' and 'valued' for being a grandchild in the family also argues for their greater awareness of being an independent individual. This statement is supported by Ross, Hill, Sweeting and Cunningham-Burley's research (2002) in that the encouragement and support of the grandchild generation by grandparents are expected in grandparent – grandchild relationship, in terms of the narratives of grandparent interviewees. This sort of expectation is considered by these authors to be a process of 'strengthening of individualisation', which states that grandparents regard their grandchildren as independent individuals and show their respect.

By and large, I would propose that 'being somebody' suggests that personal individuality can be built up within interpersonal interactions. Comparing the condition of being a grandchild in the past and in the present, the gradual progression in grandchildren's status, from being considered inferior to being loved, tolerated and respected by their seniors seems to be argued for and expected. I do not state that this

is a common circumstance for all grandchildren, but, what seems to be certain is that the grandchildren I interviewed are aware of their growing status in the family, compared to their grandparents in *their* childhoods; this demonstrates the transformation that has occurred between these two generations. In terms of this understanding of being a grandchild, the decrease of family authority and the increase of being aware of individuality seem to indicate that current grandparent – grandchild relationship heads to a more individualistic stage. I shall pay more attention to this transformation in grandparent–grandchild relationships in later chapters for a better exploration of this phenomenon with more empirical data.

It is possible that gender difference has a role in being a grandchild. In this discussion about the meaning of being somebody loved and cared about as a grandchild, the interviewees who pay more attention to the emotional perspectives between grandparents and grandchildren are women. In contrast, the responses that focus on lineage inheritance, both in biological and lineage terms, are mostly by men, as mentioned previously. Possibly, these distinguishing features of being a grandson or a granddaughter can be explained by the fact that people in Taiwan or Chinese-based societies seem to have more expectations of men to inherit their family – a very traditional Chinese concept. In Chinese culture, men pass down their family's surnames to the subsequent generations, which is seen as one of the paths to inheriting lineage. In this respect, it seems that grandsons are concerned more about their role in keeping their lineage than women are. Women, being less influenced by this so-called duty, are more likely to perceive the meaning of being a grandchild in a more personal manner. In discussing the different expectations of men and women for passing family lineage down to subsequent generations, this disparity between the sexes seen in these narratives are more understandable. However, this argument would benefit from more evidence, but little data in this research are available on this issue because gender difference was not the main consideration in the researching in intergenerational interactions. This potential relationship with gender is, of course, relevant to later research. However, the discrepancy found in the present study must be borne in mind for the data analysis, in order to shed some light on the influence that gender might have on the grandchildren's responses.

### 4.2.3  Being a resource of family assistance

The last category in terms of how grandchild informants regard themselves as a grandchild is very different from the first two aspects. The concepts of kinship inheritance and increasing family status are more ideological and conceptual. This category is another dimension that enabled the grandchild interviewees to provide tangible evidence on their role as a grandchild. More than half of the grandchild participants shared with me what they had done for their grandparents, and they saw this assistance in both emotional and practical terms, as enactments of a grandchild. Importantly, this category is contrary to the stereotypical idea that 'giving' is in only one direction, that is from the grandparent generation to grandchild one. According to the narratives of the grandchildren interviewed here, the grandchild generation gives, too.

Example 4.2f

Chris: *I think this is a natural interaction, not sure whether I can use reciprocity to explain, but I help when she [referring to his grandmother] is in need... You are a grandchild so you should do something or be obedient under the guidance of Xiao-Shun.*[37] *This is what it means to me.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother)

Example4.2g

Grace: *I should be more active to help as a grandchild. I do laundry and go fishing with my grandpa if I am free.* (Granddaughter, 21, living with her grandfather in a single-parent family)

Chris' and Grace's interviews seem to suggest that practical help from them towards their grandparents is crucial in being a grandchild. These grandchildren's provisions somewhat validate their 'functions'. In the following transcript, Cindy articulated the way in which she helped her grandfather, by giving advice, while talking about what

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[37] Xiao-Shun is a concept that represents a similar idea to filial piety, but the term is employed more widely. Xiao-Shun mainly operates from juniors to seniors, whereas filial piety primarily applies to parent-child interactions. For more information about Xiao-Shun, see Chapter Five.

being a grandchild entails for her.

Example 4.2h

| | |
|---|---|
| Cindy: | *I am the eldest granddaughter....* |
| Interviewer: | *An eldest granddaughter. Okay, how do feel about this position?* |
| Cindy: | *I have to say it is sometimes a burden to me... because my grandparents hope that my family and I can go back to visit them. ... you know, they want to see you in person, or you, at least, have to phone them. But you are really busy sometimes. You cannot actually manage it, but, but they complain if you don't do this... My grandfather... my opinion when he had to come to Taipei for his medical treatment... Would you accompany me to see the doctor? Which hospital should I stay in? Things like that. ...... I offer what I can. Apart from this, I also feel I should entertain them.* (Granddaughter, 24, living distant from her grandfather) |

Cindy gave most of her attention to concrete examples of the way in which she performs her role, in a very functional manner. Notably, she used the word 'burden', suggesting a lack of pleasure in fulfilling some of the expectations of her, and highlighting a possible area of conflict between the expectations of her role and her individual schedule. The term 'burden' also implies that Cindy committed herself more to the responsibility of meeting her grandparents' demands, rather than putting her own plans to the fore. This notion of a burden materialises in the ways that Chris and Grace describe their roles. Both of them highlighted the things they 'should' do in their family. Their roles entailed some 'should-do' things, so they are supposed to fulfil certain demands – for various reasons – which will be explored shortly. Although the interviewees did not employ the words 'responsibility', 'obligation' or other similar viewpoints, the concept of being responsible was still very clear from their interviews.

Arguably, family interactions are sustained by mutual interactions, rather than one-way taking or receiving (Marshall 1972) and a number of western research studies have proved that assistance from grandchildren to their grandparents exists in western countries (Ashton 1996; Kemp 2004; Kivett 1985; Robertson 1976). In line with the outcomes of such studies, a similar situation was evident from the

grandchild informants' in this research, shown by how they described the assistance they give to their grandparents. Looking further into the meanings of being a grandchild and grandchild behaviour, the converse seems to be true – that during the last few decades the grandchild generation has begun to be seen as not only as the recipient of assistance from older relatives, but also the giver (Ashton ibid.; Kemp ibid.; Kivett ibid.; Robertson ibid.). The stereotype of grandchildren as pay-free beneficiaries needs to be defended with respect to the transformations taking place in grandparent–grandchild relationships. The young generation, especially the adult grandchild generation, is capable of offering both time and labour to their families, lessening the 'stigma' of intergenerational mutuality. More importantly, the mutuality between grandparents and grandchildren seems to be demonstrated by the narratives of the grandchild respondents. Precisely, what they have done for their grandparents and families will now be explored to obtain a clearer understanding of the orientation of a grandchild in the family.

## 4.3    What do grandchildren do for their grandparents?

With regard to the preceding statements, the grandchild interviewees' confirmation of being functional within their family is very meaningful to their perception of being a grandchild. Although this factor was not mentioned by every grandchild participant in this research, slightly more than sixty per cent of them did so. The comments presented in the transcripts below concern the grandchildren's help provision for their grandparents. The discussion offers explanations for this bottom-up assistance.

What exactly did the grandchild informants offer their grandparents? The findings of this Taiwan-based research were fairly consistent with previous findings by researchers such as Ashton (1996), Kemp (2005), Kivett (1985) and Robertson (1976). Their data on the help given by grandchildren's to their seniors was gathered in western countries, and they found that practical and emotional supports were what the grandchildren in their samples provided to their grandparents. These two

dimensions of grandchildren' assistance towards grandparents are provided in almost equal measure; this means that that a skewed situation in which one is more routinely provided than the other does not exist. The narratives obtained in this study were produced spontaneously as the grandchildren described their feelings about being grandchildren and the way in which they are responsible for helping their seniors. However, some of the comments were probed into more deeply during the interview through the use of specific questions like: 'Can you describe your situation as a grandchild?', 'What have you done for your grandparents as a grandchild?', 'What do you always do together?', and 'What sort of things are included in your role?'

The grandchildren who mentioned the help they gave as grandchildren did not specifically categorise their support as either physical or emotional. I, as the sole interviewer and researcher, divided the diverse forms of assistance they mentioned into two groups, depending on the type of help they offered. In the following paragraphs, I shall explain briefly what emotional support and practical assistance entails. This serves to present a precise standard for labelling the grandchildren's provision of assistance.

## 4.3.1 Emotional support

The main narratives of emotional support for this research are summarised as a spiritual fulfilment that helps people endure personal difficulties, such as periods of depression and frustration. Satisfying and entertaining grandparents are another means of emotional support, since grandparents are cheered up or inspired by such actions. Providing company is also included here, which goes some way to helping grandparents avoid loneliness and to feel loved. The methods by which grandchildren express their support are variable and depend on the situations that both they and their grandparents face.

Example 4.3a

Jamie:          *I tried to make her laugh or said something funny to entertain her*
               *[referring to her grandmother] when she had an argument with my*

*grandfather. I just chatted randomly or showed her some old photos which were significant to her. This is the way I show my care, I think. This thing means a lot to me.* (Granddaughter, 24, living in the same city as her grandparents)

Example 4.3b

Wednesday: *I just stayed around her and let her feel she was not alone during the period when she lost her younger brother. She was quite depressed because of the loss of a relative and the fear of her fragility. In fact, I did not talk a lot, but spent time listening to her, whatever she said. I think it is very important for me to accompany her through any difficulty.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandparents)

Example 4.3c

Amber: *I finished the food she prepared for me even though I was totally full. Because I knew she would feel happy if I had the food, therefore, I did so for her happiness.* (Granddaughter, 22, single-parent family living with her grandparents)

The cases above describe how the grandchild interviewees cheered up or entertained their grandparents as a means of emotional support. From the contents of their narratives, it seems that these grandchildren tried to help their grandparents get over depression or they simply satisfied them. From the cases of Jamie and Wednesday, who lit up their grandmothers' moods, to the case of Amber, who pleased her grandmother by finishing the food she had provided, it can be seen how diverse emotional support can be. Other than cheering up and satisfying their grandparents, highlighting the value of their grandparents' existence in their lives is another way in which grandchildren provide assistance. Oliver and Jason mentioned this aspect, in that they tell their grandparents how important they are to them.

Example 4.3d

Oliver: *I learnt how to cook from my granny. The reason I do so is not only because I like cooking, but also I want her to know how important she is, and she is irreplaceable in our family.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandparents)

Example 4.3e

Jason:                    *I comforted him when he was ill or he thought he was going to pass away. I*
                         *just told him that it was too soon for things like that because he would not*
                         *take a part in my wedding and the graduation of my PhD. Just let him know*
                         *he still has to get lots of things done.* (Grandson, 28, living in the same city
                         as his grandfather)

According to the statements presented in Examples 4.3d and 4.3e, it is obvious that
the means by which these grandchildren try to offer emotional support is slightly
different from those in Examples 4.3a, 4.3b and 4.3c. Oliver and Jason underscored
the significance of their grandparents in their lives by appreciating their cooking and
their being presence. In so doing, grandparents undoubtedly recognise or
re-recognise their value by the affirmations of their grandchildren. As revealed in the
discourses above, there are many different ways for grandchildren to achieve the
same goal, of providing emotional encouragement, in describing the particular type
of assistance they give to their grandparents. Furthermore, this grandchild cohort
emphasised the practical assistance they had provided to their grandparents when
their grandparents had been experiencing difficulties in performing specific tasks on
their own.

## 4.3.2 Practical assistance

In this category, the labour of the grandchild interviewees is considered more as a
resource. It might include things like providing transport, running errands, helping
when a grandparent is ill, doing household chores or farming tasks and such like. On
the one hand, some statements depicting the grandchild's role arose spontaneously
during the interviews; on the other hand, other comments arose in response to
specific probing questions that asked what they really did for their grandparents in
their families. Importantly, there were several circumstances in which the grandchild
interviewees provided help for their grandparents. One means of giving support is
more spontaneous, whereby the grandchildren assist their grandparents even though
they are not asked to offer their time and labour. On other occasions, the
grandchildren assist their grandparents when they are in need to offer their energy

and time. More about these differences in helping grandparents will be discussed in later sections.

Example 4.3f

Annie: *I think taking care of them is the kind of thing which makes them feel I am just like another daughter and warm… We stroll together at a school which is next to our house.* (Granddaughter, 19, living in a three-generation family)

Example 4.3g

Chris: *Sometimes, we go to the cinema or visit the countryside together. Don't just leave them at home doing nothing… I run some errands for them as well, buying newspapers and throwing out rubbish, for example… I also pick her up for some shopping.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother)

Example 4.3h

Tommy: *We go to the suburbs for holidays… I buy cakes for them when their birthdays come round.* (Grandson, 28, living distant from his grandmother)

Interestingly, the responses outlined above suggest that these grandchildren are inclined to offer assistance to their grandparents in a more active way. In their narratives, they described assisting their grandparents by underscoring what they had done for them, without mentioning the reasons behind their actions. The interviewees did not explicitly say whether their grandparents were in need of their assistance or not, therefore, I categorise such behaviour as being more 'active'. However, other kinds of help are called for when grandparents are in need, and different reasons back-up the grandchildren's help in a nuanced analysis.

Example 4.3i

Sean*:* *I always do some banking stuff or bring medicine from hospital for them especially when my uncle is unable to do so… cleaning the house and washing windows are my jobs, too.* (Grandson, 30, living in a grand-family)

This expression of grandchildren's support in this research is in the group categorised

as being 'for grandparents', highlighting a conditional requirement for the grandchildren's help. Cindy and Lily also offered this sort of practical aids.

Example 4.3j

Cindy*:*                        *I help them with farming if needed.* (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandmother)

Example 4.3k

Lily:                          *I stayed in hospital to accompany her when she was ill and needed me.* (Granddaughter, 27, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Cindy and Lily provided their grandparents with assistance when there was nobody else in their families to do so. They used the term 'needed', which supports this argument. Saying this, I do not question their willingness to assist their grandparents, but rather I suggest that there are diverse phenomena and different reasons for grandchildren's assistance.

As mentioned at the start of this section, grandchildren are unlikely to provide financial aid to their grandparents, and this is understood in terms of their limited financial resources – because they are undergraduate and postgraduate students. Logically, they do not have large amounts of money, and they are likely to be net recipients in monetary terms within their family. Even though some of the interviewees had part-time jobs, their earnings tended to be low. A few of the grandchild informants sensed the insufficiency of their financial resources, and recognised that they were not able to assist their grandparents financially.

Example 4.3l

Winnie:                       *I think I'm only able to buy some sweets and I cannot afford something expensive due to my financial resources.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a three-generation family)

Example 4.3m

Jamie:                        *I told him [referring to her grandfather] that I will treat them very well when I have the ability to earn my own money. However, I have been unemployed so far, so that I have never been able to make financial*

In the statements above, it is obvious that the interviewees know they are not capable of offering financial support, because they recognise their financial resources are insufficient to really help their grandparents. This observation can be linked to the understanding that most of the assistance the grandchildren mentioned focuses on practical and emotional support. In brief, the grandchild participants clearly demonstrated that they provide assistance for their grandparents, signifying the bi-directional intergenerational transfer in grandparent–grandchild relationships. Both grandparent and grandchild groups can be actors in assisting the other cohort, and the nature of these interactions are fluid.

By and large, making visits, helping at times of illness, doing household chores, providing emotional support are the main form of assistance given by grandchildren to their grandparents. A complex series of factors influences whether they do assist their grandparents, and how much they do. Many factors are significant in determining the nature of these mutual interactions; among these factors are age (Kivett 1985; Robertson 1976) and gender of the grandchild (Ashton 1996; Kemp 2004), the health status of the grandparents (Kemp 2004), the effects of the intermediate generation (Robertson 1976) and the geographic distance between the grandparents and grandchildren (Ashton 1996; Charke and Roberts 2004; Kivett 1985). However, as mentioned in a previous part of the discussion, the data provided by western academia allows a very basic understanding of the grandparent–grandchild-related issues, but this framework cannot be applied directly to grandchildren and what they do for their grandparents in the Chinese collective social context. With this in mind, it was important to examine more closely the explanations given by the grandchildren for the help they provide to their grandparents.

## 4.4    Explanations for grandchildren's assistance

Based on the data obtained in this study, three main reasons are emphasised to explain the assistance given by grandchildren to their grandparents. On analysis, these can be defined as: a) lineage considerations; b) the quality of the grandparent–grandchild relationship, and c) the desire for reciprocity. These three themes are interwoven with each other, in that some grandchild respondents gave only one reason to rationalise their provisions to their grandparents, while others highlighted various factors to rationalise their behaviours.

These narratives were guided by the questioning of the interviewer, by asking specific questions after the grandchild had described what he or she had done for the grandparent. The following questions were asked: 'Why do you want to do these things for your grandparents?', 'What makes you do so?', 'What are the reasons explaining your behaviours towards your grandparents?' and 'Why do you think you do help each other?'. These questions were deliberately designed to increase understanding of the reasons behind the interviewee's assistance and the way in which they perceived their interactions within their families.

### 4.4.1  Lineage considerations

Lineage is not only regarded as a symbolic term with respect to being a grandchild, but also as a cultural ideology. It relates to familial norms that are mentioned by the grandchild informants. For instance, obligation, responsibility and duty are all included in this category, and primarily serve to reveal the operation of traditional Chinese values in guiding the behaviour of family members. In this theme, the grandchildren clearly confirmed the effect of cultural concepts on their behaviour towards their grandparents. In accordance with traditional culture, their help can be attributed to lineage-related reasons through diverse means.

Example 4.4a

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *Why do you do those things to assist them?* |
| Tommy: | *Maybe… it's maybe lineage. It is a deep lineage relationship, in that I feel I am sort of their child. I am their child, although I know we are grandparents and grandchildren. I feel I am responsible.* (Grandson, 28, living distant from his grandmother) |

Example 4.4b

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer*:* | *What reasons make you do so?* |
| Cindy: | *I think it comes from our lineage.* |
| Interviewer*:* | *Can you say more about lineage?* |
| Cindy: | *I think it's something about lineage, relation and responsibility. An obligation of being children and grandchildren… My family is rather conventional and I have to help and be obedient to him because he is my grandpa. He is my father's father and I am not allowed to do something against him. This is what we call Xiao-Shun.* (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandfather) |

Example 4.4c

| | |
|---|---|
| Jason: | *Because we are family.* |
| Interviewer: | *Family?* |
| Jason: | *Hmm…I don't really know how to explain, but it is about grandparents and grandchildren… We have to help each other.* (Grandson, 28, living in the same city as his grandfather) |

In terms of the data presented above, it is obvious that assistance from the grandchild participants to their seniors comes from the sense of obligation to their families, as indicating the effects of traditional collective values on family support. The emphasis on the grandchild's responsibility towards his or her grandparents is also demonstrated by Ross et al. (2002). In their study, a sample of grandchildren with a Scottish–Chinese background seemed to have a greater sense of respect and responsibility compared to other grandchild groups. Significantly, the influence of Chinese culture on the Scottish–Chinese participants is underlined to explain their stronger sense of family norms on family behaviour, in comparison to the other ethnical participants. Correspondingly, the narratives in which the grandchildren mentioned the influence of traditional values seem to be in line with such findings and reinforce the strength of traditional collective concepts in the domestic sphere.

It is noteworthy that a few features of intergenerational solidarity – a theoretical term coined by Bengtson in 1991 in the west – reflect similar arguments, supporting the findings of this research. In this respect, this statement is conceptualised so as to interrogate previous research findings, which illustrates that the finding is not limited to the settings of this particular study. As stated in the methodology section (Chapter Three), intergenerational solidarity consists of six dimensions to explain family interaction and mutuality – namely *associational*, *affectional*, *consensual*, *functional*, *normative* and *structural* solidarities. Consensual and normative solidarities primarily argue for the importance of familial values and existing rationales between family members, and encourage people to exercise their obligations to one another. This reasoning is also behind the 'lineage considerations' revealed in the present study, adding further significance to the meanings and importance of cultural and family norms and family responsibility on domestic interactions, for example, for rationalising intergenerational flows.

However, if lineage accounts for the functions of families, why was this reason scarcely advanced when explaining why grandchildren with western backgrounds assisted their grandparents? Interestingly, Hoff (2007) proposed that grandparent–grandchild interactions in Germany are best explained by intergenerational sakes as in some kind of investment in each other, rather than the idea of intergenerational solidarity. According to Hoff, intergenerational transfer between grandparents and grandchildren in the western context is more likely to be based on the concept of 'exchange' rather than on the effects of solidarity. However, the significance of family/grandparent–grandchild sake was not emphasised in the focus of this Chinese-based study, which grandparent-grandchild solidarity is underlined instead. On the strength of this disparity, I would like to argue that collective values relate more strongly to Asian cultures, in that the ideas of collective norms are more functional or obviously revealing than in western contexts (Chiou 2001; Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeier 2002). This may explain why lineage-based rationales did not emerge in previous studies on the subject that were conducted in western societies (Ashton 1996; Kemp 2004; Kivett 1985).

In brief, the influence of lineage seems to be weighted more highly in collective societies than it is in western contexts, the latter apparently having a different conceptualisation of the family, with more attention paid to individualistic ideas (Coleman et al. 2006; Connidis 2009). Such discrepancies in the way eastern and western family members conceptualise their families may further highlight the uniqueness of the lineage consideration in Chinese families.

Furthermore, based on these responses, the grandchildren highlighted the ideas of responsibility and obligation to make sense of their helping behaviours. However, where does the responsibility for this intergenerational family support originate? What is the basis of this family obligation? Notably, the terms used by these grandchildren justify that their grandchild roles are attached to some 'should-do' and 'given' tasks to facilitate their grandparents' lives and their families. People are born with a few specific 'callings' and thus perform their roles appropriately by carrying out their given tasks (Fan 2006; Hwang 1999). This statement arguably relates to traditional Chinese values, in that collective concerns always include this role-given idea and communal considerations. Moreover, within this concept, family assistance seems to leave no room to negotiate because of the determinate attitude, gleaned from traditional values, towards fulfilling the responsibilities attached to specific family roles. Accordingly, the idea of accepting their given roles can be traced back to the concept of 'being in the same family' (Killian and Ganong 2002; Piercy 1998). It argues that family is a collective organisation, so the members are expected to be aware of their duties that are required for the family system to operate properly.

However, it cannot be denied that family interaction has been transformed by negotiation or renegotiation among family members, in order to conform to varying social circumstances (Finch and Mason 1993; Croll 2006). Where can the adjustment of family members' behaviour emerge, if the tenets of traditional collective values leave no scope for argument as to how they should behave? Importantly, grandparent–grandchild interaction or family support is not only inspired or guided

by traditional collective values; some other influential factors are also underscored in this study. Therefore, I would like to pause the discussion of negotiations between family members and move on the next explanation arising from exploration of this particular type of intergenerational support. In the coming section, further and more detailed investigation of grandchildren's assistance to their grandparents will be undertaken, to investigate whether negotiations among family relatives need emphasising.

## 4.4.2 Quality of grandparent-grandchild relationship

Predictably, according to the published literature, the quality of relationships between family members plays an important part in individual interactions. Not surprisingly, the degree of intimacy in the relationship turns out to be essential in grandparent–grandchild mutuality. This notion is supported by the fact that just over half of the grandchild interviewees in this research brought the level of intimacy with their grandparents to the fore when explaining whether or how much they assist their grandparents. Chris, for example, confirmed the importance of the grandparent–grandchild relationship when describing why he helps his grandmother. His intonation, attitude and assertive response strongly suggest that this closeness very much influences the level of assistance he provides.

Example 4.4d

Interviewer: *Why do you want to assist your grandmother?*

Chris: *Relationships! This is an important factor encouraging me to help her.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother)

Example 4.4e

Matt*: *I think this is love, a love within family, and only this kind of love has such strong power.* (Grandson, 23, living in a three-generation family)

Example 4.4f

Oliver: *We, both of us, love this relationship. We like our relationship with each other. I think that should be cherished. My granny is very open-minded, so*

*that we can chat about anything.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandmother)

Matt and Oliver both indicated that their positive relationships with their grandparents encouraged them to give help. They indicated directly that grandparent－grandchild closeness explains why they were willing to do things for their grandparents – stating that their grandparents deserved their assistance. Oliver's words – '… we can chat about anything' provides evidence for how close he is to his grandmother because they are completely open with each other. In the following narrative, Sean actually eliminated the notion of obligation and responsibility in providing support for his grandparents, by clarifying the overriding importance of intimacy. He explained his helping behaviours to me:

Example 4.4g

Sean:                              *I think it based on the relationship between us. I was raised by them and have been living with them all my life. We are relatively close to each other.*

Interviewer:                      *It is simply related to your emotional connections?*

Sean:                              *Yes, yes. Responsibility and obligation, actually, are not engaged in this behaviour.* (Grandson, 30, living in a grand-family)

The correlation between a positive grandparent–grandchild relationship and the explanation behind grandchildren's assistance to their grandparents is arguable. Homans, esteemed for his expertise on social behaviour, is one founder of *Exchange Theory*. In his book entitled *Social behaviour as Exchange* (1958), he spells out how people are always encouraged to interact more with others if more positive feelings are received by doing so. Moreover, the findings of Thompson and Walker (1987) reinforce the fact that assistance is one of the functions of a relationship. Cheal (2002) also underlines the positively connection between family responsibility and family relationship. In this vein, the positive relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren can be said to inspire the grandchildren to assist their grandparents, in terms of their high-quality connections.

However, the operation of intimacy in generating grandchildren's aid is not clearly

demarcated from other factors; sometimes, it is combined with other factors. Sean is a good example for illustrating this phenomenon. He prioritised the role of intimacy in explaining his assistance, but he also articulated the significance of 'balanced mutuality' in provoking his 'paying back'. He illuminated this idea with an assumption:

Example 4.4h

Sean: *I recognise that you cannot ask them to support you. It is… hmm… how to say… if there is something happening, they will be the one, standing shoulder to shoulder with you. Due to this, I will support them if they need me, without any doubt. (*Grandson, 30, living in a grand-family)

Sean emphasised the importance of reciprocity in his 'paying back', although he did not use this specific term in his argument. Homans' observations are relevant again, whereby he straightforwardly weighed the concept of reciprocity in human interactions by stating that 'the more valuable the activities that are engaged in, the more valuable those that they must give aid to' (1958: 599). The reason I am foreshadowing this idea is to support the next (and final) category that explains why grandchildren assist their grandparents – a reciprocal concern.

## 4.4.3  Desire for reciprocity

Reciprocity is the third explanation offered in this research. In this area, the grandchild interviewees said that they have received a lot and much has been offered to them by their grandparents, hence it is their time to pay them back. Take childcare, for example; the grandparent cohort in British society is regarded as the most important resource in childcare, in that they might be there to offer their time and energy to look after their grandchildren, especially when both parents of a child have to work (Dench and Ogg 2002). Moreover, a Taiwanese official research also states that grandparental assistance in childcare is vital resource in this society (Government Executive Yuan 2002). Therefore, the need for childcare from grandparents is one opportunity for grandchildren to receive help, care, resources and

the like from their grandparents, which builds up more grandparent – grandchild interactions.

Example 4.4i
Jamie:                           *I have no idea why my grandmother has treated me so well... my repayment is because I have gained so much from her.* (Granddaughter, 24, living in a three-generation family)

Example 4.4j
Lily:                            *My granny treated me so well, so that I have to care for her and help her. I think it is what Xiao-Shun is. I took her allowance when I was very young, therefore I have to pay back when I am capable now. It seems to be a concept of Xiao-Shun... I think we have to follow this moral norm and Xiao-Shun. It is natural to return the favour if we are treated well, too.* (Granddaughter, 27, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Example 4.4k
Wednesday:                       *I always feel the seniors have given a lot and I have to pay back... I don't think what I have offered is enough.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Example 4.4l
Oliver:                          *The benefit sounds quite realistic and pragmatic, but I think people can be more mutually appreciative and help each other. Mutually beneficial. This is a kind of benefit.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandmother)

From these narratives, it is reasonable to argue that these grandchildren represent the idea of reciprocity. They highlighted what and how much their grandparents had given them, and how it triggered their willingness to pay back. Oliver's narrative clearly emphasises the concept of being reciprocal. He suggested the importance of being 'mutually beneficial' in interactions. Although he did not talk about how much his grandmother gave him, the term 'mutual' explains his desire to pay back, at the same time as indicating his grandmother's devotion to him and his family.

The idea of paying back is a theme of Marshall's statements (1972). He describes

'balanced reciprocity' and argues that people maintain a balanced relationship and interaction by equal levels of giving and receiving. The analysis presented in this present research, on mutual interaction by the grandchildren has also been demonstrated by Kemp (2005). In Kemp's research, the outcome shows that grandchildren think they create their own expectations, which they then have to meet. Moreover, the idea of 'giving back' to their grandparents is one of three things the grandchild informants emphasised in terms of grandparent – grandchild mutual expectations. 'Being sources of pride and spending time with grandparents were among the most common ways of returning' (Kemp 2005: 515) is what grandchildren do to achieve those expectations. The reciprocal concepts that exist between grandparents and grandchildren, as demonstrated in Kemp's studies and the present one, are significant.

Being able to demonstrate the idea of reciprocity from the grandchildren's perspectives is very noteworthy. The significance of reciprocity in grandparent–grandchild interactions is that it implies an idea generated in the minds of grandchildren – balance mutuality, perhaps. I do not suggest that all 'paying-back' activities stem from the ideas of balanced reciprocity, rather that they also relate to traditional Chinese values – for example the Xiao-Shun mentioned in Lily's testimony. Moreover, it may also be influenced by the intermediate generation, as suggested by Annie, in her interview. Annie talked about the effect of her parents' family education on her role in assisting her grandparents. However, I would suggest that the occurrence of reciprocal care in explaining grandchildren's assistance of the grandchildren indicates the possibility of a balanced grandparent–grandchild relationship – a relationship that is ongoing.

Critically, what does suggesting that a more balanced relationship exists between grandparents and grandchildren mean? Arguably, this phenomenon does not mean that a hierarchy no longer exists to affect intergenerational interactions, because traditional values are still very dominant in the grandchildren's narratives. Nevertheless, I would like to propose that a transformation has occurred in grandparent–grandchild relationships, highlighting a new tendency generated

between grandparents and grandchildren in present-day Taiwan. The grandparent–grandchild relationship was far from the ideal of 'balance' in the past, as hierarchy predominantly governed how relatives should act with each other. However, the desire for reciprocity is underscored by the grandchild generation in this study as a vital reason for invoking their provision of assistance to the elderly, which suggests a very different grandparent – grandchild interaction from the past.

In addition, as mentioned above, family interaction is not maintained at its former level, in terms of the negotiation and renegotiation occurring in the domestic domain (Mason and Finch 1993; Croll 2006). Indeed, family members seem to have no room in which to negotiate their behaviour, as the attitude that traditional values should be obeyed was firmly promoted, confirming the effect of the lineage consideration on grandchildren's assistance. However, family negotiation or renegotiation may emerge while individual choice and freedom are underlined for family assistance. With reference to the statements about the effects of the quality of grandparent – grandchild relationships and the desire for reciprocity on family support, the grandchild generation seems to have more personal choice, together with the right to decide on their degree of intergenerational interaction and mutuality. There is no so-called standard or norm observed in discussions within theses two explanations. Correspondingly, it argues that the youth in the domestic domain has certain freedom to negotiate or renegotiate their family behaviour, since family obligation is merely one of the reasons which encourage family support.

Arguably, I interpret this to indicate the influence of other non-traditional concepts, since the idea of mutuality between grandparents and grandchildren did not traditionally exist in Chinese culture, where hierarchy powerfully functions. However, this idea is more likely to be related to individualistic concepts. I will return to this subject later. In the next chapter, I will consider current understandings of traditional and imported values, using more narratives from the researched. In so doing, stronger statements might be possible about the influence of traditional and imported values, namely collective and individualistic notions, on grandparent–grandchild interactions.

## 4.5    Conclusion

Three key topics were discussed in this chapter relating to the way in which the grandchild respondents regard their roles in the family, and what they do for their grandparents, as well as providing explanations for what compels them to assist their grandparents. Regarding their status as grandchildren, these three main themes are underlined to elucidate the meaning of the role of a grandchild, in terms of the narratives of the respondents. First there is lineage-inheritance, which accounts for the continuity of a family; the grandchild interviewees view themselves as a symbol, passing their familial lineage down to the next generation. By so doing, their family traditions will live on. The concept of 'being somebody loved and cared about' by their grandparents reveals a particular advantage of being a grandchild, since grandparents' care, affection and love acknowledges their own importance of being a grandchild. Accordingly, grandchildren seem to self-affirm their individuality and value, deeming themselves as significant people, rather than 'nobodies'. The third and last perspective of the grandchild's position in this research is that of being a functional resource for their family. The grandchild informants proposed that their functions relate to being able to offer assistance to their grandparents, either in a spontaneous manner or when circumstances require it. Briefly, emotional and practical aid is the primary resource they provided; in general, financial support is not possible because of their financial status.

The reasons for giving assistance to the grandparents were discussed in the interviews. Importantly, lineage consideration, the quality of each grandparent–grandchild relationship, and the desire for reciprocity are the key explanations for providing help. The lineage consideration links in with traditional ideas in the interviewees' interpretations, and shows how they are aligned with traditional Chinese values, which reinforce juniors' responsibilities, obligations and sense of duty towards their seniors. The quality of the grandparent–grandchild relationship plays another vital role in inspiring the grandchild interviewees to support their grandparents, making them happy or cheering them up. Moreover, the

desire for reciprocity- the grandchild interviewees want to pay back to their grandchild after receiving more resources from their grandparents. It is an intriguing aspect of this study which perhaps highlights the trend of pursuing a balanced grandparent–grandchild relationship. This idea of balance in the relationship is growing in Taiwanese society.

Importantly, after looking thoroughly at the 'perceptions' of the grandchild role and the 'explanations' grandchildren's provide for the assistance for their grandparents, a potential link between these two research focuses can be suggested. The two explorations seem to be compatible when comparing the analysed themes – lineage inheritance and lineage inheritance considerations, being loved and cared about, the quality of grandparent – grandchild relationship, being a resource for the family, and the desire for reciprocity. I believe that the interviewees see lineage inheritance as a vital part of being a grandchild, and most of them consider lineage to be a critical reason in their helping role. Furthermore, some of the grandchildren who described how they much they appreciate their relationships with their grandparents as a motivating factor, also talked about how they were loved and cared about as a grandchild. Those who stated that providing assistance is an important part of being a grandchild declared the desire for reciprocity as the reason for supporting their seniors. These analyses indicate some significant similarities between the two considerations are significant, in that around forty or fifty per cent of their distributions overlap in this sample of the grandchildren. This relatively strong association suggests that the respondents in the study have fairly consistent perspectives when it comes to explaining and understanding their relationships and interactions with their grandparents.

What's more, as mentioned in the literature review, the principle of responsibility has faced challenges because of the impact of liberal ideology. People have begun to appreciate the concepts of personal freedom and choice stemming from neo-liberalism, which frees individuals from certain responsibilities. Importantly, this particular concern is employed to explain the decline in family responsibility of parenting in western societies (Rodger 1995; Gillies 2005, 2008). However, what

kind of stories would be discussed in this Chinese-based society? Will the effect of liberal ideology also be underlined or do people in the East have different viewpoints from which to explain the dynamics of family support?

With reference to the explanations for grandchildren's provision for their grandparents, three main categories are focused on, namely, lineage considerations, the quality of grandparent–grandchild relationships, and the desire for reciprocity. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, none of these reasons predominates, but what does this statement, that these factors have equal influence on family support, imply? Under the spotlight of traditional collective values, filial obligation and in-group benefit always seem to emerge to explain family mutuality (Fan 2006; Hwang 1999). Nevertheless, the dominance of family-related considerations in grandchildren's assistance to their grandparents seems not to appear in this research. The interviewees did not particularly evaluate this consideration as the most important factor encouraging them to provide time and labour for their grandparents. At the same time, in rationalising their behaviour, the grandchild generation brought up the quality of this intergenerational relationship and their desire to pay their grandparents back. Noticeably, these two ideas indicate, to an extent, that they helped their grandparents as a matter of personal choice. They were not forced by other family members or under pressure from any family obligation; only their free will accounted for this intergenerational provision.

In line with that argument, I propose that the effect of liberalism, too, is evident from the narratives of the grandchild respondents. In relation to grandchildren's assistance, intimate grandparent – grandchild relationships and the idea of paying back are considered an operation of liberal ideology on grandchildren's assistance to their grandparents. It enriches the reasons for family support, an observation which argues that traditional collective values are not the only basis for mutuality within families in this present research. As such, how neo-liberalism functions on family support in this study differs from the existing research (Rodger 1995; Gillies 2005, 2008). Accordingly, I would like to point out that the operation of liberal freedom can go two ways- setting people free from attached responsibility or enriching personal

choice for more communal considerations. In this research, the effect of neo-liberalism was not     argued as a reason not to provide assistance for seniors from the grandchildren, but it, instead, highlights how the youth exercises liberty on individual choice to explain the provisions for their grandparents.

Furthermore, the information suggesting that extended dependency could affect grandchildren's responsibility was not reflected in the narratives of the grandchild participants. Although they highlighted the outcomes and influence of education on their family interaction, no specific argument concerning their assistance as grandchildren was offered. As I inferred from the literature, the impact of extended dependency mainly affects the mutuality of parents and children, whose responsibilities for each other are more direct and compulsory. In comparison, the effect of young people's delayed independence on the grandparent–grandchild relationship seems less substantial, so that relevant articulation of the issue by the grandchildren was lacking in this specific study.

There is one further important issue to address before proceeding to the next chapter. That is, the meaning of intimacy in the grandparent–grandchild relationship and the greater balance observed in intergenerational interactions. From the interpretation of the grandchildren's role orientation within families, to the explanations for their role enactment, there is a compelling argument that the grandparent–grandchild connection is leading to a more balanced situation. The two concepts are worthy of attention in that they seem to imply the existence of a connection between individualistic considerations and collective practices. For instance, the mutuality of intergenerational transfer may indicate that the grandchild interviewees leave familial responsibility aside when they are assisting their seniors. Instead, they invoke a personal interest and balanced mutuality to rationalise their behaviour.

Significantly, this phenomenon, which employs individualistic considerations for collective activities, deserves more thorough discussion in order to explore the nature of the connections, articulating a conflict of thought between personal concerns and group benefits. However, at this point I would like to change direction and move on

to the issue of collectivistic and individualistic concepts as a framework for the grandchildren's narratives. The association between personal interest and communal flow can expect more concrete and precise pictures from the grandchildren's narratives of their interpretation and perceptions of traditional collective values and individualistic concepts.

# 5 CHAPTER FIVE: TRADITIONAL VALUES AND IMPORTED CONCEPTS AND THE GRANDPARENT-GRANDCHILD RELATIONSHIP

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses in more detail on what traditional collective values and imported individualistic concepts [38] mean to grandchildren. In terms of the information, it helps to understand what the grandchildren have experienced and why they interpret the effects and the values of these two conceptual ideologies in their family life in certain approaches, especially the grandparent–grandchild relationships examined in this research. Noticeably, in this chapter, again, the discussions are primarily based on the researched materials offered by the grandchild participants, in terms of the difficulty, highlighted in the Chapter Three, in getting the relevant information from the grandparent group.

The importance of traditional values in the behaviour of Taiwanese people has been argued for in the introductory chapter, in accordance with complicated cultural and historical factors. Moreover, in the previous chapter, which discusses the nature of being a grandchild, the grandchild interviewees took the values of traditional Chinese ideologies into account in making their arguments – culture-related concepts such as lineage and traditional rites. With reference to those tradition-related issues, and associated doubts, the way in which the interviewees understand the effects of traditional collective culture on their domestic relationships and interactions has become a vital part of the discussion in this research. In addition, another value system also needs to be considered when the significance of traditional collective culture is highlighted in the Taiwanese lifestyle: namely, the values inherent in imported individualistic concepts – specifically relating to individualism. The

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[38] For more information about itemising traditional collective values and imported individualistic concepts, please see Chapter One.

grandchild informants pointed out the effects of individualism in the course of their narratives, which accounted for their understanding both of being a grandchild and the transformations of being a grandchild over time. Besides, as mentioned in the literature, the potential for tension between traditional collective values and imported individualistic concepts is a very important issue in both western and eastern academia. Not surprisingly, the grandchild interviewees in this study also discussed the possible incompatibility between imported individualistic concepts and traditional collective values, which indicates that Taiwanese society has changed over time and the predominance of Taiwanese tradition is not absolute.

It is worth noting that the abstractness and vagueness of traditional and imported concepts make any discussion of these ideas and practices difficult to verbalise, both for the grandchild and grandparent participants. However, the younger generation's generally greater level of education goes some way to explaining why grandchildren are more likely to be able to discuss these complex issues than their grandparents' generation. The data on traditional and imported values derived from the grandparent respondents failed to gain insights into their interpretations of these concepts, due to the insufficiency of the interview materials. Although they employed the term 'tradition' to explain the difference in lifestyles between themselves and their grandchildren, they could not elaborate on what tradition exactly was, or what it meant in their lives. They mainly argued that the drop in traditional values in contemporary society gave their grandchildren more lifestyle freedom than they had.[39] As a result of the insufficient data on traditional and imported values, from the grandparents' perspectives, the discussions below are based solely upon the materials of the grandchild generation.

## 5.2    Understandings of traditional values

Explorations of how traditional values are interpreted by grandchildren started with

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[39] For more information, please see Chapter Three.

their understanding of being a grandchild, and the reasons they gave for their assistance. These observations contained plenty of ideas stemming from traditional Taiwanese culture. In the conversations that took place during the interviews, the grandchild informants employed a variety of Chinese values to point out the nature of their roles and to make sense of their help provision for the elderly members of their families. In brief, Chinese-related notions are predominantly revealed by descriptions of the grandchild's role, daily lives and family circumstances, indicating an understanding of traditional values, and an appreciation of the connection between their lives and cultural values operating in the domestic arena.

The majority of the grandchild generation spontaneously discussed traditional Chinese values without any prompting, as seen in Chapter Four, although one in six were prompted for more information on their perspectives on traditional culture during the course of the interview. This may indicate the prevalence of cultural ideas in the life of the sample researched here. Some of the grandchildren did not invoke traditional values to describe their behaviours and their grandparent–grandchild interactions. In these cases, I intentionally raised specific questions to probe their thoughts about traditional values, in order to explore their perspectives on this particular value. I posed such questions as 'What are traditional values in your understanding?', 'What do you think about tradition?' and 'Do traditional values matter in your life?'. These questions were followed by 'How important is it?', 'Why is it significant?' and 'How does it work in your family?'. However, despite these approaches to exploring traditional concepts (namely spontaneous and prompted), there was no significant difference in the responses of those who were prompted and those who replied spontaneously in terms of their understandings of the concepts.

According to the different aspects of traditional values, I found that the grandchildren's responses primarily fell into three categories, in terms of varying characteristics of the terms used by them. These were: a) a hierarchical code; b) roles, responsibilities and expectations; and c) collectiveness, cooperation and mutuality. These categories were generated during the data construction, and all three themes penetrate through the whole analysis, elaborating on what tradition means,

how it functions, and to what extent grandparent–grandchild relationships are governed by it. It is worth mentioning that some grandchild interviewees employed more than one idea to discuss their opinions. Others responses mainly focused on one category to highlight their understandings. In brief, no single idea of the three described here was dominant in this research.


## 5.2.1  Hierarchical code


Hierarchy can be understood in the family context as a structured distinction between senior and junior members of a group. To some extent, this underpins the principles of rituals that juniors follow and obey. In traditional Taiwanese culture, the notion of hierarchy emphasises the importance of looking up to the elderly, in terms of the high level of attention given to filial piety (Hsieh 2004; Jordan 1986; Nuyen 2004; Park and Chesla 2007). Around a third of the grandchild informants mentioned this particular characteristic in basically describing what tradition means to them, and how it works in their families. One of the interviewees, known as Amber, moved into her maternal grandparents' household with her mother after her parents were divorced. She is a good example of this. She distinguished between staying in her own family and staying in her grandparents' house when we talked about how she felt about her parents' separation and the move to her grandparents' house. She said:


Example 5.2a

Amber:                         *Everything is more traditional at my grandfather's home. We are expected*
                              *to spend more time getting together with my grandparents, uncles, aunts*
                              *and cousins.*

Interviewer:                  *Okay. What do you think about this situation?*

Amber:                        *The first thing which comes to my mind is seniority; a significant tradition*
                              *of this exists in our family. We all respect grandfather and grandmother,*
                              *and we also look up to our parents. This is the ordinary way in my family.*
                              (Granddaughter, 22, living in a single-parent family with her grandparents)


Amber experienced different family lives – with her own nuclear family and in her grandparents' household. Although Amber did not describe more about the operation

of tradition in her parents' family, she did spell out the differences between the two families, referring in particular to the more traditional situation in her grandparents' home. She pointed out that 'seniority' was one of the significant features of her grandfather family tradition, so she respected her grandparents and parents. I would argue that this emphasis on seniority illustrates how people are placed in different levels within the family, in that the higher position of the elderly is raised. Kevin's narrative, below, brings the issue of seniority even more clearly into focus, showing how authoritarian his grandfather is within his family:

Example 5.2b

| Interviewer: | *Kevin, let's talk about whether something in your opinion might affect the relationships or the interactions between you and your grandmother, as we have shared a few of your stories.* |
| Kevin: | *I think… principles can influence grandparent–grandchild relationships. Seniors have so many principles, just like my grandfather. He has plenty of principles for our family.* |
| Interviewer: | *What are these principles you mention?* |
| Kevin: | *I think they are traditional ideas – grandfather wants us to do this and to do that, which is reasonable by his traditional standards, you know. Sometimes I just find it is a bit annoying. However, he is my senior, so I cannot say no.* |
| Interviewer: | *How do you recognise the influence on your relationships?* |
| Kevin: | *I reckon it could worsen our relationships because many young people, they don't want to… I think they don't want to listen to this annoying stuff because their own parents may not set up so many rules to control their children, but grandparents do sometimes. However, I think this is hierarchy operating in my family. Parents and grandparents are seniors and you cannot speak to them loudly or disobey their decisions. (Grandson, 21, living in the same city as his grandmother)* |

In his story, Kevin clearly argued that he had to do what his grandfather asked, whatever the situation, whether or not he was willing. His grandfather's seniority rationalised his actions and demands and Kevin's conformity to fulfil his grandfather's requests. The strength and the irresistible fact of seniority and authority of seniors in his family were confirmed. The hierarchal doctrine in Kevin's case is understandable, whereby the older generation are entitled to more rights and powers; this implies a strong sense of the impact of hierarchy in the domestic arena. With

reference to these privileges, the seniors govern their juniors. Correspondingly, the grandchildren may be unable to reject the demands of their seniors. Winnie's story (below) reinforces Kevin's arguments. She, too, had no choice about obeying her seniors, due to the operation of hierarchy within her family, although she referred to her parents rather than her grandparents in order to illustrate this.

Example 5.2c

Winnie: *My parents discipline me so strictly and this is because of tradition. They always want me to come home early due to their conventional thoughts. We've argued about this situation a lot, but it is obvious that I eventually have to conform to these regulations.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a three-generation family)

Winnie was in a very similar situation to that of Kevin. With very little room to negotiate, she mentioned her failure to shift the opinion of her parents under such traditional constraints and hierarchical systems.

Apart from the strict demands and family principles governing people's behaviours, an emphasis on 'title-calling' illustrates how hierarchy is exercised in the family. This is shown in Wednesday's narrative below.

Example 5.2d

Wednesday: *My family is very typical in that my father, mother and grandparents are very traditional. I am not sure how your family is and what you call your older sister and brother. In my family, it is not allowed to say their names directly, so you have to call them sister or brother.*

Interviewer: *Yes, I see.*

Wednesday: *I am mentioning this because I heard from some of my friends that they are in a similar situation to me. On the other hand, I also know some people just call their older siblings' names straightforwardly. My family is very far removed from this situation and I was shocked the first time when I heard my boyfriend just calls his sister's name. I totally cannot understand, as I think she is his older sister.*

Interviewer: *Okay, this thing has never happened in your domestic domain, right?*

Wednesday: *Yes, we do care about the titles of family members. Like my younger brother and sister, they would never call me [Wednesday]. Using people's titles*

Wednesday's testimony offers a different insight into the operation of hierarchal rules in the family, showing how people are expected to look up to their older relatives – even if they are siblings. Her descriptions help illuminate the strictness of hierarchy, whereby calling someone by their name, rather than their family title, can be interpreted as disrespectful in terms of the understanding of traditional values. In this case of title-calling between siblings, one can only imagine how the naming protocol works in grandparent–grandchild relationships. It is clearly seen to be important even for intra-generational interactions.

The statements of Kevin, Winnie and Wednesday about the manifestation of hierarchal values in their families are quite representative of traditional values. It is clear that the younger generation must pay attention to respect and conformity of their elders. The grandchild interviewees in this study were expected not to disobey certain principles, regardless of their opinions and feelings on the matter. As a result, these observations argue for the irresistibility of authority and hierarchy, and seemingly illustrate that domestic behaviours are strictly requested because of traditional Chinese culture. Descriptions of hierarchical structures affecting grandparents and grandchildren abound in these interviews; the grandchildren approved of the higher status of their grandparents and were in agreement as to their inferior positions. Accordingly, the privileges of seniors and the conformity of themselves with the wishes of their seniors were confirmed by these testimonies.

Meanwhile, the grandchildren interviewees also highlighted the importance of the different role enactments between seniors and juniors. Their comments show that inferiors are supposed to obey their superiors, to fulfil their responsibilities and to meet their given expectations. This role distinction is further underlined when explaining how traditional values function in the following discussion.

## 5.2.2 Roles, responsibilities, expectations

In discussions about daily interactions between grandparents and grandchildren, the grandchildren told me that they think they must help their families – this is what every relative is responsible for. According to the grandchildren's accounts, family members seem to be 'locked' into specific positions and must behave with certain attached rules. This relates to another feature of Chinese cultures. Vitally, role distinction and the attached responsibilities and expectations are key elements of the traditional Chinese character for a well-functioning family construction as described in the interviews. Maintaining a viable family requires a few standards or requirements to direct its members' behaviours for communal benefit.

Chris's narrative, which follows below, straightforwardly and noticeably argues how people distribute their work according to their gender difference; thus men and women have different 'tasks' to ensure domestic cooperation is achieved. When we talked about specific features of his family, he said:

Example 5.2e

Chris: *My grandparents didn't have time to go to school because they tried hard to maintain their material life. They are not highly qualified academically, but they are concerned about family ethics a lot. I think it comes from their society and family context where such an idea was promoted: women should be responsible for domestic chores and men are supposed to earn as much money as possible for their family. I am heavily influenced by this tradition because this is what I have seen and been told since I was young. I reckon I have been instilled with it unconsciously even though I have realised that the world changes. (*Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother)

Distinction between roles is a very significant feature in Chris' account, in which he described what traditional values mean to him. Through his testimony, it is clear that his family members have their own orientations to their other family members and to their communal families. Apart from their fixed roles, Chris even related the concept of role arrangement to society and family, using his grandfather's case of not

receiving an education and arguing for the connection between being traditional values and social circumstances. His grandparents had such a great sense of their responsibilities because of the social context they grew up in. In terms of establishing traditional values in society, its influence is felt widely and powerfully.

Grace's narrative is similar to Chris's. She also described the importance of cooperation between family members and role distribution within her family. By highlighting the different tasks allotted to members of her family, she demonstrated her ideas about tradition.

Example 5.2f

Grace:    *Role distinction is apparent in my family because you should behave with reference to your role. We, students, should study hard and this is part of a tradition in which everyone has their own role to play. My family is not a typical one in that my granny is the person who does everything around the house and my mum and aunt work hard to make money. This is a more traditional routine… This is how we do family.* (Granddaughter, 21, living in a single-parent family with her grandfather)

Grace signified her family members' orientations, describing how her family works. Her grandmother, mother and aunt were respectively in charge of different things for the family's sake. From her point of view, everyone was assigned to different 'tasks' and they are expected, by other family members, to fulfil them. This is tradition' this is how family can function properly. By and large, both Grace and Chris argue clearly that this settled task distribution is a feature of interpreted traditional values, from role settings and attached responsibilities to expected behaviours. Notably, something in Grace's interview deviated from Chris's gender-set distribution in which men were the money earners and women were in charge of household chores; in her family, the main financial resources were the females. This fact is probably explained by the loss of both her father and uncle, so the women in the family had to carry on the responsibility of making money. Other than this unusual circumstance, both grandchildren drew clear boundaries for their roles in their families, showing that role-fixed orientation is a feature of tradition.

Apart from gender and functional distinctions within family members, role-responsibility and role-expectation of the grandchild generation can be narrowed down to even more specific tasks for grandchildren to perform. A great number of the grandchild respondents – nearly the half of the informants in this study – underscored the influence of Xiao-Shun (孝順). They regard it as the most important concept behind their duties and thoughts. Xiao-Shun is similar to filial piety, by translating from Chinese, but its application is far broader. In Chinese ideology, both grandparents and parents are the recipients of it; and juniors should 'Xiao-Shun' their seniors (Fan 2006). But what exactly does Xiao-Shun comprise? According to Hwang (1999), Jordan (1986) and Tsai et al. (2008) it is mainly defined as: a) respect for seniors; b) obedience to seniors; c) consideration and concern for seniors; and d) care of seniors. The majority of the grandchild respondents mentioned the operation of Xiao-Shun as a traditional value attached to their role responsibility and expectation. Some interviewees (around one third of them) directly referred to the term Xiao-Shun, but the remainder employed similar ideas to point out the features of respect, obedience and consideration. Lily replied very directly when asked to think about what traditional values are. She described that to be Xiao-Shun is the most important aspect of being a grandchild, in terms of cultural concepts.

Example 5.2g

Interviewer: *Lily, you have used the terms 'traditional values' and 'morality' to explain how your family works. Let's talk about what you think traditional culture and morality are? What do these mean to you? I'm sort of curious about it…*

Lily: *I think the most important thing in the tradition is Xiao-Shun.*

Interviewer: *Hmm?*

Lily: *Doing Xiao-Shun! This is our responsibility as grandchildren. We should spend as much time as possible accompanying her [her grandmother]. The elderly, they don't need too much money and what they want is very simple – consideration. They may hope you can match their expectations or something like this. And we, grandchildren, should work their expectations out.*

She argued strongly that Xiao-Shun is a traditional value and also a guide, directing her behaviours as a decent grandchild. Being Xiao-Shun is embodied in her grandchild role, so she showed her approval of the notion that grandchildren were supposed to meet their grandparents' and her family's expectations. Moreover, she also indicated what these expectations of being Xiao-Shun might be – consideration and company. Correspondingly, she employed this feature to clarify why she assisted her grandmother.

Example 5.2h

Lily: *I do that also because we have a close relationship.*

Interviewer: *Okay. Based on what you said, you think the relationship is a dominant influence in your helping your granny. Is it?*

Lily: *Yes. I think I should obey this moral rule and Xiao Shun. We should treat people well if they do the same thing to us.*

Interviewer: *Okay. Can you talk more about the concept of Xiao Shun?... As you have mentioned it more than once. What is it, according to your understanding?*

Lily: *I think it is a sort of responsibility that people have, within the family. It's a part of tradition.*

Interviewer: *You attributed your assistance to your grandmother to your relationship and to Xiao Shun. I was wondering which one is more important or more powerful in encouraging your behaviour?*

Lily: *I think it is fifty–fifty. Half relationship and half grandchild's responsibility. I think that you cannot let people down if they care about you. This relates to my role as a grandchild. (Granddaughter, 27, living distant from her grandmother)*

That she 'cannot let people down' signifies again a given role of a grandchild and attached responsibilities and expected behaviours, in that Lily seems to have a strong sense of committing herself to her family. She had welcomed the duties put on her shoulders, to fulfil her grandmother's demands, so she could be seen to be in approval of her responsibilities as a grandchild.

Matt produced a similar narrative. The extract below illustrates how he was raised and the how he sees his familial position:

Example 5.2i

Matt:                             *This is the way I have been taught and how tradition talks, as I am the*
                                  *oldest grandchild in my family. I am responsible for my grandparents and*
                                  *this duty is attached to my role. (Grandson, 23, living in a three-generation*
                                  *family)*

His words pointed out that he was eldest grandchild, but also underlined the subsequent expectations attached to his specific role. Arguably, the term 'the oldest grandchild' may have different connotations for other grandchildren – as an eldest grandchild, he is in a different hierarchical position. This statement clearly shows that the distinctions between different roles in the family could be very trivial. The notion that everyone has their own individual role or tasks, according to their position and conditions within the family, is described in two articles by Fan (2002, 2006). Fan argues that 'a basic fact of human life is that humans are born into roles and relationships that are already given to them' (2006: 5). This statement supports the grandchild respondents' perspectives.

What is the ideology of 'family' if people are designated specific role or tasks in their families? The family is regarded as a collective unit; some of the grandchild informants gave the impression that their personal positions were part of a united unit, beyond every individual – that is, the family. In this sense, family members offer their time and labour to their families, by way of their assigned responsibilities. I would suggest that the idea of individual duties towards family, in order to maintain them in a 'viable' format, indicates a form of 'collectivism', whereby tasks are shared and distributed into different levels and positions within the group for greater communal benefit.

## 5.2.3  Collectiveness, cooperation and mutuality

The notion 'working for a communal advantage' concerns the family as a unit, mirroring the findings of Chinese-based research, and reflecting the existence of collectivism (Miller and Makela 2005). The idea of being collective as a traditional

value is predominant in this study, too. In fact, more than half of the interviewees highlighted its salience to describe how important traditional collective values affected their daily lives and how their family functions. This collective-centred preference of the grandchild respondents, at this stage, implies a sense of togetherness and belonging, whereby the grandchildren think that family members are supposed to help each other in order to make their families functional. Practical cooperation and emotional interdependence embody the concept of being collective, in this study. The connections between collectiveness, cooperation and mutuality can be understood more fully by looking closely at the testimonies of the grandchildren.

In the narrative that follows, Cindy used the term 'we Chinese' to bring out her ideas about what traditional ideas are.

Example 5.2j

| Interviewer: | *What do you think about traditional values and their importance in the family? You just used the term 'we Chinese' and you also commented that 'we Chinese' should help each other.* |
| Cindy: | *I think I should do something as our tradition is collective.* |
| Interviewer: | *How does that work in your daily life?* |
| Cindy: | *I think it is an implicit rule and no one would tell you how you should do so, but you just know you have to do it. I think family members should get together often and do something together, too.* |
| Interviewer: | *Hmm...* |
| Cindy: | *Chinese are different from western people in that Chinese people prefer helping each other, especially providing inter-generational mutual assistance. My grandfather and grandmother regard mutuality as much better than being independent. I identify with their point of view.* (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandfather) |

The term 'we Chinese' seems to demonstrate how Cindy perceived particular features of Chinese people, and she argued that people should do activities together because of their Chinese character. As well as aligning with this traditional doctrine, she claimed that people were supposed to know what to do, and how to behave, without having to be reminded, thus spelling the power of cultural atmosphere and cultivation. Stating it like this, it seems that people's lives are expected to be attached

to cultural values. In Annie's statement, below, this viewpoint is expressed again to argue how people are guided in organising their living arrangements.

Example 5.2k

Annie: *I have noticed that Chinese traditions seem to concentrate on family ethics and my family members follow the principle a lot. My family is big and has plenty of members. We have lived together since I was very young and our neighbours are relatives, too. You can always meet relatives within a short distance when you walk around the neighbourhood. Ha, I think the arrangement is really interesting.*

Interviewer: *Why do you have such a living arrangement?*

Annie: *It is a part of tradition that relatives are expected to live close to each other. And… we can help each other if needed.*

Interviewer: *Okay. But you do have a big family. Any special way tradition works within your family, apart from living close together?*

Annie: *Yes, we also emphasise distributing diverse tasks and that everyone should fulfil their own duty.*

Interviewer: *What for?*

Annie: *For the same goal… and for this family.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean?*

Annie: *We do things for everyone who belongs to this family, not for ourselves only.* (Granddaughter, 18, living in a three-generation family)

Annie described a close-residence arrangement of her family, and how its members are assigned with diverse tasks to work towards a communal advantage. From this point of view, in data construction, it seems rational and advantageous for people to stay close, be mutualistic, and do things for their relatives, in order to achieve 'shared goodness'. This gathering of communal efforts is how the collective idea functions are argued in this study, as the grandchild informants always connected this notion with their reasons for providing mutual help, getting close, spending time together, and such like.

The data from Oliver's interview more clearly suggests that the concept of collectivism is representative of traditional Chinese values, whilst pointing out his thoughts on collectivism.

Example 5.2l

Oliver: *I know the family format nowadays is different from the past. In my generation, people prefer the nuclear family, including father, mother and their child (children), to the three-generation family, comprising seniors and young grandchildren. I've noticed that family life has been transformed, but we still spend time together. This is a sort of collectivistic reflectivity, gathering people.*

Interviewer: *A collectivistic reflectivity? Can you say more about it?*

Oliver: *Collectivism? I think.*

Interviewer: *Do you mean that family presents a concept of collectivism?*

Oliver: *Yes, but it changes all the time. It is a constant process.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean or refer to? The size of family or the content of family? Sorry, you've lost me.*

Oliver: *I mainly focus on family size when I mention 'changes'. I would respond 'parents and children' at the first moment if you asked who constructs a family. However, it does not mean that my grandparents or my uncles are not my relatives. They are, of course, my family members, but I think family structure is not unitary, having layers, one by one. Parents and children are included in the core circle and spread out to grandparents and uncles, maybe, in the second one and so on… I may build my own family in a nuclear structure, but I don't want to feel distant from my wider family because of the nuclear family. I think big family is our root. People may work on different things, but still for a communal purpose.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandmother)

Employing diverse descriptions, the grandchild interviewees used different words and ideas to describe this collective-related perspective of traditional cultural values. Some interviewees directly employed precise terms, such as collective ideas or collectivism, to illustrate how collectivism influences their lives, as a traditional value. Others used relevant collectivistic thoughts to explain how they were affected by this ideology, without explicitly mentioning 'collectivism' specifically; gathering people together, for instance.

Although the means of expressing exactly what traditional values entail are different, the ideas of collective perspectives in this research seem to show little variation from each another or with descriptions of collectivism in the literature (Miller and Makela

2005; Oyserman et al. 2002; Oyserman et al. 2008). In brief, the three themes outlined in this chapter are overwhelmingly those that are most frequently invoked and emphasised by the grandchild respondents, clearly representing the grandchildren's perspectives on typical values of Chinese culture.

Additionally, the consistency of these perspectives about traditional Chinese culture may be explained as a result of the way in which Taiwanese people approach traditional Chinese culture. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the dissemination of traditional values is done through formal school education, probably leading to consistency in the influence of these values, as reflected in the way the grandchildren articulated them. Moreover, because of the consistency in reports about the influence of collective values by the interviewees, it seems that the grandchild generation still attaches traditional values to the elements of collectivism, showing that family should function with traditional-value-related meanings.

With regard to previous research, the group-focused nature of Chinese collective values is in direct conflict with many of the ideas of western individualism, which suggests a decline of traditional values in younger generations (Ralston et al. 1999; Rozman 2002). Correspondingly, during the conversations about traditional values in Taiwan, the grandchildren frequently articulated that they noticed the transformations that had occurred to loosen traditional Chinese ties and the powerful influence of perceived imported values in their family life. With reference to certain issues raised during the interviews and the statements of previous research, I will now explore the extent to which the interviewees noticed these changes on and the reasons of the loosening of the primary values. I will also pay attention to the extent to which the younger generation in Taiwan has adopted this seemingly reverse-tradition concept in their daily lives, and precisely how they exercise it in their families.

## 5.3 Comprehensions of imported individualistic concepts – individualism and individualisation

As highlighted in the Literature chapter above, the debate on the value of individualism or the effect of the individualisation process on human behaviour is still ongoing in western academia, although a great number of studies have explored the way individualism affects people and what individualisation brings to societies (Beck and Beck-Gersheim 1995, 2002; Durkheim 1933; Santore 2008; Smart 2007; Yan 2003, 2009, 2010). On the one hand, the implementation of individualism and the process of individualisation are seen as encouraging people to prioritise their individual aims and interests. On the other hand, the development of individualism and individualisation reminds people of the significance of 'being individual' and the need to respect every person.

Before entering into the main discussion about how members of the grandchild generation interpret individualism or individualisation in their lives, I would like to highlight the way individualistic-related topics were introduced into the interviews. Some of the grandchild interviews also spontaneously proposed that the tendency to be more individualistic is responsible for the phenomenon of family transformation over the generations. However, when the respondents did not directly mention the effects of these values on their lives, they were probed for more information using specific questions such as: 'Have you ever thought about whether there are some new concepts that also affect your familial relationships, since you have talked lots on the influence of tradition?' and 'Is there something regarded as rather different from traditional doctrines?'. Importantly, the informants were less likely to spontaneously underline individualistic perspectives than traditional values during their interviews. I had sensed during the interviews that participants did not often automatically mention the influence that individualism and individualisation had had on their daily or family lives. The ratio of those who spontaneously suggested individualistic-associated concepts and those who were prompted was about 3.5 to 1, whereas the ratio was 6 to 1 for tradition-related issues. Thus it may be argued that the grandchild interviewees had different degrees of familiarity with collective or

individualistic ideologies.

Noticeably, in terms of the grandchildren's discourses, a great number of the individualism-related discussions started with someone pointing out that he or she had experienced the tension, and resulting dilemma, between collective and individualistic concepts in normal life. This phenomenon may account for the perceived antithetical connections between the development of individualism and individualisation and the maintenance and performance of collectivism in Taiwanese society as mentioned in the literature (Lee 2004; Lee et al. 2010; Oyserman et al. 2002; Ralston et al. 1999; Williams 2003). However, what are individualistic-associated concepts understood by the grandchildren generation in this research? According to these narratives, the features of individualistic-associated concepts can be sorted into two categories – being more independent and becoming less considerate of others.

## 5.3.1 Being more independent

Being more independent is one of the reported features of individualism in this research. It is interesting to determine what kind of situations the interviewees show their independence. Correspondingly, the phenomenon of increasing numbers of nuclear families is argued by the grandchild generation to be a sign of greater independence of people in Taiwan. A few of the interviewed grandchildren suggested that the shrinking size of families is a critical reason for the differences observed between contemporary society and that of their grandparent counterparts. The rising rate of nuclear families given by the official statistics (see Appendix 2) seems to support the narratives of the grandchildren. The official resource shows that the formation of nuclear families in place of traditional, extended ones in Taiwan is a major trend, corresponding with the collapse of stem, or joint, families in Taiwanese society. Importantly, as mentioned in the Chapter One, in the 1980s, it was a turning point of social orientations in Taiwan from labour-intensive to knowledge- or technology-pooled, which was a period of processing industrialisation. In this vein,

urbanisation and modernisation accompanied, which also explain the increase of smaller families (Tung et al. 2006). However, smaller family formats are a sign of less dependence on other family members in this small-scale study, which indicates a downgrading of the importance big families. This is corroborated in a number of the grandchild informants' narratives. For example, Chris shared his ideas about how the structure of the family has changed over time, from bigger to smaller, and relates this to the increasing independence of people seen today.

Example 5.3a

| | |
|---|---|
| Chris: | *The society, where we are now, is totally... we are heading to westernisation and... we had a stem or joint family in the past, but now... it doesn't happen now and it is a sign of being independent.* |
| Interviewer: | *Okay. Do you mean that people have less preference to their wider families because they put their independence to the fore?* |
| Chris: | *Yes. This is why the nuclear family occurs. I think the trend of forming nuclear families indicates that people are going to be very individual, a process of heading towards individualisation. Taking what happens in America as an example, people there... parents' responsibility of raising their children ends when children reach the age of 18. After that, children have to rely on themselves to make their lives. This influences us constantly.* |
| Interviewer: | *Based on what you said, western values keep influencing us all the time. But, what are the ideas you refer to as western values?* |
| Chris: | *Individualisation, independence and self-centredness.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother) |

In his narrative, Chris directly articulated that being more independent was an American characteristic, citing the case of young Americans moving out of their parents' houses at the age of 18. He took this individualistic trend as an effect of external, imported concepts and further emphasised this was the way Taiwanese society was heading. 'Westernisation' is the term he used to specify the direction of the transformation; Taiwan was becoming less of an eastern environment in his opinion. It is notable that the features he raised to characterise westernisation were individualisation, independence and self-centredness, relating to the reinforcement of the status of individuals. In addition, shrinking family size was addressed in Chris's account as 'evidence' with which to rationalise this phenomenon, although there are

other reasons available to explain the increasing number of nuclear families in Taiwan: greater geographical mobility or industrialisation, for instance (Tung et al. 2006). However, the fact that he interpreted cultural values in such terms perhaps shows that the link between family format and traditional values is rather substantial.

Jason also recognised some new tendencies operating in modern families and perceived that the importance of family relationships had declined because of the growing preference for nuclear families. He was aware that people seemed to care less about their families then they once did, in their pursuit of independence.

Example 5.3b

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *Why did you say that the family relationship is not as important as it was?* |
| Jason: | *I think people don't want to take responsibilities. Family contains responsibility. A bigger family carries more pressure, so that big family becomes less common.* |
| Interviewer: | *Why do you think so? Is there anything contributing to your opinions?* |
| Jason: | *Because of contemporary tendencies…* |
| Interviewer: | *What are they?* |
| Jason: | *I think people simply want to … they just want to be happy and free. It is individualism. Something western…? Other people are less important than people themselves, being more independent.* |
| Interviewer: | *Do you mean that people focus on themselves rather than concerning …* |
| Jason: | *Yes… concerning the whole family. It was what people did in the past.* (Grandson, 28, living in the same city as his grandfather) |

With regards to Jason's narratives on becoming more independent, the preference for establishing smaller households is perceived as one way in which individuals pursue more personal space and freedom in their lives; there will be fewer interruptions from and involvement with other family members. Jason articulated that the chance to escape from an overload of pressure and an expectation of more autonomy and independence contribute to this desire to establish smaller family formats. Both Jason and Chris mentioned 'something western' and 'heading to westernisation', suggesting that increasing familiarity with western values is responsible for Taiwan society taking on a western-based context. The discussion about increasing independence does not show that the formation of a nuclear family, or being more

independent are *caused* by the impact of individualistic concepts, but it reveals how the grandchildren in this research understand and link individualistic culture and its influence on their family lives.

This transformation in family structure tends to argue for the effect of western individualism on the environment in Taiwan and the independence that results, as reinforced by the narratives of the grandchildren interviewees. Furthermore, the respondents who highlighted the increase of independence in Taiwanese society, pay more attention to what individuals might receive by following this new tendency and embracing more personal privacy and autonomy. This affirmative influence has also arisen during the exploration of individualism in western scholarly reports, for example those by Oyserman et al. (2002), Santore (2008) and Triands (1995). They confirm this independent perspective as a representative feature of individualism. However, another aspect of individualism has also been identified, which focuses on a communal level and the harmful effects it has on family collaboration and grandparent–grandchild relationships.

## 5.3.2  Becoming less considerate

Apart from 'being more independent', there is another theme in the grandchildren's accounts that features in the perceived imported concept- individualistic ideas. This aspect is 'lack of (or having less) consideration for others'. This is perceived by the grandchild informants as an implicit force, that pulls people apart from others and may damages family bonds. The explanation for this is that people can be less caring towards each other and their relations with other people when they place their personal aims and interests to the fore. The grandchildren's substantial shared experiences suggest that people who are more familiar with individualistic principles are marked by an attitude of indifference, because of their reduced consideration towards other people.

In the following narrative, Amber expressed her own thoughts about individualism during a conversation about her recognition of the impact of individualism. This was after she described her 'traditional' family and how collectivistic it is. I asked if she could share her opinions about what individualism is.

Example 5.3c

Amber:           *I think it is opposite to collectivism in that people only think about themselves.*

Interviewer:     *Okay. Can you talk more about why you understand it in this way?*

Amber:           *I think that I stand in the middle. Sometimes, I just do what I like and what I think are the right things to. Sometimes, I do something I am not willing to do when I consider other relatives' feelings and I know they expect me to do the same. So... mmm... I think this is individualism when I ... when I do whatever I want without thinking about other people's points of view. Sometimes, I feel contradictory... struggling about whether I should just follow my free-will or not.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a single-parent family, within her grandmother's household)

Amber described the dilemma she faced when deciding whether or not to follow her own will or to live up to other people's expectations. However, 'without thinking about others' is considered to be a consequence of heading towards individualism, in that she refers to disregarding other individuals. Moreover, her idea of individualism involves not giving, or giving less, consideration to others. The terms 'struggling' and 'contradictory' she used further indicate the incompatibility she feels between traditional and imported values.

Three more interviewees, Andrew, Kevin and Lily, expressed similar thoughts about individualism, and the new ideas it has brought into society. They talked about how society and families have changed and how these differences have affected them. All of them acknowledged some transformations in Taiwanese society and their own families because of the trend towards westernisation and increased individualism. They further outlined the potential damage that westernisation and individualism might bring to families and the interactions between relatives.

Example 5.3d

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *Have you ever heard that people think the significance of the family has dropped?* |
| Andrew: | *Yes.* |
| Interviewer: | *Okay. How do you feel about this statement?* |
| Andrew: | *I think the social environment makes me believe so. Yes. I sort of approve of it. The contributor is individualism, in that people care about their ideas and what they want, rather than considering a larger whole.* |
| Interviewer: | *Can you explain more about what individualism is to me?* |
| Andrew: | *First of all, you will think about yourself and everything around your life. Taking yourself as a key point in deciding everything. For yourself – not for your family and grandparents. Maybe… maybe… family relationships get worse?* (Grandson, 28, living in a single-parent family with his grandmother) |

Kevin and Lily discussed individualism in a similar tone.

Example 5.3e

| | |
|---|---|
| Kevin: | *I think the elderly won't expect to be looked after by their juniors, whereas old people could have this sort of dependence in the past society.* |
| Interviewer: | *What situations cause the loss of these expectations?* |
| Kevin: | *I think our traditional morality is collapsing.* |
| Interviewer: | *Mmm… but why?* |
| Kevin: | *Because of some external values, maybe… foreigners… fathers don't take care of their children when they are old enough and vice versa, I reckon.* |
| Interviewer: | *Can you talk a bit more about what these external values are?* |
| Kevin: | *Individualism…probably… you consider yourself more often and more important whatever you do. I think it is self-centred to look at and to evaluate everything. People may not be able to help their family if they think they are sort of in difficulties. They are unwilling to stick together through thick and thin. They put everything about themselves to the fore. Let's say people would not help out their parents or grandparents financially if they were also short of money. Selfish… huh?!* (Grandson, 21, living in the same city as his grandmother) |

Example 5.3f

| | |
|---|---|
| Lily: | *People who endorse individualism are more selfish… In contrast, some collectivistic people, like some charities… they find ways to show their* |

*warmth and kindness to people who need it. Therefore, the new trend coming from the West would make people more and more selfish and indifferent.* (Granddaughter, 27, living distant from her grandmother)

Andrew, Kevin and Lily all of them pointed out that 'considering yourself and paying no attention to others' was what individualism represented to them. As a consequence, they saw that the solidity of and interdependence within families faced some major challenges. This potential for harm was also expressed by Grace, whose narrative described how individualistic characteristics have angered her.

Example 5.3g

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *Grace, we have talked about what traditional values and collective ideas are and now I want to move on to another relevant concept. Have you ever heard about 'individualism' before? Any understanding?* |
| Grace: | *The things around people themselves are more important?! It's happening in family as well. Take my cousin as an example. He comes back when he is on summer vacation from the USA every year. That's all. He hardly contacts the family, having left Taiwan, and he explains that's because he is stressed out by his tuition… I cannot help thinking that my cousin is just selfish, too individualistic and thinks about himself without paying any consideration to our family members. We care about what he does and how his life is in America, but why doesn't he call back? Why doesn't he understand our feelings?* |
| Interviewer: | *How long has he lived in the USA?* |
| Grace: | *One or two years. There have been plenty of things he could have done for our family, but he just didn't. He has never thought about how much we think of him and worried about him. Never… it's so frustrating.* (Granddaughter, 21, living in a single-parent family with her grandfather) |

Grace expressed a lot of emotion as she talked about her cousin who studies abroad. She could not understand why he was so selfish, and, to some extent, she blamed the situation on the effects of being individualistic because of studying abroad, emphasising his selfishness and the harm it had on her family's solidness.

Alternatively, this perspective on the person's becoming less considerate of others mainly emphasises the effect of in-group considerations. Importantly, citing different

aspects – namely, communal evaluation or individual assessment of the influence of individualistic notions – seems to govern how each grandchild interviewee interprets individualism. With regards to the communal dimension, it is clear that they evaluate individualistic values in a negative way with respect to family interactions, sometimes expressing their feelings with frustration. The detrimental outcomes of having less consideration for others and being selfish are paid attention to, especially as far as family-related issues are concerned, which are most heavily influenced by the trend for individualism. However, their opinions about individualism are very different when it comes to personal considerations; they agree that being individualistic allows people to have more freedom and space for themselves, and this they see as a positive influence of individualism.

Regardless of the features of being more independent or becoming less considerate, the interviewees argued that this individualism is an external influence from western or American culture, either from education or mass media. With regard to this statement, the elements of individualism are considered to be non-traditional or non-Chinese-based; they are imported into the society. This opinion about the origin of individualism is even clearer in the later discussion of how education and the media have affect people's life in Taiwan in the Chapter Seven.


### 5.3.3  Limitations about individualism and individualisation

Although evaluation of the merits of individualism or of the process of individualisation is still a contested issue in the west, in the understandings of the grandchild generation in this research, individualism or individualisation was consistently presented as antithetical to collective-related notions. In the data, the discussions of individualism and individualisation centre disproportionately on the negative aspects of family interaction, since the value of individual benefit is being promoted. Considering these characteristics of individualism, or the results of the process of individualisation, with reference to the question posed in the Literature Review, we can ask: would selfish individualism or the moral type be portrayed as

representing core individualistic values by the Chinese-influenced youth in this study? Arguably, it was the idea of selfish individualism, rather than of moral individualism, that was adopted by the grandchild participants researched here. By the same token, Yan (2009: 289) claims that individualism, introduced into Chinese society at the end of the twentieth century, has been understood only as utilitarian individualism or simply selfishness. However, what do these compatible research outcomes mean for the present research? The understanding of individualistic-led concepts in Chinese circumstances is somewhat limited, in that the focus has only been on the ideas of selfish or utilitarian individualism. This limited knowledge and these largely negative images within the communal perspective may account for the incompatibility between collectivism and individualism highlighted in previous studies and the present research (Yan 2003, 2009).

Concerning the limited comprehension of individualism and individualisation, incomplete information creates another issue for this research. As mentioned, individualism is both an individual attribute and a philosophical value guiding people's behaviour. Individualisation, on the other hand, is regarded as a social process, in which attention is paid to individual advantage rather than to the common good. To this end, disengagement from traditional norms and the development of new formulations that promote an individualistic environment are aimed at. However, the features that differentiate individualisation from individualism did not show up in the narratives of the grandchildren. In their accounts, the grandchild respondents seemed to consider the two terms interchangeable, in that the individualism-related thoughts and behaviour were mixed within a total concept to describe the impacts of individualism and individualisation on their lives. The lack of full understanding of individualism and individualisation is taken account of in explaining this specific research phenomenon.

It is also interesting that the grandchild informants had different approaches to sharing their perspectives on the two value systems. It is noteworthy that they discussed individualism and imported concepts in a fairly general manner, whatever aspects were raised, to specify the potential consequences on contemporary society.

They seldom talked about how this tendency really works or affects their own families. This is in contrast to discussions about what traditional values are, and how they function in the domestic arena. In these discussions, the grandchildren shared lots of personal stories with me to describe how they have been affected. Although this discrepancy was unexpected when setting up the interview questions, the phenomenon deserves to be brought to light. It may be argued that the different amount of time that these two value systems have been working in Taiwanese society means that the grandchild respondents are more familiar with traditional values and what they mean in their domestic interactions. As a result, traditional collective values are appeared more often by personal story-sharing in the research. The concept of individualism is fairly new to Taiwanese society (Rozman 2002), as it is an external, imported value system. Hence, it is understandable that the grandchildren barely apply this notion in their personal lives and therefore use individual experiences to describe its influence. Moreover, the closeness of these two sets of values to family-related issues could provide another explanation. In other words, Chinese traditional doctrines are mainly set up to guide interpersonal interactions, so that such collective principles are perhaps often regarded as underlying family relationships and mutuality. Accordingly, the grandchildren had more personal examples to share when the discussion turned to family-related behaviour; whereas individualism, as an ideology placing greater emphasis on individual conduct, was more likely to be discussed in a general sense when the interview centred on in-group considerations.

Moreover, collectivism and individualism do not seem compatible, once the understandings and influence of these two sets of values on family interaction are confirmed by the statements of the grandchild participants. Hence, further discussion is needed to explore the implications of concern, particularly with respect to how the grandchild generation reacts when the two value systems collide in their lives.

## 5.4    Compatible or incompatible?

This section addresses the collision of collectivism and individualism, in order to explore whether any tension between these two value systems exists, and how it works. Fundamentally, the relation between individualistic principles and collective concepts is seen as a sociological puzzle (Santore 2008). In the book *iChina*, Yan (2010) proposes that the differentiation and disembedding from the original social background where people have stayed are one of the features of individualism. These statements seem to suggest a conflict between collectivism and individualism. More significantly, what is the story with respect to the grandchildren researched in this study?

The coming section will address the testimony of the grandchild interviewees, to investigate whether the antithetical relation between collective and individualistic values presented in previous research should also be supported here (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Mill 2007; Yan 2006, 2010). Accordingly, the interviewees suggested possible incompatibilities and tensions arising between these two collective and individualistic concepts, mainly affecting their daily behaviours and their interactions with their grandparents. Certainly, collective values and individualistic concepts are not completely dichotomous, but the grandchildren experienced the incompatibilities of individualism and collectivism with respect to their own interactions with their grandparents and their families. Most of them encountered some conflicts between individualistic pursuits and traditional expectations, challenging them to make a decision. It is important to understand these tensions and conflicts between collectivism and individualism, and the situations that demand a decision to be made – and how grandchildren reconcile them. The principles underpinning these processes are the core components of this section.

## 5.4.1 Negotiating the boundary of freedom

In talking about whether collectivism and individualism are compatible or incompatible, slightly more than the half of the grandchild participants underscored a few difficulties or issues they faced when they had to choose whether to incline towards collective or individualistic value. I followed their conversations after questioning them about the kinds of dilemmas they had met, and how they coped with them. The grandchildren provided different examples to articulate these challenges. In brief, they firstly described the tensions between the two value systems in prioritising personal and domestic advantages. Subsequently, they negotiated the boundary of individual freedom to an extent determined by the need for either more personal benefits or greater familial concerns.

Cindy underscored this point very clearly. She thought she was somehow 'stuck' between individualism and collectivism. She felt that she was not totally free, in that her liberty was limited. By sharing her and her brother's story, she demonstrated in what kinds of situation her freedom was bound.

Example 5.4a

| | |
|---|---|
| Cindy: | *I feel more traditional when I spend time with my grandparents… but I live in a western style now. But, I still clearly recognise that my central consideration is somewhat traditional. As I told you, I have to be obedient and well-behaved towards my grandparents, but I am fine with that. It is a part of my free will.* |
| Interview: | *What do you mean?* |
| Cindy: | *I reckon that my external activities and internal faith are sometimes contradictory between collectivism and individualism.* |
| Interviewer: | *Do you mean your explicit lifestyle is more likely to follow western tendencies, but the internal perspectives are more traditional?* |
| Cindy: | *Yes, that's where I am now. I think I am struggling with individualism and collectivism in my family.* |
| Interviewer: | *Okay. Can you talk more about how you feel? How you think? And share some practical things which happened.* |
| Cindy: | *Hmm… I think I can fully exercise my rights with regards to the concept of* |

*individualism, to make decisions when the things are not related to my grandparents, and my parents agree with this. If the things, however, are connected to my grandparents and my father's family, I and my parents know that I cannot decide things freely and have to carefully think about every single detail to avoid any negative impacts on the larger family. Take my brother, for example. He has been together with a girl who is older than him recently.40 Actually, having a relationship with somebody seems to be a rather private thing and nobody should get in involved in it too much. However, my parents try to convince my brother to think more deeply about having a relationship with the girl because of her age. My father keeps saying that the girl is older than my brother to force my brother to split up with his girlfriend, because of the possible gossip spread among our extended family. I feel sorry for my brother, but I also can understand my father's concerns. Moreover, I can foresee the success that stands with my father.* (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandfather)

From Cindy's discourse, it is clear that she has set up a boundary between the personal dimension and the domestic arena when exercising her free will, which is seen as an incarnation of individualism. According to her brother's story, the things associated with her wider family are not subject to individualistic concepts; she considered that these sorts of self-centred ideas may cause harm to her wider family. When there is conflict between personal and familial arenas, it seems there can be no victory for self-interest because domestic issues far outweigh them – she described this specifically in terms of the likely failure of her brother's romantic relationship.

Wednesday told a similar story to illustrate the conflict between collectivism and individualism in her family. She also separated her life into individual and domestic dimensions, and prioritised family-related issues.

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[40] In past Chinese society, it was not common or considered appropriate for men to be in a relationship with or married to an older women; the perfect stereotype is for older men with younger women. Men marrying older women are seen to have their value downgraded, in that people would wonder whether such a man was less capable of pursuing someone younger.

Example 5.4b

Wednesday: *I think the conflict stemming from individualism and collectivism is not serious in my family. My family is traditional, but it is still quite democratic. The situation of father or mother or grandfather being authoritarian in their treatment of juniors, is not common. People in my family can communicate. An authoritarian power only emerges when there is something important and related to our whole family… so important that our whole family will be affected. In this situation, traditional concepts decide everything and my grandfather or my father is the main decision-maker.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Both Cindy and Wednesday discussed their freedom, originating from the influence of individualism. They had no problems in exercising freedom in their personal lives. In contrast, they pointed out the limitations of that freedom for events related to their families, seeing those situations as ones in which they could not freely do whatever they wanted. A clear boundary was drawn between situations in which they were able to enjoy their liberty, and those in which they were forbidden from using their freedom. Arguably, this distinction provides clear evidence that being liberal is not boundless, and needs to be negotiated within the domestic arena, particularly across generations.

In practice, the boundary between exercising freedom and having only limited liberty is fluid. In terms of the data obtained here, it can be supposed that this negotiation largely depends on how much it relates to family issues and to what extent it affects the family. The grandchild respondents confirmed their freedom and right to decide their personal issues, such as their decision to study, however they had to consider their families if their behaviours were likely to affect them. Thus, their freedom was not total. Independence, autonomy, freedom and the like are all conditional and negotiable. Individualistic inclinations seem to be exerted in very personal domains, whereas the being collective is acknowledged as being more widely necessary. In the family system, the research data suggest that the main ideas of individualism hardly exist in families that have strongly collective structures, and are supported by very traditional values. With reference to the cultural doctrine ingrained within family

systems, this may explain why the philosophy of individualism faces difficulties when crossing into domestic life.

## 5.4.2  Prioritising collective values

What might happen after drawing a line to distinguish between the scope of exerting personal freedoms if the boundary is blurred or overlapping? It is almost impossible to delineate people's lives into two completely unrelated domains, namely individual and communal dimensions. As a result, the conflict between the inclinations towards personal pursuits or familial benefit cannot be avoided. This section discusses how grandchildren would react if this contradiction existed. As mentioned previously, Cindy's narrative provides a good example for discuss any such conflict. Her brother's case clearly demonstrates the interference of domestic concerns on an individual relationship. In this situation, her brother did not have enough freedom to pursue his romantic relationship, because of the potential for gossip around the family. Cindy even stated that she could imagine her father would succeed in his attempts to convince her brother to give up his intimate relationship for the common benefit of his family. It seemed there were not many choices open to her brother, and she implied that he had to make concessions for her family's reputation, thus placing greater weight on his domestic considerations.

The following extract is from Wednesday's interview. Her disclosure shows some similarity with Cindy's brother, by underlining how collective concerns should be prioritised.

Example 5.4c

| | |
|---|---|
| Wednesday: | *I think I am more or less influenced by traditional values whilst making decisions.* |
| Interviewer: | *In this situation, is there any place for individualism?* |
| Wednesday: | *Yes, traditional values are the chief part and individualism comes after that, just like the trunk and the branches of a tree. Tradition is the trunk governing the final decisions. However, I realise that individualistic ideas constantly crash into the trunk, but I think the trunk would not be changed.* |

*I would not be influenced by these branches. However, I learn how to embrace these ideas. Like, for example, I probably would say that cohabitation is not a perfect situation if you ask this question because I would think there is no need to live together for two single people and it is not really acceptable under traditional Chinese doctrines. They could just get married. Nevertheless, I may say… why not, if people love each other? I learn how to accept this new thing, but I don't think I would cohabit with someone.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandmother)

She used a useful metaphor by describing tradition as the trunk of a tree and individualism as the branches. It is totally clear how she prioritises the two ideologies. Furthermore, Wednesday took the example of cohabitation to show how people have accepted some new ideas alongside their traditional lifestyles, but she did not think cohabitation would be a choice for her, because it was not part of her own traditional values.

Kevin had similar thoughts about the more important position occupied by traditional values in his life. He clarified that these cultural concepts are 'our roots', and served to sustain a harmonious society.

Example 5.4d

| Kevin: | *I think we should keep and follow what we have had and do things alongside this tradition.* |
| Interviewer: | *Do you mean we should take traditions as the main core, guiding our behaviour?* |
| Kevin: | *Yes. And the new ideas can be additional or complementary resources, but cultural values are our roots for keeping our lives in order.* |
| Interviewer: | *Then should they become mixed or... ?* |
| Kevin: | *Yep. These new ideas can be added to tradition step by step.* (Grandson, 21, living in the same city as his grandmother) |

To 'keep following what we have', as articulated in Kevin's narrative, expresses very clearly that he understands the importance of tradition. He laid out *a priori* a position for traditional Chinese values and took them as the root for maintaining society. With reference to the narratives of Kevin and Wednesday, taking imported concepts as

additional and complementary ideas for colouring traditional cultures is relatively clear by how they weigh up these two value systems.

Similar ideas are presented more strongly in Grace's interview. She admitted that she found it difficult and was tired of obeying traditional regulations, but she still made herself conform to them. She believed that this decision was the best for everyone, representing a greater and better good for her family, even though such decisions made her feel somewhat wronged, showing a sacrifice for this collectiveness.

Example 5.4e

| Interviewer: | *Do you think you are more traditional or more individualistic?* |
| --- | --- |
| Grace: | *I think most of time I am inclined to be more collective and traditional. Sometimes, I reckon I feel tired of complying with traditional regulations. Too lazy to do everything according to family rules. To be honest, I do want to be more individualistic and independent, and have more autonomy sometimes, but I finally choose a way which is better for everyone in my family. That's still the most important thing to me. I accommodate myself in traditional notions.* (Granddaughter, 21, living in a single-parent family with her grandfather) |

The statements above demonstrate a determinant of traditional Chinese values in Grace's understanding, whereby she made a concession for her family, placing her personal advantages in a subordinate position.

In brief, some compulsions for abiding by traditional cultures were revealed in the accounts of the grandchild informants; they employed the term 'should' in order to make sense of their adherence to traditional ideology. Correspondingly, Chapter Two describes how traditional Chinese values are taught to children during nine years of compulsory education in Taiwan. This official system of education may help to explain why some grandchild participants are very aware of their commitment to traditional values. For the grandchildren in this research, being cultivated by traditional Chinese cultural principles before experiencing imported individualistic concepts may strongly indicate the priority they give to traditional collective values above individualism. More importantly, although these grandchildren considered

imported notions to be subordinate, they still indicated that they were open to new ideas, mentioning their lifestyles without denying the effects of imported concepts on them.

## 5.5    Conclusion

The grandchild respondents in this study see the features of Chinese culture as important and significant to them. The 'hierarchical code', 'roles, responsibilities and expectations' and 'collectiveness, cooperation and mutuality' are powerful, representing traditional concepts and guiding the lives and actions of the people in this research. Their statements are very lucid, demonstrating well how these traditional values operate by pointing out concrete examples in their own lives. In terms of these observations, I would argue that the grandchild generation holds true to traditional Chinese values and the influence of these collective-related factors continually work in the domestic environment, underpinning family morality in contemporary Taiwanese society – at least amongst my interviewees.

Furthermore, the respondents regard the principles of individualism as imported concepts in Taiwan, and have highlighted potential areas of conflict and ambivalence, in line with previous research. In this exploration, it is interesting that the comments on the value of individualism or the process of individualisation were discussed separately in terms of both personal and domestic arenas. The interviewees mainly cited 'being more independent' (self-prioritising) and 'becoming less considerate' (selfishness) as the core characters of individualism. On the one hand, gaining more freedom and independence are seconded by this generation, hence the increasing rate of forming nuclear families seems to be an evidence to argue the aspiration of pursuing liberty and private space. This also highlights the advantages of personal development. On the other hand, 'becoming less considerate' is deemed to have detrimental effects on the collective good. Analysing how collective and individualistic features influence the participants' families leads to concerns about

solutions for dealing with any conflict that arises. Consequently, the limitations of freedom and the priority of collective values are highlighted in order to show the greater importance of traditional Chinese values, in terms of the perspectives of the grandchild interviewees.

Critically, 'generation' is a conceptually substantial term, which penetrates the entire study, which dominates how to recruit the participants in this study. It has been argued that people who grow up in the same generation share certain feelings, thoughts and behaviour, within their generation's location. Similar cultural and social backgrounds decidedly affect the way people interpret life and the way they act (Glenn 1977; Manheim 1952; Pilcher 1994). In addition, this generation theory includes two sub-dimensions: one focusing on the social and historical events people have experienced and the other emphasising different strata of age or stages of life. As previously mentioned, the grandchild generation in this research represents both domains and the grandparent generation expresses the characteristic of the stage of being grandparents.

With regard to the data generated in the study, the theory which articulates the strength of generational location on people's behaviour and thoughts is supported. Critically, there is a very high congruency in the grandchildren's interpretations of traditional collective and imported individualistic values. Members of the grandchild generation offer parallel thoughts and evaluations concerning these two sets of values and their effects on family assistance. More importantly, they use comparable means to resolve the tension, where it exists, between traditional collective and imported individualistic ideas. For example, the hierarchical code emerged as describing traditional Chinese values and how they function in the domestic area, a factor recognised by a substantial proportion of the grandchildren. Meanwhile, the notion of being more independent was underlined by many of the grandchildren to express how they understood individualistic-related concepts. In this regard, the majority of grandchild respondents reported a similar approach to dealing with the potentially antithetical issues of collective and individualistic concepts. What does this congruency mean for the data analysis? To an extent, the concept of 'generation

theory' or 'generational location' applies to this research. It clearly explains how the youth who grew up in Taiwanese cultural and social environments have formed parallel understandings of historical and social values and of the effects of those values on people in the family.

However, as argued in Mannheim's work (1952), sharing the same generational era and experiencing the same generational phenomena are not homogenous. In other words, people living in the same generation still face different life challenges, such as socio-economic conditions, which perhaps affect the way they view or interpret their worlds. Therefore, the financial condition of the grandchild interviewees was considered when recruiting the researched grandchildren from the same generation. It was found that, although the interviewees did not come from the same social and financial backgrounds, the approach they adopted to interpret these two sets of cultural and social concepts did not vary. This outcome suggests that diverse generational circumstances did not produce disparities in the interpretation of traditional collective and ongoing individualistic values with regard to their family interactions. In accordance with this research conclusion, I suggest that such cultural and social concepts are found throughout the nation, so that people of the same generation, inhabiting this country, represent the same historical and social generational phenomena. Therefore, the influence of varying financial conditions of the grandchild participants does not appear in this research.

Lastly, in terms of the accounts of the grandchild generation, the data help to illuminate the precise positions of these two value systems in the lives of the youths. However, the act of downgrading traditions, as mentioned in previous studies (Wu 2004; Yu and Miller 2003), seems to be less obvious in this study. The grandchild cohort still shared plenty of tradition-based values within their families in a strong attitude in this research and emphasised their dominance within the family. In contrast, the effect of individualistic concepts is supported to a lesser degree by the grandchild generation in family-related discussions. The relevant discussion mainly holds at a general level. Different approaches were used to state the functions and varying influences of traditional and imported concepts in the interview materials;

therefore I would suggest that the rapid rate of social transformation from traditional collective to imported individualistic values seems not to be demonstrated in this Taiwan-based study.

Importantly, the tendency to be more familiar with individualistic ideas in contemporary Taiwanese society is undeniable, according to these grandchildren's descriptions. Whether or not – and in what ways – the grandparent–grandchild relationship and interaction are affected over time, in terms of cultural and social transformations need further exploration. This is the subject of the following chapter, which examines how being a grandchild has changed across generation.

# 6 CHAPTER SIX: BEING A GRANDCHILD ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

## 6.1    Introduction

*'As for 'being a grandchild', the life I have is extremely different from the one my grandfather had'*

*Jason, grandchild interviewee*

The main focus of this chapter is to explore how the grandchild and grandparent respondents delineate, or describe, the differences in being a grandchild across generations. In Chapters Four and Five, the roles, perceptions, attached expectations and assistance given towards grandparents by grandchildren were discussed both deeply and broadly. Moreover, their interpretations of traditional and imported values in the grandchildren's narratives were explored to determine how these two value systems operate and affect Taiwanese people and families. More importantly, a number of connections were identified between the orientations of family members and the various interpretations of traditional collective and imported individualistic values, indicating the influence of cultural and social concepts in the domestic arena. The subsequent discussion looks even deeper at the reasons given by the interviewees to explain the disparities between being a grandchild in the past and in the present. I also examine whether the difference in being a grandchild across the generations is linked with the change in traditional and imported concepts, in the opinion of the interviewees, in order to link cultural, social and domestic domains.

In this section, data from both the grandparent and grandchild interviewees will be drawn upon to show how these two generations have highlighted the difference between yesterday and today as regards the condition of being a grandchild. Following the arguments articulated in the last chapter, 'generational location' or 'generational phenomenon' still performs an important role in perceiving how different being a grandchild across generations. Both the grandparent and grandchild generations had similar views on the disparities of being grandchildren over time. It

argues that the understandings of the grandparents and grandchildren about the cultural and social factors on grandparent – grandchild relationships are in a congruent approach. Critically, the participants in this present research thought that being a grandchild in the past and the present did not operate under the same standards. As Finch and Mason (1993) and Croll (2006) noted, familial relationships and interactions are enacted through processes of negotiating and re-negotiating; family members adjust themselves, or their behaviours, to accommodate contemporary conditions where they are located in the family. Thus their relationship fluctuates. With regard to the previous statements, the changes and the similarities between being a grandchild in the two generations are discussed below, offering explanations about the disparities and maintenance of the grandchild role over time.

This kind of discussion was undertaken primarily by asking probing questions, having already heard stories about familial circumstances from the informants about their current conditions. The question for both the grandparent and grandchild respondents was posed in a very similar way. I asked: 'Do you think it is different being a grandchild between your generation and your grandparents' (or grandchildren's) generation? If yes, what are those differences, and what contributes towards them?' I followed up by enquiring about their thoughts on the ways in which grandchildren's roles and grandparent–grandchild relationships might change in the future. In this way, I set out to investigate whether changes in the grandparent–grandchild relationship are on a traceable trend from the past to the present and from the present to the future, thus presenting an overview of where grandparent–grandchild relationships are heading.

## 6.2    Being a grandchild: past and present

It is notable that the grandparent and grandchild informants had similar ideas about the transformations in being a grandchild between the two generations. The two most significant features raised to illustrate this change over time focused on: a) greater

contribution to the family in the past, and b) greater obedience towards seniors in the past. Interestingly, the grandparent and grandchild respondents gave different explanations to account for what were otherwise similar features of the changes, namely the condition of being more obedient in the past. The grandchild informants emphasised the changes relating to increased freedom in Taiwan today to describe why being a grandchild is different now, whereas the grandparent generation related it more to the influence of improved education.

## 6.2.1  Different contribution to the family

First of all, a greater insight into the society in which the grandparents lived is crucial in order to understand how tough their lives were as grandchildren, compared with their modern counterparts. As noted in the introductory chapter, Taiwanese society was far harsher before the 1980s. It was a critical time. Taiwan was shifting its financial and industrial sectors from a labour-pooling mode to a knowledge- and technological-intensive format (Hermalin et al. 1994; Lee 2004). The difficult conditions that ensued and the insufficient resources of families are well understood. Not surprisingly, such a quality of life can have an effect on the interactions between grandparents and grandchildren. This point is underscored by both the grandparents and the grandchildren in this study. A few grandparents referred directly to the toughness of life during their childhood, highlighting the difference in living conditions from their own grandchildren's affluent lifestyle. Andrew's grandmother told me that Andrew could get anything he wanted in order to demonstrate how affluent his life is, which differs from hers in so many way. This is followed by Oliver's grandmother's story, which also mentioned the limited resources in the past.

Example 6.2a

Andrew's grandmother:    *Andrew could buy anything he wants without any concern. I could not do so as we had a tough life before. I think this is the reason that the elderly cherishes things more.* (Living with Andrew in a single-parent family)

Example 6.2b

Oliver's grandmother*:    The food we had was whatever we planted or raised on our own and we*

*shared with our family relatives. We didn't properly celebrate the New Year.*
*As you know, nowadays grandchildren celebrate all the time, sometimes for*
*no reason.* (Living distant from Oliver)

Oliver's grandmother also had difficulties in making her family life since her family had to plant vegetables or raise livestock on their own, indicating their limited resources for spending. In this case, unnecessary expenditure or indulgences were not allowed, supporting to the case of Andrew's grandmother. In this vein, the discussions above, again, fit the social and financial backgrounds in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s highlighted in the Chapter One. A series of wars in the mainland China and the colonisation by the Japanese sovereignty in Taiwan Island ended up in that people did not have sufficient resources in their lives.

As discussed in Chapter One, life was very uneasy for people during the period from the 1930s to the 1950s, because of the challenges presented by political and social circumstances. Critically, the hardships ended no earlier than the 1980s, when Taiwan changed its social orientation. Therefore, when the grandparent generation were children, whether they stayed in mainland China or Taiwan Island, their lives were marred either by civil war or by labour exploitation by the Japanese administration. Family relatives' demand for labour and time must be seen in this context.

Apart from the statements about the shortage of material resources in the past, a number of other grandparent informants made stronger and more direct statements about current grandchildren, stating that they have no need to help their families to underline the different family position of the youth because of better life conditions. The narratives of Grace's grandfather firmly highlighted this condition; this was very uncommon when they were at a similar age.

Example 6.2c

Grace's grandfather:    *Life in the past, which was better than average, still cannot compete with*
*today's situation. I could not have a proper meal when I was a kid. Life was*
*really tough. We only had meat to eat on a few special occasions. The life*
*young people have now is different in that they can go to McDonald's*

*whenever they want to. They don't fight for their family…   We did have to do things for our families.* (Living together with Grace in a sole-parent family)

In these narratives, Grace's grandfather's firstly underscored the differences in their lifestyles, in terms of resources of food, and then commented that 'they don't fight for their family'. He drew attention to the different contributions made by grandchildren generation to their families in either generation. Sean's grandmother reinforced the attitude of Grace's grandfather, that current grandchildren do not need to assist their families, whereas she had to go as far as making sacrifices for the common good of her family.

Example 6.2d

Sean's grandmother:         *I needed to sacrifice my time to help my father look after his grocery store, but grandchildren now are not asked to make a similar sacrifice. (Living together with Sean in a grand-family)*

By employing the term 'sacrifice', Sean's grandmother successfully showed how being a grandchild varies over time. Hardships such as hunger and non-fulfilment of desires are rarer today, for example, which shows that the grand-childhoods of the grandparents were very different from their present-day counterparts.

Not only did the grandparents describe the toughness they faced in the past; the grandchildren did too. In the following conversation, for example, Cindy depicted how she understood the toughness their grandparents faced in the past. Moreover, Vincent shared a similar idea about the life in the past as Cindy.

Example 6.2e

Cindy:         *They (referring to her grandparents) had to help their families without any choice and had to comply with their grandparents.* (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandfather)

Example 6.2f

Interviewer:         *Do you think there was something different when your grandparents were grandchildren from you as a grandchild at the moment?*

| Vincent: | *Yes. They had difficulty in making a life, so they had to care about themselves, their siblings and their families. Grandchildren in the past had to be responsible for their families and help their families. They also put plenty of expectations on themselves because they wanted to help their families out in their tough lives. They were keen to reach great achievement.* (Grandson, 22, living in a grand-family with his grandmother) |
| --- | --- |

The idea of collective practice for grandchildren in the past, including helping their grandparents and other people in the domestic sphere, is vivid in Cindy's and Vincent's disclosures. Their responses acknowledge that grandchildren were not without duties a few decades ago, pointing out that people were expected to help or be responsible for their families while the life was difficult in the past. Based on their understandings, communal considerations were a key part of the difference between the past and the present. The tough life experienced in the past explains why all family members had to provide assistance, including the grandchildren. Therefore, the grandchildren in the past were more likely to have clear obligations to support other relatives. The responsibility of grandchild nowadays towards other family members seems not to be as required as it once was, although the young group in this study did confirm their role came with attached expectations (see Chapter Four).

There is also the issue of collective practice for communal benefits. This perspective is supported in Greenhalgh's work (1994), whereby author states the importance of 'family labours' for the success of 'family firms'. Moreover, Lee's research (2004) makes the following premise for domestic cooperation: the 'Chinese family is a corporate unit to which family members contribute labour and income' (p 103). This free or low-paid labour deploys along lines of gender and generation, where the senior generation makes the decisions and the junior cohort performs. In accordance with the evidence of previous studies, the energy and time offered by the juniors in families is not doubted. Meanwhile, for the wellbeing of collective practice, the dominance of obedience by juniors towards their seniors cannot be ignored. In dispensability of this conformity supposedly explains the feasibility of familial cooperation. Being more obedient in the past is addressed below as another aspect of the critical transformation in the nature of being a grandchild.

## 6.2.2 Different levels of obedience towards seniors

In addition to the greater contribution to family in past society, the majority of the grandchild respondents understood that being a grandchild in their grandparent's generation was hard. The grandchild interviewees expressed that being a grandchild before was rife with strict principles. Absolute obedience was required towards their grandparents, indicating that they stood lower in the family sphere. Therefore, grandchildren hardly voiced their own points of view. In contrast, grandchildren in the present have an easier life; they have more freedoms to negotiate with their seniors. Similarly, the grandparents' narratives verified how much obedience they were expected to show, by indicating the degree and extent to which their grandparents could intervene in their lives. By and large, both the grandparent and grandchild interviewees used being 'more obedient' as a critical feature of being a grandchild in the past. This, therefore, is another difference in grandchildren across the generations. Amber shared her opinions about how being a grandchild could be very different. She pointed out that her own situation would probably have been unacceptable in the past.

Example 6.2g

Amber: *Grandchildren were much more obedient to their grandparents. People nowadays suffer from more pressure because of making a living. Therefore, I think we want to follow our own minds to live our lives. I am not saying I don't care about their feelings or opinions, but I do regard these things subordinate. The situation couldn't happen in the past society, I guess.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a single-family with her grandmother)

I followed her responses to ask whether people in the past did not want to be free to make their own lives, if what she had just said was the case. She replied:

Amber: *I think people wanted it, too. But, they might have thought that obeying their parents and grandparents was the most important thing. They just had different standards to arrange things.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a

single-family with her grandmother)

Example 6.2h

Winnie: *It is totally different being a grandchild nowadays, compared to the generation of my grandparents. We can postpone the things that grandparents ask and do our own stuff first. However, my granny told me it would never have happened in the past. They probably would be punished if they showed their unwillingness when asked. Therefore, I think there is a huge difference between these two generations. (Granddaughter, 22, living in a three-generation family)*

Amber's account is supported by Winnie's narrative, in that they both identified the different standards of prioritising things by the two generations. The obedience of juniors towards seniors in the domestic sphere was placed to the fore in past times, whereas it is less important than personal stuff nowadays. With reference to the grandchildren's' understandings, it is very clear that they have far greater freedom to follow their own schedules. There are several ways to make sense of this disparity. For instance, the different demands placed on grandchildren in the past and in the present are one explanation generated by this research. It will be further elaborated on in the following discussion of the transformation.

Additionally, some of the other grandchild informants pointed out their greater level of freedom by drawing on the strict boundary between grandparents and grandchildren in past society.

Example 6.2i

Matt: *My grandparents' grandparents were very strict and they had to be very scared and obedient to their grandparents. However, my grandparents are very kind to us, so that we don't need to be afraid of them. (Grandson, 23, living in a three-generation family)*

Example 6.2j

Wednesday: *Their interaction was much stricter and grandchildren at that time were very respectful to and scared of their grandparents.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Example 6.2k

James:                          *My grandfather told me that his grandfather could severely smack grandchildren, and grandchildren were asked to behave well at the same time he was a kid.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandfather)

The tension between grandparents and grandchildren in the past shows that the authority of grandparents was great. The seniors held absolute authority since there was a very strict boundary between the generations, with lots of principles and rites. As shown in Croll's study (2006), failing to obey the demands of grandparents or parents is traditionally unacceptable without reasonable justification or explanation. James, cited above, verified this point by referring to the physical punishment that resulted from the grandchild's inappropriate behaviour.

The grandparent interviewees identified with this situation, too, and shared some of their personal examples. They also indicated the degree and extent to which their grandparents could intervene in their lives.

Example 6.2l

Grace's grandfather:            *It is impossible to educate your grandchildren nowadays and they don't obey your discipline, either. It is very different from our time. (Living with Grace, who is in a single-parent family)*

Example 6.2m

Nothing's grandfather:          *In the past, you would keep quiet if you knew your grandparents were not happy or in a bad mood, but current grandchildren don't care about or listen to their seniors.*

Interviewer:                    *Grandpa, do you mean that grandchildren don't follow their seniors' principles now?*

Nothing's grandfather:          *Yes. They care nothing at all.*

Interviewer:                    *How about you as a grandchild?*

Nothing's grandfather:          *We don't dared not to take anything seriously if my grandparents just asked.*

Interviewer:                    *How do you feel about the situation in contemporary society?*

Nothing's grandfather:          *The youth don't look up to their seniors any more.* (Living with Nothing in a three-generation family)

The grandparent generation highlighted how current grandchildren were not like they were as grandchildren, and they compared themselves as grandparents with their own grandparents, describing their less dominant position and downgrading of their family statuses in the present day. From being aware of the bad mood of his grandparents, to having his words ignored by his grandchildren, he indicated the breakdown of authority of seniors in the present environment. Grace's grandfather also clarified how the authority of grandparents in the past no longer exists. Combining the narratives of both the grandparents and grandchildren above, the degree to which grandchildren obeyed their seniors' requests can be seen to differ across generations, and the authority of grandparents seems to be less dominant in the life of grandchildren today. This change shows how authoritarianism is not present to the same degree in present-day families.

Most significantly, attention must be paid to the ways in which interviewees explain these changes. In what kind of conditions are the transformations produced? As mentioned in the introduction (Chapter One), a number of factors are raised to explain those shifts of grandparent–grandchild relationship and interactions. Although there is a disparity between how the grandparent and grandchild generations account for the greater level of obedience in the past, both generations have a similar viewpoint about why the grandchildren in the past contributed more to their families.

### 6.2.3 Explanations for the transformations

Although the grandparent and grandchild informants underlined similar perspectives in talking of the disparities between the two generations, they had different ideas to explain the change in grandchildren's being more compliant in the past than in the present. Moreover, the grandparent and the grandchild respondents employed 'better financial condition in contemporary society' to explain why current grandchildren had devoted themselves to their families much less.

## 6.2.3.1 Contributions to family labour

Mainly, the tougher living conditions of the past were described by the grandparent respondents to explain why they had to offer more labour to their families during their childhoods. Insufficient material wealth in their lives was mentioned, hence their need to provide labour. Meanwhile, the grandchild interviewees also focused on the difficulty of life in the past to understand the greater level of assistance provided by grandchildren in the past, although they did not experience this toughness themselves. Grace described how the lives of her grandparents had been difficult during a discussion about why life as a grandchild is different for her:

Example 6.2n

Grace: *I think it is something relating to financial conditions. I feel people nowadays have an easier life. We can do whatever we want to and we also are able to go to schools.*

Interviewer: *Okay. So, do you mean that finance is a dominant factor contributing to the difference in being a grandchild in the past and the present?*

Grace: *Yes. They didn't have enough money to maintain a proper family life if they didn't work hard. Therefore, everyone had to make efforts to support their families even if they were just children. (*Granddaughter, 21, living in a single-parent family with her grandfather)

Example 6.2o

Chris: *Umm… How to say… They didn't have adequate financial resources or time to make a proper life, so they had to rely on each other and work hard for their families.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother)

Chris's account mirrors Grace's view that when their grandparents were the same age as them they had to work more for their families. Financial issues were highlighted to account for the situation, whereby people could hardly survive by individual effort alone. Thus collective practice came to the fore. In previous studies, this interdependence within the family was explained by the incorporation of property and land in Taiwan (Ahern 1981; Hermalin et al. 1994). Again, as already mentioned, agriculture and family-run businesses were a vital part of the past society – until 1980, the labour from family members counted importantly (Chiou

2001). Agriculture without technological inventions depended on a huge amount of labour for planting and reaping of produce. Furthermore, the 'family firms' were literally run together by family members, hence gathering family members was an indispensable step. Both of these two situations demanded more help from grandchildren.

Apart from the influence of material insufficiency in past society, which demands more cooperation, James's grandfather gave an interesting example to make his own interpretation about this condition. The way in which present-day grandchildren allocate their time means they can provide less assistance to their families.

Example 6.2p

James's grandfather:  *We had to plant some food and offer our energies to help our families, but what grandchildren do after schools now is their homework… We had to share familial burdens, but they seem to not need to.* (Living distant from James)

Needing to do homework allows grandchildren to escape from domestic duties, according to James's grandfather. He thought that grandchildren cannot afford to give their time to aid their families because their homework takes priority. This statement conveys another perspective of the grandparent informants, to do with the effects of education on their intergenerational relationships with their grandchildren. Arguably, better education may itself account for the reduction in obedience of grandchildren today, according to some of the grandparents, which initiated further discussions of the role of education (see Chapter Seven).

## 6.2.3.2 Obedience

Significantly, both the grandparent and grandchild interviewees interpreted 'being more obedient' across the generations differently. The grandparents articulated how the status and privileges of grandparents have decreased, which thus contributes to less obedience from the grandchild generation. The reason they gave for this is the

educational expansion of modern Taiwan, with the increased time allocated for education and the increasing capability of grandchildren. As a result, the dependence of juniors on their seniors has diminished and the authority of senior subsequently has dropped. Cindy's grandfather elaborated on this subject.

Example 6.2q

| | |
|---|---|
| Cindy's grandfather: | *Grandchildren need to spend time studying and they have no time to learn what you want to teach. The era is different from the past where we were. They are so different.* |
| Interviewer: | *Which part do you think has changed the most?* |
| Cindy's grandfather: | *The period of childhood. Teachers just take charge in educating children because they attend school every day. Children have other things to follow then… Grandchildren nowadays don't listen to you as we once did towards our seniors. They don't accept our opinions now. The situation is changed.* |
| Interviewer: | *What was the situation in the past? What would you do if you didn't identify with your grandparents?* |
| Cindy' grandfather: | *We didn't… We always followed our grandparents' rules. We didn't dare say no…* (Living distant from Cindy) |

Two meaningful statements emerged from Cindy's grandfather's account – how time is allocated to education and how authority has shifted to teachers at school from seniors in the family. He stated that education offers people a new environment to interact with people outside the family; this in turn has altered the family ecology so that family is no longer the main means of educating the younger generation or of occupying their time. In these circumstances, seniors in the family have lost their dominant status. The effect of education is also cited by Wednesday's grandmother and Grace's grandfather. The amount of time grandchildren spend studying is a major theme.

Example 6.2r

| | |
|---|---|
| Wednesday's grandmother: | *People in the past were more compliant with their parents and grandparents; people in the present, however, are not in this situation any more. They don't stay at home as often as we did before – they are at schools instead. Sometimes, they deliberately do something opposite to our wishes. They just simply don't want to obey us. This is how different it is.* (Living in the same city as Wednesday) |

Example 6.2s

Grace's grandfather:    *In my generation, there were not plenty of people going to schools, so that the seniors in the family held an authoritarian position. Gradually, the stature of teachers is getting more and more important when everyone nowadays attends school.* (Living together with Grace, who is in a single-parent family)

All testimonies demonstrate the gradual transmission of authority in children's lives from the family to the school. This process of shifting authority and time spent in school is an outcome of the prevalence of education; according to the grandparent informants in this study, this is responsible for the loss of the authority of the elderly in families.

By contrast, the grandchild group had a different viewpoint. They did not think the degree of obedience had decreased because of the drop in their conformity; they merely highlighted their different ranking of things. In their understanding, the way they 'do' life differs from their grandparent counterparts. They prioritised their personal considerations, rather than placing domestic communal demands at the fore.[41] In this situation, the deference they showed towards their grandparents did not disappear, but the degree of obedience was not as it was in the past. In their accounts, the grandchildren did not link these differences with education. It is possible that the social context of the grandparent generation caused them to get used to the absolute authority of seniors, and the strict boundaries between grandparents and grandchildren. The social context of the grandchild generation is much less authority-dependent and these grandchildren may therefore be less aware than their grandparents of the power of that kind of authority.

In addition, these findings partly clarify the status of seniors in the family is not as supreme as it once was as the need of cooperation within the family has loosened. They might further indicate that the virtues of 'hierarchy and being collective' embedded in Chinese tradition are being challenged. Seniors have less influence over

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[41] For more information, please see Chapter Six (page 129).

juniors – and juniors are more independent are the major transformations seen over time in being a grandchild, according to both the grandparent and grandchild informants. As a consequence, the path of transformation arguably leads people to become distanced from traditional concepts and more familiar with individualistic concepts. This argument is also raised by the understandings of traditional values and individualistic concepts described in Chapter Five. Combining the patterns in grandparent–grandchild interactions with the narratives on traditional collective and imported individualistic ideologies from the grandchildren' perspective, I conclude that a move towards individualism is happening. The next part of the discussion addresses this transformation more fully, but from other aspects, such as the nature of the new emerging grandparent–grandchild relationship.

Before moving on to the next section, there is one more point which is worth a mention. Indeed, life was harder and family attitude was stricter all over the world in the 1930s and 1940s. Moreover, developments of technology and quality of life have been improved in every country contemporarily. As such, what makes Taiwanese case special, which indicates the spotlights of this nation's cultural and social values?

Importantly, the difference of being a grandchild over time was primarily discussed in a collective attitude, rather than an individual tone. At the beginning, the interviewees started highlighting the changes of personal life, such as how though life could be and how committed people should be to their families in the past. However, they eventually reflected these explicit social improvements across generations to their family lives, which emphasise more considerations on communal perspectives. For instance, in the conversations of the grandparent generation, they first expressed the tough life they had before, and then argued their sacrifice of time and labour for their family. By the same taken, the grandchild respondents shared more ideas about personal rights and choice to make decisions for their own sake, but it ended up in the drop of family-based cooperation nowadays. Briefly, although the effects coming from social developments were firstly underscored on personal lifestyles or life conditions, the shifts on communal interactions always turned out to be the main considerations of the consequence of these macro-level transformations

in the society. With reference to this collective-led attitude about the impacts of cultural and social shifts, it could be seen as a particular outcome because Taiwan is culturally based on collective values.

## 6.3    New grandparent-grandchild relationships

Having discussed the difference in being a grandchild in the past and the present, some new phenomena in present-day grandparent–grandchild relationships are analysed in the next section. The grandchildren's and the grandparents' narratives will be used to reveal their points of view about what new interactions exist between grandparents and grandchildren in contemporary society, in terms of a completely different lifestyle.

### 6.3.1  A friend-like relationship

After confirmation that there was greater obedience among grandchildren in the past, an interesting trend has emerged in the interviews. A new kind of relationship has developed between grandparents and grandchildren. Take Matt as an example. He expressed the closeness he had with his grandparents by highlighting their kindness. In fact, this point of view is common in this study, in that a great number of the grandchildren used similar ideas to describe how they felt about their grandparents – a different one from the past.

Example 6.3a

Matt:                       *My granny is such a kind person in that she treats everyone very well and there is no need to talk about how good she treats me. I feel we are very close.* (Grandson, 23, living in a three-generation family)

Regarding Matt's narratives, I wonder how grandparent–grandchild relationships have changed in contemporary society when grandchildren feel they are really close to their grandparents. What kind of differences are there in their interactions if

traditional constraints are less strict than they were in the past and family bonds are more fluid? According to the grandchild participants, a friend-like relationship with their grandparents is common in contemporary Taiwanese society. The grandchildren proposed that this situation partly reflects their interactions with grandparents who are not authoritarian and who do not have many traditional constraints in their family lives.

Example 6.3b

| | |
|---|---|
| Andrew: | *I think there are so many discrepancies about being grandchildren between these two generations. Take my granny as an example. When she was a grandchild, people were supposed to respect their grandparents, extremely so. There were a great number of principles to comply with... so many rituals needed to be done well. Something like that. However, grandchildren can joke with grannies nowadays, and the strict and rigorous boundary between grandchildren and grandparents is getting blurred.* |
| Interviewer: | *Yes...* |
| Andrew: | *Umm... My granny doesn't discipline me strictly and she is just like one of my friends. It happens to everyone now. Nevertheless, some basic respect and manners are still required within our interactions.* |
| Interviewer: | *What are those things?* |
| Andrew: | *Respecting her opinions, appropriate behaviour, like don't yell at her or against her directly, and so forth.* (Grandson, 29, living in a singly-parent family with his grandmother) |

Andrew's discourse shows that the strict boundary between grandparents and grandchildren seems to be blurring. He described his more flexible and relaxed interactions with his grandmother. He went on to propose that friend-like relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are probably commonplace, by articulating that he and his grandmother are able to make jokes with each other and that 'it happens to everyone'. This interaction, to some extent, shows that the hierarchical rites between grandparents and grandchildren are losing ground, and the strict boundary that would mean circumscribing how young people interact and show respect as their elders is fading away. The following narrative from Oliver echoes Andrew's in that he mentioned how close he was to his grandmother.

Example 6.3c

Oliver:                          *I am really grateful. The interaction with my grandparents is very joyful*
                                 *because it seems that I get one more friend at home… I am not sure why I*
                                 *feel closer to my grandparents with less distance, compared to the*
                                 *closeness I have with my parents. I think we are real friends as we can play*
                                 *around, play jokes on each other and try to make one another feel happy.*
                                 (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandmother)

This statement again sheds light on the new-found intimacy in grandparent–grandchild relationships; Oliver referred to shared activities and close ties with his grandmother. It is notable that most of the grandchild respondents also described a positive connection and friend-like relationship with their grandparents. In the families they described, the grandparents and grandchildren share everything together, and there are fewer concerns about the rites of traditional hierarchy. Therefore, quasi-friendships between grandparents and grandchildren have developed.

Understandably, these quasi-friendships would seldom occur in a hierarchical society because the intergenerational distinction is strongly emphasised. In past, it was very clear that intergenerational relationships were guided by different norms, which emphasise the salience of superior-inferior associations within families. Moreover, with reference to 'Five Relationships' mentioned in Chapter Two, the relations within family members are all regulated by hierarchical concepts, that friend-like relationships within intergenerational relatives would not be expected in authoritarian-structure families. Therefore, the existence of friend-like relationships between the generations serves to illustrate the collapse of grandparents' authority and the shortness of diminishing distance in status between them. I propose that this blurring of the boundary between grandparents and grandchildren reflects an unstable operation of traditional Chinese values in families today. Similarly, in the Chapter Four while discussing the perception of being a grandchild, a better balanced grandparent – grandchild relationship is echoed because of the increasing statue of grandchildren in the family. The grandchild participants expressed that they felt they were loved, cared about and tolerated by their grandparents, as highlighting they are somebody in their families, not 'nobody'. In this regard, I neither try to argue that

Chinese culture has dissolved, nor suggest that the operation of traditional values is no longer dominant; instead, I speculate about this trend – if it is anchored by being less traditional, does it enrich the grandparent–grandchild relationship. This line of thought stems from the fact that the grandchildren say they have closer relationships when the grandparent–grandchild distinction is not as strongly defined as it once was. From the strict principles, fixed rituals and lack of choice regarding grandparent's requests, to a negotiated interaction and capacity for a friend-like relationship, these transformations typify the changes in the intergenerational relationship over time; and they are heading to greater grandparent–grandchild intimacy. To an extent, this statement indicates that traditional Chinese rites are not as dominant as it once was.

## 6.3.2  Influence of technological developments

In addition to the new style of interaction revealed by the grandchildren's accounts, the grandparent interviewees also mentioned how the lives of the present-day grandchildren differ so greatly from their own childhoods. The grandparents did not merely describe the atmosphere in the family, but also some aspects of life outside the family, such as technology. The emphasis on technology is because they believe their grandchildren's lives are much easier than theirs were, not least because of the invention of hi-tech devices. These resources contribute greatly to the differences between the experiences of the two generations. The grandparents in the study addressed how such technological developments brought their grandchildren into a brand new world; one that was far beyond their imagination. Oliver's grandmother put emphasis on life in a computerised society when she described how different her childhood was from her grandchildren's.

Example 6.3d

Oliver's grandmother:    *Everything is computerised. People know how to enjoy their time with computers, whereas we spent time assisting our families. Computer games are very popular. Meanwhile, grandchildren gain more knowledge and information from the cyber world. Therefore, they are more intelligent and active than we were. Whether computers or televisions, children have plenty of channels to approach new things, accessing the world with which they*

*are not familiar… The children in my generation played completely*
*different games, compared to the kids in this material-affluent society. We*
*made our toys, which were very simple, but I think the internet just offers*
*children a versatile space to experience and connect with this world.*
(Living distant from Oliver)

Oliver's grandmother highlighted the prevalence of technological devices in modern life, naming computers and televisions, and their consequences on children's lives. The difference of the two generation's ability to access the world contributes to the changing interactions within families. Winnie's grandmother also talked about the influence of computers and television on grandchildren's lives today, and the way they bring the youth into another world.

Example 6.3e

Winnie's grandmother:     *I have a feeling that my grandchildren are fairly influenced by the*
*information they can get from computers and televisions. There was no*
*computer and television when I was young. Today, they can easily access*
*foreign things, including stuff from America, the UK, Japan and the like.*
*For example, cartoons in the past were really plain with only some cute and*
*funny images, but the current cartoons are far beyond my imagination.*
(Living with Winnie in a three-generation family)

She described how computers and television provide new ideas and information for young people, and how this generation has seized the chance to experience the world – not only the eastern one, but the western one. This ability to access western culture, Winnie's grandmother suggested, means that these devices enrich young people with new information and knowledge, but at the cost of complicating their lives.

From this perspective, technological developments seem to have changed how people spend their time and live their life; they are seen as channels importing new ideas from outside the family and Taiwanese society to the younger generation. Argued like this, the world outside the family emancipates people from a closed environment, allowing them greater opportunities for interaction with a diverse range of people and things in varied circumstances. This is important, and the interviews in

this study show that the grandparent generation also senses the existence and influence of western values imported into their society via computer and hi-tech devices. Under such circumstances, the gates of Taiwanese society are open, so that grandchildren in the present experience life in very different way from the past.

To summarise, the developments in technology discussed above are seen to 'upgrade' human beings from being 'plain' into living a 'complicated' lifestyle, as western information and trends arrive via the computerised environment. There is also the possibility that these resources are partially responsible for separating people from their domestic lives, due to time spent on these activities and affluent lifestyle. As a consequence, life for grandchildren nowadays is indeed less associated with family. This observation is made in the grandchild interviewees' narratives, whereby they predicted the nature of grandparent – grandchild relationships in the future. The unfamiliarity of their grandparents with new technology and the level to which they will engage with the new technology will put further distance between the lives of grandparents and grandchildren, because they would have less and less in common. Nevertheless, it is worth discussing whether 'having less in common' implies that people will be more independent and less collective.

## 6.4    **Grandparent-grandchild relationships' developments**

Predictions about the future of grandparent–grandchild relationships are expected to imply whether people are satisfied with, or have concerns about, the transformations that are being seen already. Probing questions were asked in order to elicit predictions about future grandparent–grandchild interactions, such as: 'What do you think the relationship between your grandchildren and their grandchildren will be like?' and 'What will grandparent–grandchild interactions be like in the future?', or 'Do you think you will have a different relationship from that which you have now with your grandparents?'. I inquired in a similar way for both the grandparent and the grandchild informants because these questions came naturally after discussing the

transformations of intergenerational connections over time. As mentioned before, the responses from the grandparent and the grandchild participants share some similarities, however I present their viewpoints separately since they used different tones and terms to describe their thoughts.

## 6.4.1 Grandchildren's predictions

In general, the grandchild informants argued that they had more positive relationships with their grandparents, compared to their grandparent counterparts in the past. As for the development of grandparent–grandchild relationships in the future, their narratives fell into three main areas in the analysed data: 1) contact-decreasing; 2) closeness-reinforcing; and 3) role-modelling. The distribution of support for the first two categories were even, accounting for about 25 per cent of the grandchild informants, and around half of interviewees suggested the third idea, of role-modelling. In the first instance, they considered that grandparents and grandchildren might have less contact because young people would become more and more independent; this, they suggested would be because of increasing convenience associated with societal developments and technological innovations. People would depend less on others as they increasingly deploy technologies to sort things out for themselves. In the second instance, they proposed that grandchildren would be closer to their grandparents as the boundaries between them loosened even more from strict traditional rites; these grandparents and grandchildren would have more opportunities to, and would be more willing to, disclose their thoughts and feelings to each another. In the last instance, grandparent–grandchild interactions might not change too much in the future as both generations are already satisfied with what they have, with little need for improvement. Good grandparent – grandchild relationship is expected to be passed on to the coming generations. The narratives below explain in greater detail these three areas of prediction.

## 6.4.1.1 Contact-decreasing

This concept focuses on the increased independence of young people compared to their counterparts in the past, when grandparents and grandchildren were deeply involved in each other's lives because of their living arrangements and the way they lived.[42] Societal and economic developments in Taiwan have reduced the need for this kind of team-working and large families and the need for other people's assistance. Thus self-sufficiency brings about significant transformations in an individual's interactions with others. The contact-decreasing phenomenon, as predicted by the grandchild generation in this study is based on the two main areas of concern.

### A.  More hi-tech facilitations

This concept revolves around the effects that technological developments have had on people. Human labour, for example, can be replaced by high-technology devices of various kinds, making people's lives easier and more effective as a result. Such effects apply to the grandchildren more than the grandparents, because young people are more likely to adopt and access to these trendy devices. Some of the grandchild interviewees pointed out that other technological developments have less desirable effects on the grandparent–grandchild relationship.

Example 6.4a

| | |
|---|---|
| *Oliver:* | *I am a bit worried about the rapid speed of societal developments and technology. I might not know how to chat with my grandchildren if they said something I am not familiar with. I don't think I could catch up with those new things even though I am willing to learn. Just like the situation where my grandfather learns how to use a computer.* |
| *Interviewer:* | *I see… You worry about the gaps that new technologies probably bring into your interactions with your grandchildren, right?* |
| *Oliver:* | *Yes. That's what concerns me. I think we might not have proper interactions because I may not understand what he (referring to his potential grandson talks about.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandmother) |

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[42]  For more information, see Chapter Five.

Example 6.4b

| Interviewer: | *What do you think about grandparent–grandchild relationships in the future?* |
| Vincent: | *I think grandparent–grandchild relationships may be increasingly influenced by technology. I have lived with my grandmother since I was born and my parents have not lived with us. Therefore, my grandmother cares about me with everything, so that she asks lots of things and questions when I play on my computer or chat with my friends on the internet. However, I know whatever I explain she still will not get it, what I do and how it works. I am not sure whether something would be different if my parents were around, but I think it could be an issue hindering me from having a close relationship with my grandchildren. Well… if I have grandchildren.* (Grandson, 23, living in a grand-family) |

These grandchildren believe that the unfamiliarity of their grandparents with new technologies might cause more distance between themselves and their grandchildren in their old age. Oliver and Vincent expressed that they both had difficulties in communicating with their grandparents about technology-related topics. They suggested that the decrease in shared knowledge between grandparents and grandchildren is a predictable consequence of having less contact with each other.

## *B. More personal resources*

The following narratives address how the quantity of resources that the grandchild cohort will have when they are aged. The grandchild interviewees emphasised the importance of planning for old age and grandparenthood, in terms of financial resources and good health after retirement. Such preparations contribute to a self-sufficient lifestyle and enable people to be less constrained within groups in their old age. This more independent generation will, when elderly, be able to sustain their own lives with less support from their juniors. The greater independence they have, the less assistance they might need, and that includes assistance from their own grandchildren. Chris considered his future life as a grandparent who would not need specific care.

Example 6.4c

Chris:                    *I think the lifestyle would be very different. I think… I think we don't, don't need grandchildren being around so that we don't need to be treated especially well by our grandchildren. We can have our own lives.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother)


A similar idea is expressed in James's interviews. He not only expressed that he would be free from the responsibility of taking care of the whole family, but also suggested that his descendants would not have the burden of looking after him. There would be freedom from the duty of caring in both directions. He attributed this situation to self-sufficiency with regards to food and money of both seniors and juniors.


Example 6.4d

Interviewer:              *Have your own life? Can you talk a bit more about this?*

James:                    *Be more independent… We won't have... must take responsibility for our family. This duty was required in order to sustain the whole family, so that my grandparents had to take care of the entire family, including their grandchildren. However, by the time that we are somebody else's grandparents we won't need to look after our grandchildren and will do what we want to because we will be able to do so. We are abundant in food, time and money, so we won't worry about insufficiencies. We won't need to be bothered about preparing things for our grandchildren. Less contact? Maybe…* (Grandson, 28, living in the same city as his grandfather)


Example 6.4e

Interviewer:              *Cindy, do you have any idea about the future relationship between yourself and your grandchildren?*

Cindy:                    *I think it is significantly associated with the degree of health and free time. Take my grandparents, for example. They didn't plan anything for their retirement and they had hardly any savings to make pre-arrangements for their life. They nowadays rely on their children and I think they may feel it is embarrassing to ask for something from their offspring because they are not productive for their family now. It reminds me that in an ageing society people have to map their own lives with more freedom and well-organised plans for later life. Taking care of your juniors is no longer a core part of*

*your aims in life. Maybe there won't be that much time spent with my family.* (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandfather)

Example 6.4f

Wednesday:    *I think I would use my time more effectively in that I would have another hobby, apart from devoting myself to my family. I don't want to stay at home and wait to be served by someone. I may go out with my friends or travel around. Make my life more colourful.* (Granddaughter, 25, living in the same city as her grandmother)

According to the statements above, preparing a retirement plan is critical for enjoying life in old age or during grandparenthood. Such plans were less likely to be devised in the past because of the deficit in resources. Cindy and Wednesday clearly argued for the connection between well-prepared plans and independent grandparenthood. In so doing, they considered they would not be as attached to their families in the future and would not devote themselves completely to them; they do not see this as an ideal option, due to their knowledge of their grandparents' lives. The freedom they seek might involve greater distance from the family, leading to less contact between grandparents and their grandchildren.

It is significant that the grandchild interviewees described this situation in a personal tone. Their lives would be well organised; their personal hobbies and interests would not be neglected and limited. Less attention would be paid to communal considerations. In these circumstances they foresee relying less on their relatives and more on their resources for carrying out their personal plans. Therefore, a drop in grandparent–grandchild closeness is predicted. Correspondingly, I suggest this personal preparation for the later life, based on more individual consideration rather than familial commitment, may link to the effects of ongoing individualistic influence in the grandchild generation. The statements above show that the younger generation does not prioritise domestic responsibilities – a very different role enactment from their grandparents. In respect to this prediction about the grandparent – grandchild in the future, family consideration seems to be less dominant as it was.

## 6.4.1.2 Closeness-reinforcing

Increasingly, closer relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are regarded to be inevitable, according to some of the grandchild interviewees' perspectives. Because people become more open-minded and less authoritarian, so they more readily accept new ideas, and loose the strictness of their traditional values. The fact that young people are well-educated now goes some way to explain why the grandchild informants regarded their own grandparent roles as less arbitrary, compared to their grandparents. With more room to negotiate and discuss familial decisions, authoritarian grandparenthood should be occurred less and less in the domestic domain when the current grandchildren become grandparents. Andrew underscored how open he would be to negotiation and to treating his grandchildren equally, avoiding potential conflict. As a result, he assumed that he would have a better relationship with his grandchildren.

Example 6.4g

Andrew:                 *Because of being well-educated, I think I would be more open-minded towards my grandchildren so that we could talk and share our opinions. Also, gender equality is important now, so I would treat my grandchildren equally. This is the reason why I think I and my grandchildren would have a more intimate relationship.* (Grandson, 28, living single-parent family with his grandmother)

Andrew predicted that the relationship he would have with his grandchildren would be built on more open, and less biased, principles because of the education he has received. Therefore, he believed that better grandparent–grandchild relationships could be expected in the future, which illustrates a different attitude from his grandparents. Amber, whose narrative follows, predicted that she would be a good listener with her grandchildren. She went on to say that she would not be a strict grandmother.

Example 6.4h

Amber:                  *I would discuss things with my grandchildren and not arbitrarily make decisions for my family. I won't be an authoritarian person as I am more*

*open-minded and I know this is common in more developed countries. From what I have learnt at school, I also know the importance of respecting other people, including my children and my grandchildren.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a single-parent family with her grandparents)

Amber's account makes it clear that she would not be a hierarchical-minded grandmother and would consider her grandchildren's ideas before making decisions, once again referring to the contribution of her education.

These grandchild informants verified that their openness and wider acceptance contribute to more intimate and mutually respectful relationships, which are what they look forward to in the future with their grandchildren. There is also the suggestion of a decrease in the hierarchical structure of society, in that the unbalanced relationship of grandparents and grandchildren observed today and in the past will become a rare condition. This reinforces suggestions about the blurring of boundaries between seniors and juniors in the family, a theme expressed by the grandchildren discussing their friend-like relationships with their grandparents.

Not only does education have an influence, but also personal experiences matter in determining how close the grandparent–grandchild relationship can be (King and Elder 1997). In the following narratives, the grandchildren claimed that they would avoid treating their grandchildren in the ways they have found uncomfortable themselves. Their personal experiences influence their behaviours and thoughts about how to be a proper grandparent. Hence, they will bear in mind what they have gone through in their interactions with their grandchildren. They do not intend to repeat such unfairness.

Example 6.4i

Sean: *I think grandparent–grandchild relationships would be better because I know what I don't like about my grandfather's behaviour, which affected our interactions. Therefore, I think I would try to avoid those things happening again between me and my grandchildren…Then, closer relationships can be maintained.*

Interviewer: *Can you give me an example?*

| | |
|---|---|
| Sean: | *Umm… I don't like authoritarian discipline, so I won't ask my grandchildren to follow my own opinions without listening to their ideas.* (Grandson, 30, living in a grand-family) |

Example 6.4j

| | |
|---|---|
| Annie: | *I think I would spoil my grandchildren more.* |
| Interviewer: | *Oh… Why do you say so?* |
| Annie: | *Because I have experienced a lot of inequalities, so I am more attentive and sensitive about the effects of these inequalities.* |
| Interviewer: | *Are you saying that you had some tough times caused by your grandparents treating you differently from someone else?* |
| Annie: | *Yes. Actually, they always treat me really well, but somehow I sense they prefer their grandsons. I know how bad the feelings can be when gender bias operates in the family.* (Granddaughter, 18, living in a three-generation family) |

These statements are based on a belief that as grandparents themselves, they will be closer to their grandchildren because they will empathise with how they feel and think, because they were once 'victims' of unfairness. Sean and Annie expressed a wished to avoid being authoritarian and demonstrating gender bias. By indicating their respect for their future grandchildren's opinions and thoughts, they showed they are determined not to make the same mistakes as their grandparents. They know how these negative emotions could influence grandparent–grandchild interactions.

This awareness of openness and avoiding negative past experiences, means these grandchildren envisage positive developments in future grandparent–grandchild relationships. Once again, these more balanced interactions and reductions in traditional styles of interaction between grandparents and grandchildren suggest a path away from traditional customs. I suppose that the paradigm of the conventional grandparent–grandchild connection is diminishing, and the current grandchild generation seems ready to create their own standards of interaction with their future juniors.

## 6.4.1.3 Role-modelling

So far this discussion has covered both positive and negative predictions about future grandparent–grandchild relationships, but in this section the grandchild interviewees described copying the behaviour of their grandparents. Nearly half of them pointed mentioned this during their interviews. In conversation, they conveyed how good their grandparents had been towards them and their families, and that they had intimate relationships with them. They easily identified with the satisfactory interactions between themselves and their grandparents, and they hoped to maintain this style in interactions with their own grandchildren, thus sustaining this positive grandparent–grandchild relationship in the future. The grandchildren reported their great appreciation of and closeness with their grandparents, expressing no wish for any significant changes in their interactions. First, Jamie described the openness of her grandparents and explained that she would follow in their steps.

Example 6.4k

Jamie: *My grandparents are open-minded in interacting with me. I think I would follow their steps in interacting with my grandchildren, too. They will be my models because I think I have experienced the benefits of this kind of grandparent.* (Granddaughter, 24, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Example 6.4l

Jason: *I would mimic how my grandfather was with me.*

Interviewer: *Okay. Why do you say so?*

Jason: *I think he is really a good role model. As for the role of being a grandfather, I am confident saying that he does a good job.*

Interviewer: *Can you share something with me?*

Jason: *He is open to negotiation, nice and open enough.* (Grandson, 28, living in the same city as his grandfather)

Example 6.4m

Kevin: *I don't think there would be too much difference between me being a grandfather and the way my grandmother is now.*

Interviewer: *Umm… why do you say so?*

Kevin:                    *I don't see a need to change anything as she is agreeable and a very good grandmother.* (Grandson, 21, living in the same city as his grandmother)

These three interviewees each mentioned their grandparents' personalities, which do not seem to be conventional in a traditional sense. Their grandparents are already 'enlightened' contemporary characters - open-minded, open to negotiation and agreeable. From a liberal perspective, these are all good traits. Therefore, the grandchildren displayed their willingness to follow in their grandparents' footsteps when they themselves are grandparents. More importantly, it is worth noting these transformations in grandparent behaviours in recent history, signifying what some contemporary grandparents are like. Integrating all these points of view, it can be said that grandparents in Taiwan today are less likely to be considered by their grandchildren to have supreme status and traditional thoughts in the family. For this reason, more intimate relationships between grandparents and grandchildren can arise.

Whether predicting greater distance or greater closeness in intergenerational interactions – even to the point of replicating the close senior-junior connection they have now – the grandchildren interviewed here all suggest, to some extent, the decreasing influence of traditional values in their families and the increasing effect of individualistic concepts. First are the increase in personal preparations, and a lower commitment to family, whereby family member treat their personal requirements with more importance. Second, there is the greater degree of open-mindedness and having more space for negotiation in the grandparent–grandchild relationship; these suggest that families are becoming boundary-less. Third is the desire for continuing positive intergenerational interactions; the closeness of grandparent–grandchild relationship what the grandchild informants have explains the reason of role-modelling in their responses.

In all combinations, the prediction about the future relationship between grandparents and grandchild seems to argue a trend which is towards individualism and steering away from traditional/collective-based context. However, what about

the grandparent informants? After all, they are in the group that is losing so-called privileges. Will they share their grandchildren's points of view? Or will they be more concerned about the downgrading of their domestic position? This is the focus of the next part of the discussion.

## 6.4.2 Grandparents' thoughts about the future

Compared to the grandchild interviewees' ideas, the grandparents in this study paid relatively less attention to the future of grandparent–grandchild relationships. Based on a few of their responses, the considered future grandparent–grandchild relationships are too far away to think about it, especially because they will not be involved in them. Most grandparents made no comments on this subject, but a few stated that they thought the relationship would either stay the same or become more distant. More information is revealed by the following narratives of the grandparent informants.

### 6.4.2.1 Being unpredictable

While several of the grandparent informants in this research are dispassionate about the future of grandparent–grandchild relationships, they provided enough information to explain why they do not pay much attention to how they will develop. Their main reasons focused on the instability of people's lives in the present day, which they see as being bound by their imaginations. Wednesday's grandmother highlighted the uncertainty of people's longevity, so she did not want to bother thinking of this issue.

Example 6.4n

Interviewer: *How do you think the relationship between your grandchildren and their grandchildren will be in the future?*

Wednesday's grandmother: *To be honest, we may die tomorrow, so people's futures are unpredictable. Therefore, I know nothing about this stuff. There is no need to think that far, it is meaningless.* (Living in the same city as

Matt's grandmother felt similarly. She conveyed that predictions of grandparent–grandchild relationships are beyond her capability, as the future is too complex and changeable. She could not be sure about the situation that might exist when her grandchildren are themselves grandparents.

Example 6.4o

Matt's grandmother: *I have no idea at all. I think people's lives would be very different from now. It is just like how life nowadays is so different from the past. People are more active and open-minded, whereas people in the past were more frugal and constrained. But, I am not sure how their relationships will go... too complicated.* (Living in a three-generation family with Matt)

Because of some specific concerns, this group of grandparents were reluctant to share their thoughts about what kinds of grandparent–grandchild relationships might develop in these environments. They pointed out that the differences between their generation and their grandchildren's are so great already, and the likelihood of even less involvement in the future life, so they would rather not guess about such things.

Accordingly, due to these sorts of unpredictable conditions relating to future grandparent–grandchild relationships, I am concerned whether this is an insight into the decreased influence of traditional values on the intergenerational connection. Previous research and the data from this study about traditional values, consistently highlights hierarchy, role responsibility and collectiveness as representative features. The connections between grandparents and grandchildren should be attached to these ideas if Chinese culture is to remain strong. In accordance with the grandparents' articulations, the effects of traditional cultures may be downgraded in grandparent–grandchild interactions when grandparents provide uncertain responses on the future of the intergenerational bond. Although this particular issue was not addressed directly in both the grandparent and grandchild interviews, the statement, based on the existing data, is worth elucidating.

## 6.4.2.2 Becoming more distant

In this section, some of the grandparent respondents indicated that social developments and current living arrangements would be responsible for this negative development of the future grandparent–grandchild interactions. This is because more affluent and busier lifestyles decrease the opportunities for family members to spend time together. As a result, grandparent–grandchild interactions will become more distant in nature, echoing the opinions of some of the grandchildren above.

Kevin's grandmother described how the desires of the youth influenced her perception of her grandchildren. She used her youngest granddaughter's story as an example to describe what is happening in her family.

Example 6.4p

| Interviewer: | *Can you imagine the nature of future grandparent–grandchild relationships?* |
| Kevin's grandmother: | *They are getting more and more distant.* |
| Interviewer: | *Why do you say so?* |
| Kevin's grandmother: | *I think it's about our society. The environment is changing so that people have more and more affluent lives. It is possible that you cannot catch up if you are not quick enough. Financial conditions are getting better and even my youngest grandchild wants a mobile phone. See how young she is, still at primary school, but she wants a mobile phone.* |
| Interviewer: | *Yes, I see…* |
| Kevin's grandmother: | *They have too many desires for material things and online shopping further fosters this situation. I think I would not be able to catch up with them eventually.* |
| Interviewer: | *Do you think this increasing desire comes with the development of society?* |
| Kevin's grandmother: | *Yes, I have concerns about this. They want more and more, and I am getting less familiar with these new things. I presume the gap between grandparents and grandchildren will be wider in the future.* (Living in the same city as Kevin) |

Kevin's grandmother discussed how these are things she could not easily accept because of the speed of technological developments in her grandchildren's lives. She

further argued that this situation will become more serious when the material desires of young people become even greater, leading grandparent–grandchild relationships to become more distant. This concern is also revealed by the grandchild informants when predicting future grandparent–grandchild relationships, indicating how technological developments can negatively affect grandparent–grandchild closeness.

Additionally, some other grandparents who perceived the possibility of increasing distance between grandparents and grandchildren in the future paid attention to the nature of family structure in the current environment. Oliver's grandmother indicated this clearly. She attributed the increased remoteness between the elderly and young people to the smaller family format. She focused on the increase in numbers of nuclear families as one contributory factor, causing people to be more distant from their family members.

Example 6.4q

Oliver's grandmother:    *In fact, the trend of grandparent–grandchild relationships is more distant than in the past. You know?! Why? Young people prefer living alone, forming nuclear families. Therefore, people who do not live together are growing apart. Grandparents and  grandchildren could meet each other very often in the past, but this situation is less common now. This is why I am saying that their relationships will be less close.* (Living distant from Oliver)

Example 6.4r

Winnie's grandmother:    *I feel that that familial relationship is less important in this society, as people nowadays live separately.*

*Interviewer:*    *So… you think that is all about how far away people live? Anything else?*

*Winnie's grandmother:*    *I think the youth don't like to live with the elderly…This is what I think and hear from other people.* (Living together with Winnie in a three-generation family)

Both Oliver's and Winnie's grandmothers pointed out that living arrangements serve to explain the situations in which grandparents and grandchildren are becoming more distant from each other.

In brief, the pursuit of personal considerations and hi-tech possessions is what young people want today, causing the grandparent–grandchild relationship to become more distant. In light of this, the grandparent respondents are not confident about positive developments in grandparent–grandchild relationships. This potentially more distant interaction may also indicate that the maintenance of collectivistic domestic arrangements would decrease in the future, illuminating the potential for dismantlement of traditional values.

## 6.4.2.3 Staying the same

Another group of grandparents anticipated that the nature of grandparent–grandchild relationships will stay the same as it is now. They suggested this because of their own situations, which are relatively positive and satisfactory, as shown in some of the grandchildren's responses. Therefore, they believed this family relationship can be 'inherited' in some way, by teaching or modelling.

Example 6.4s

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *What do you think grandparent–grandchild relationships will be like in the future? Is something going to be different from now?* |
| Annie's grandmother: | *I don't think so. Nothing will change, I guess. I appreciate what I have right now and I think my grandchildren will have a similar feeling to me. I am lucky and I won't think about some other things too much.* |
| Interviewer: | *Do you mean that nothing will be different from the current situation you have with your grandchild?* |
| Annie's grandmother: | *Yes. It is hardly changed* |
| Interviewer: | *Why do you think this is?* |
| Annie's grandmother: | *Annie has grown up in this environment, so I assume she will do similar things with her grandchildren as we have done with her. By doing so, I don't think there would be anything different.* (Living together with Annie in a three-generation family) |

Annie's grandmother stated that she is content with her family situation and assumed that this appreciation would apply also to Annie, due to a lifetime spent in the same environment. In the next narrative, Nothing's grandfather expresses support of this

idea. He also suggests that the mode of interactions within a family can be passed down, so that descendants also inherit its implicit features.

Example 6.4t

| Interviewer: | *How do you think grandparent–grandchild relationships will develop in the future?* |
|---|---|
| Nothing's grandfather: | *They will stay the same, even if some of them get married and don't live with us anymore.* |
| Interviewer: | *How about the relationship between Nothing and her grandchildren? What kind of situation will be seen in the next generation?* |
| Nothing's grandfather: | *More or less the same.* |
| Interviewer: | *Okay. It would not be better or worse?* |
| Nothing's grandfather: | *Yes. I think our juniors can keep what we have now if we educate them in the right way. They would pass our traditions down to future generations. They can stay the same because what we have now is good enough to be preserved.* (Living with Nothing in a three-generation family) |

Copying and passing down their values as grandparents is a common theme in these grandparents' statements. They felt that future generations should be able to maintain present structures by family modelling or by family education. Again, this point of view is similar to the role-modelling idea of the grandchild respondents, illustrating how the grandparent and the grandchild interviewees both confirmed the importance of their existing family situations.

Similarly, maintaining close relationship between seniors and juniors, being more distant grandparent–grandchild connections, or lacking of the ideas of the further intergenerational interaction all highlight once again the possibility of the losing traditional values and growing of individualistic concepts in the domestic arena. To sum up, the existence of similar predications and thoughts of the grandparent and the grandchild interviewees about the future of intergenerational relationships seems to argue that heading towards individualism-led family environments is approved of by both the groups of interviewees in this study. In brief, I suppose that this particular intergenerational relationship is hardly maintained where it is now, in terms of ongoing changes in Taiwanese society for different developments. Even if there are some grandparents and grandchildren claimed that grandparent – grandchild

relationship in the future would stay the same, they primarily referred to the quality of grandparent - grandchild relationship, rather than the way how they would interact with each other. The current situation of grandparent – grandchild relationship would be anyhow different in the later period, in terms of the arguments of the participants about how social developments and the inventions of new technology have changed family interactions.

## 6.5    **Conclusion**

Comparisons between the past and the present reveal that the nature of being a grandchild, as well as the nature of grandparent–grandchild relationships, is changing. The majority of the differences mentioned in the interviewees' responses indicate that the process of transformation has led to more independent and balanced grandparent–grandchild interactions. Current grandchildren have more personal space and liberty, in that they are able to prioritise more things for themselves, rather than completely devoting their time and labour to their families. The lesser importance placed nowadays on labour-pooling and time distribution gives way to being educated, and explains the drop in collective activities within the family. Moreover, the authority of elderly people in the domestic arena is more limited now, as grandchildren possess more personal resources and greater capability for voicing their individual concerns and opinions. In line with these observations, I continue to argue that traditional values may start to loosen as the need for collective collaboration and absolute obedience from the bottom of the family to the top eases off; while deference and respect will remain. In this vein, I propose that the way how traditional collective values have changed is about the scope how wide they could reach people's lives, rather than the depth how important they are in people's lives. From the very beginning of arguing the loose of traditional values on the interactions between family members, the influential effects of Chinese collective concepts have never disappeared during the relevant discussions. However, it seems that the

impacts of traditional values get more limited to family-related issues, such as more respect for personal choice and rights.

Apart from the variations in grandchildren's lives over time, a few new aspects of the grandparent–grandchild interactions have been revealed in the narratives of the grandparent and grandchild respondents. On the one hand, friend-like interactions between the generations are commonplace today, with fewer constraints and more flexibility between them. On the other hand, grandchildren possess more material wealth and information so they rely on themselves far more than in the past, showing the increased capability of grandchild today. In line with this statement, their relationships have been guided into more balanced and equal conditions, in that the authority of seniors has decreased, as has the absolute 'inferiority' of juniors. All in all, that produces a less rigid hierarchal state. Yan (2009) describes how it was impossible for grandchildren to fight for their rights or voice their opinions because 'according to custom, a child was not considered a full person' (p 109). The positions of grandchildren and children were starkly inferior in the past, in that they were normally resourceless and heavily dependent on other family members. This study shows that this situation rarely exists nowadays; it is becoming part of history.

The grandparent and the grandchild cohorts offered comparable predictions about the future of the grandparent–grandchild relationship. More distant relations were brought up by both, whereby the growth in hi-tech innovations and personal resources and consideration would put more distance between family members. Some felt that the grandparent–grandchild relationship would stay like it is now, whereby contented grandchildren will role-model their family environment. The informants who thought this way were all satisfied with their counterparts and their level of intimacy, and wanted to pass down this positive association. A number of grandparent informants expressed their indifference on the matter of future relationships, mainly because it would affect them and they were uncertain about the future. The grandchildren were more optimistic, thinking that the intergenerational relationship would get better as traditional constraints and strict boundaries between

seniors and juniors dissolved, implicitly arguing for a smaller effect of traditional values on the grandparent–grandchild relationship.

In a conclusion, this chapter has emphasised the changes in being a grandchild and in the grandparent–grandchild relationship in the past and present. It also illustrates that this is an ongoing process, leading people from more conventional and authoritarian domestic contexts towards more flexible and egalitarian family environments. Within families, people have started to emancipate themselves from a more collective ideology to more independent attitudes. Some of the main aims of this study were to explore whether, and by how much, Taiwanese society and families have been affected by imported individualistic values, and to what extent they have been transformed by them, and how far apart from Chinese traditions they have become. The observations describe in this chapter signify that hierarchy-governed interactions and the extreme authority of grandparents over grandchildren is not prevalent anymore. Instead, their relationships have proceeded towards ones characterised by negotiation and flexibility. With these changes, I would suggest that domestic principles are not based firmly on Chinese culture any longer, but this has not resulted in the complete demolition of those traditional values. Correspondingly, the informants described the influence of Chinese traditions on their daily lives, but the degree and content are different from the past. In this new changing society, the grandchild interviewees have re-interpreted Chinese culture to lead their behaviours. They have also developed, with new individualistic attitudes, their own standards as regards their roles in the family to re-negotiate their performance. In practice, they attempted to illustrate how they experience and react to the complicated circumstances of their lives, blending existing cultural collective values and imported individualistic concepts.

# 7 CHAPTER SEVEN: DOMESTIC – DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND WIDER SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a number of demographic and social factors that have been transformed over time, to explore the impact they may have on being a grandchild and on grandparent–grandchild interactions. These factors include the grandchildren's genders, family formats, education expansion, mass media and official policy. In Chapter Six, the grandparent–grandchild relationship was explored and revealed to be very varied; there were diverse family and economic backgrounds leading to a wide range of opinions from both the grandparent and grandchild generations. However, the discussion in Chapter Six mainly focussed on changes in being a grandchild over time, rather than addressing the key factors at play behind those transformations. As a result, the following sections will look into more domestic–demographic factors and wider social features, in order to explore their effects on grandparent–grandchild interactions.

The criteria for narrowing the discussion down to the specific factors affecting grandparent–grandchild relationships are twofold. One stems from the discussions presented in the literature review, whereby previous studies show that gender difference and family composition are crucial factors in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. This is mainly because females are more likely to have closer relationships with their grandparents (Baranowski 1982; Kennedy 1990) and because living distances between grandparents and grandchildren explain the change in frequency of intergenerational contact (Kennedy ibid.; Kivett 1985). Importantly, these two factors could perform very differently in Chinese-based societies, in that male preference and the format of big family are rather representative for traditional Chinese cultures. In addition, the expansion of education and the mass media are both important for rationalising the changes in

family ecology; it is through these mechanisms that new western concepts are imported into Taiwanese society (Fang 2009, Triandis 2004). These elements are raised by many if the interviewees in order to account for domestic and social differences between the two generations. However, there is an exception – namely, official policy in Taiwan. This factor is also worthy of attention in order to explore whether (and how) grandparent–grandchild relationships are affected by the attitudes and policies of the government in Taiwan. It is important because state and family assistance are the two main sources for care for old people in Taiwan. Therefore, formal resources for assisting the elderly should be investigated to fully understand how people perceive official assistance and manage all their resources to care for the older generation.

In brief, these significant factors are divided into two domains in the discussions below. This makes it easier to clarify the relationships between family-related and society-related factors in the context of grandparent–grandchild relationships. One part of the discussion chiefly focuses on domestic–demographic changes, arguing to what extent the grandchildren's gender and family composition affects their assistance and attitude towards their grandparents. Another section highlights how wider social transformations influence grandparent–grandchild interactions across the generations, exploring the effects of education expansion, widespread mass media and official policy in domestic issues.

## Section one: Domestic-Demographic changes

This section focuses on the influence of gender and family type of grandchildren on grandparent–grandchild relationships. Gender issues are always considered to be important in these relationships (Eisenberg 1988; Kemp 2005; Kennedy 1990; Reitzes and Mutran 2004; Taylor et al. 2005). Family structure is also important when discussing grandparent–grandchild connections, not least because geographical distance affects the frequency of grandparent–grandchild contact (Harwood and Lin

2000; Kennedy 1990; Taylor et al. 2005). Notably, the existing research gives no definitive information about the extent to which gender and family composition affect the grandparent–grandchild relationship in western academia. However, as mentioned in the interview review chapter (Chapter Two), the effects of grandchildren's gender and family format on grandparent–grandchild relationships can vary widely in Chinese-based societies. Based on the doctrines of Chinese values, a preference for males is traditionally dominant, and joint or extended families were the main family composition as a result of labour-intensive demands in the past (Farris et al. 2004). The varying importance of these factors on grandparent–grandchild relationships in western and eastern countries should be borne in mind to explore any potential different results.

## 7.2    Grandchildren's gender

Gender bias was a principal feature in Chinese society in the past. Men were expected to be strongly attached to their family, because they would legally inherit the family surname which was symbolic of passing down the family history to future generations and thus facilitate immortality of the lineage (Croll 1995). Furthermore, Chinese society was historically completely male-centred. Women were relatively regarded as inferior to men (Farris et al. 2004). This was because women would eventually marry and leave their natal family, without any duty of inheritance. In such a scenario, from a practical view, girls were therefore less valuable than boys, who logically remained more 'connected' to their families. There are some historical accounts that girls and women were expected to sacrifice their time and labour to help their male siblings' accomplish their careers and life goals; this would entail no significant benefit for the sister, and there would be no room for negotiation (Lee 2004; Lu 2004). Thus gender bias could result in very unequal conditions. However, does this male preference in traditional Chinese culture also have a role in grandparent–grandchild relationships? Is there anything different or more dominant in eastern societies than western ones? The discussion below considers whether

gender bias has passed down grandchild generations and affected grandparent–grandchild interactions and whether Chinese-based research would generate different outcomes from the western academia.

There was virtually no evidence from my data to suggest that either girls or boys offer more emotional or practical support to their grandparents. Both demonstrated their help and care for their grandparents in these two dimensions, without gender being obviously significant in either dimension. Accordingly, it seems clear that gender inequality does not apply to the expectations of what a grandchild should do in this research. However, by closer analysis of the interview material about similarities and differences between granddaughters and grandsons, I have found that the way in which boys and girls provide intergenerational support is slightly nuanced.

By closer analysis of the interview material concerning similarities and differences between granddaughters and grandsons, I have found that the way in which boys and girls respectively provide intergenerational support is slightly nuanced. Accordingly, the coming section focuses on the different effects of grandchildren's gender on family support, so that we can better understand how this influential factor determines grandchildren's assistance to their grandparents.

## 7.2.1 Emotional support

Based on the data, granddaughters are more likely to spend time being with their grandparents when their grandparents are upset. Grandsons prefer to highlight the importance of their grandparents to the family, as a means of cheer them up when they are emotionally depressed.

Example 7.2a

*Jamie*                     *I try to make her [referring to her grandmother] laugh and say something funny to entertain her.* (Granddaughter, 24, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Example 7.2b

| Wednesday: | *I just stayed around her and let her feel she was not alone… I think it is very important for me to accompany her through any difficulty.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandmother) |

These examples are not uncommon in the research data, in that there is a tendency for granddaughters to express their concern by spending time with or providing company for their grandparents. They talk to their grandparents, to try to distract them from negative things, or to make them feel loved. This helps them avoid negative feelings, and diverts their attention away from pressure and depression. However, the majority of the male grandchildren use different approaches to do this.

Example 7.2c

| Jason: | *I just told him [referring to his grandfather] that he has not attended to my wedding and the graduation ceremony of my PhD yet. Just let him know he still has to get lots of things done.* (Grandson, 28, living in the same city as his grandfather) |

Example 7.2d

| Oliver: | *I want her to know how important she is and that she is irreplaceable in our family.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandmother) |

By pointing out their importance and vital positions in their domestic life, these grandsons try to help their grandparents get out of negative moods and to value themselves again. Accordingly, I would like to highlight the possibility that male and female grandchildren have nuanced difference in providing emotional support towards their grandparents. These extracts merely show that the means of providing grandparents with emotional comfort varies between grandsons and granddaughters; they say nothing about whether one gender does a better job than the other, nor about which approach is more effective.

What about the situation as regards the giving of practical assistance from grandchildren to their grandparents? Do the grandsons and granddaughters have difference in the total amount of practical support for their grandparents? Are there

varying approaches in providing instrumental assistance between the male and female grandchildren in this study?

## 7.2.2 Practical assistance

Based on the narratives in the study, granddaughters and grandsons provided practical help to their grandparents in equal amounts. However, they performed different kinds of jobs for their grandparents, suggesting a division that is based on labour. For example, grandsons more often provide transport or run errands, and are involved less with the daily routine, while granddaughters provide more help with the routine tasks, such as taking a walk with their grandparent or preparing a meal.

Example 7.2e
Tommy:                      *I take her to the suburbs for holidays…* (Grandson, 28, living distant from his grandmother)

Example 7.2f
Chris:                       *We go to the cinema or visit the countryside together. Don't just leave them at home doing nothing… I run some errands for them as well.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother)

Example 7.2g
Sean:                       *I always do some banking stuff for them.* (Grandson, 30, living in a grand-family)

From these discourses, it seems that male grandchildren are more likely to help their grandparents with less domestic-related care. This does not mean that they do not care about the day-to-day living situations of their grandparents, but the male grandchildren rarely highlighted this domain during their interview. Conversely, most of the assistance provided by the granddaughters in this study related to their grandparents' daily lives. They put more emphasis on the domestic requirements they fulfilled for their grandparents.

Example 7.2h

Annie:                    *I want to let them feel I am just like one of their daughters and warm them...*
                          *We stroll together...* (Granddaughter, 18, living in a three-generation family)


Example 7.2i

Winnie:                   *I try to have lunch with her since she always has meals alone. That's a bit*
                          *sad because she doesn't have proper food since it is inconvenient to cook one*
                          *portion only.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a three-generation family)


Analysing these comparisons between the type of practical help given by grandsons and granddaughters enables clearer discussions about gender differences in 'being a grandchild'. Most importantly, the amount of practical help received by grandparents from their grandsons and granddaughters is about the same, but the nature of that help differs, just as with their provision of emotional support. So the interview data is suggestive of nuanced gender difference rather than major distinctions in support provided in either emotional or practical ways.

At the outset, I looked at participants' family formats to see whether any differences in the way male and female grandchildren reported their behaviour might be attributed to their different family types. The girls, who talked more about helping with the daily routine, might be from families in which the family members lived together or in the same neighbourhoods. With shorter geographic distances separating them, these grandchildren could offer more day-to-day care for their grandparents. However, this assumption is not borne out by the findings of this research, as the living arrangements of these granddaughters are diverse. Therefore, the different nature of the assistance provided by grandsons and granddaughters seems to be independent of family type in this research.

Subsequently, I investigated the gender of the grandchild generation to explore whether the variation in grandchildren's assistance could be understood in terms of gender issues. In Chinese-based societies, in terms of social and cultural pressures, women are still more likely to be encouraged to undertake family-related labour, compared to men (Jackson et al. 2007). Therefore, I also wondered whether female grandchildren are subject to greater expectations with respect to domestic

responsibilities than their male counterparts. Critically, neither the grandparent group nor the grandchild group articulated any difference in the expectations of grandsons or granddaughters for the kind of help wanted for grandparent generation. Moreover, there was virtually no evidence from my data to suggest that either girls or boys offered more emotional or practical support to their grandparents. Both demonstrated their willingness to help and care for their grandparents in these two dimensions, without gender being obviously significant in either dimension. Accordingly, it seems clear from this research that the gender inequality present in traditional Chinese values does not apply to what is expected of grandchildren.

As for the closeness between grandparents and grandchildren, the effects of grandchildren's gender cannot be conclusively demonstrated in this small study. This is in contrast to the body of literature on this issue (Baranowski 1982; Hyde and Gibbs 1993; Kennedy 1990). These studies demonstrated the existence of greater closeness between granddaughters and their grandparents; they were mainly conducted in western societies around two decades ago. Understandably, gender differences were considered to be less distinct in the post-industrial environment (Inglehart and Norris 2003). Such social changes may help to explain why gender differences do not affect grandparent–grandchild relationships or the provision of assistance by grandchildren to their grandparents, even if males and females perform different roles and have different attached behaviours.

I now turn to consider the different living arrangements across the grandparent and grandchild generations. The way these were talked about during the interviews shows that having a smaller geographic distance between grandparents and grandchildren does not encourage the grandchildren to provide more help to their grandparents.

## 7.3 Living arrangements

On the one hand, a few Western studies show that geographical proximity plays a crucial role in how relatives interact (Clingempeel et al. 1992; Kivett 1985). Geographical distance is seen as a barrier that hinders people's interactions because of the time taken to travel between homes. In this sense, grandparents and grandchildren are more likely to enjoy closer relationships and have more frequent interactions if they live close to each other, largely because of the more convenient travelling distances.

It is important to state first that the degree of proximity between grandparents and grandchildren in this study was not found to be significant. The interviewees did not say that their relationships were affected by how far away they lived from each other, and the data were not revealed in that sense. Furthermore, this specific outcome is not borne out in the interviewees' accounts, indicating that more intergenerational transfer occurs among the grandparents and grandchildren who live closer to each other. One reason for this might relate to the geography of Taiwan; it is a small island with well-connected transport links, which effectively shortens distances. Therefore, the effect of geographical proximity on grandparent - grandchild interaction is less influential.

Despite the lack of influence of geographical distance on the level of the grandchild's support for their grandparents, it is still important to explore whether living arrangements are an important source of variation within the data. The concept of 'living arrangements' differs from the concept of geographic distance and further refers to how people construct and arrange their families and domestic lives. Importantly, it can be supposed that the reasons for establishing a specific family format reflect more variations in family contexts; it is not simply a case of the distance between family members. More conceptual ideologies of the family and its members may be involved, as well as original family traditions. There are five family types in this research: three-generation families, families located in a neighbourhood

close to the grandparents, families locate far from the grandparents; single-parent families in the same household as the grandparents; and the grand-family.[43] These are categorised as five types of family in order to explore the potential differences between the different family formats and their domestic interactions. For instance, one issue might be whether grandchildren in three-generation families express more traditional attitudes with regard to their families than those living in nuclear families.

### 7.3.1  A specific propensity in single-parent families

Individualism centres around personal interests, freedom, independence and the like, but knowledge of its negative effect on the communal good came through clearly in the interviews – particularly with respect to selfishness, and less consideration for others. Looking at the data in order to gain a more detailed understanding of this, I found that the grandchild interviewees from single-parent families all shared a similar viewpoint of individualism. They commented on this negative aspect more than grandchildren with other living arrangements; they had far stronger opinions about selfishness, referring to it as a representative and significant factor of individualism. Amber, Andrew and Grace maintained the view that individualism can cause harm to relationships between family members. The extracts below show how they felt about individualism, but more information can be found in their narratives in previous chapters.[44]

Example 7.3a

Andrew:               *First of all, you will think about yourself and everything around your life.*
                      *Taking yourself as a key point in deciding everything. For yourself, not for*
                      *your family and grandparents. Maybe… maybe… family relationships get*
                      *worse?* (Grandson, 28, living in a single-parent family with his grandmother)

Example 7.3b

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[43]  For more information about these five family formats, see Chapter Three.
[44]  For more information about the narratives, see Chapter Five.

| Interviewer: | *Grace, we have talked about what traditional values and collective ideas are and now I want to move on to another relevant concept. Have you ever heard about 'individualism' before? Any understanding?* |
|---|---|
| Grace: | *The things around people themselves are more important?! It's happening in family as well. Take my cousin as an example, he comes back when he is on summer vacation from the USA every year. That's all. He hardly contacts the family… I cannot help thinking that my cousin is just selfish and thinks about himself without paying any consideration to our family members. We care about what he does and how his life is in America, but why doesn't he call back? Why doesn't he understand our feelings?* |

In this discussion, the role of biology is rather decisive in constructing people's values and interpretations since I propose that this outcome is associated with the process of forming their current family structures. The reason Amber and Andrew live in single-parent families is because of their parents' divorces, whereas Grace faced the death of her father. These things happened when they were at primary school. They moved into their grandparents' houses after they became part of single-parent families. To an extent, they all experienced the loss of their fathers, after which their grandparents took their places. I did not specifically ask whether their grandparents helped them through the process of parental separation, but it is undeniable that the grandparents in this study were a major main source of help. According to the accounts of these three grandchildren, their grandparents provided homes for them and their mothers. This situation echoes that identified by several western-based research studies, in which grandparents become the main providers of support for their grandchildren in such times (Johnson 1988; Lussier et al. 2002; Myers and Perrin 1993). This ties in with the processes of being more independent, somewhat understandably, because these grandchildren had to learn to be tougher and less dependent when they were not ready to do so. When grandchildren experience more support from their grandparents, it strengthens the level of cooperation within families.

On analysis of the content of these grandchildren's discourses, I conclude that this particular shift of family format may influence their perceptions about the values of collectivism and individualism; this is the result of going through some pragmatic

challenges when they were not mature. The following discussion shows what else can be revealed by the data about the effect of the grandchildren's background on their interpretations of collective and individualistic values.

## 7.3.2 Closer living arrangement and traditional values collective values

It might be expected that the grandchildren who lived close to their grandparents, or under the same roof as them, may share more stories about their grandparents and their interactions. Under this circumstance, these grandchildren might be expected to express more traditional values during their interviews. Application of the hierarchical code, the grandchildren's orientations to families, and the attitudes towards collectiveness are representative features of traditional Chinese values perceived by the grandchild interviewees in this study. Take the 'hierarchical code' as an example. The grandchildren from three-generation families all argue, more and less, for the importance of hierarchy. The examples below support this argument, but it can be understood more clearly in terms of their perspectives on traditional and imported values, as reported in Chapter Five.

Example 7.3c

Wednesday:  *My family is very typical in that my father, mother and grandparents are very traditional. I am not sure how your family is and what you call your older sister and brother. In my family, it is not allowed to say their names directly, so you have to call them sister or brother.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Example 7.3d

Grace:  *Role distinction is apparent in my family because you should behave with reference to your role. We students should study hard and this is part of a tradition in which everyone has their own role to play. My family is not a typical one in that my granny is the person who does everything around the house and my mum and aunt work hard to make money. This is a more traditional routine… This is how we do family.* (Granddaughter, 21, living in a single-parent family with her grandfather)

Example 7.3e

Annie:                    *I have noticed that Chinese traditions seem to concentrate on family ethics and my family members follow the law a lot. My family is big and has plenty of members. We have lived together since I was very young and our neighbours are relatives, too. You can always meet relatives within a short distance when you walk around the neighbourhood. Ha, I think the arrangement is really interesting.* (Granddaughter, 18, living in a three-generation family)

According to these accounts, all of the grandchild participants from three-generation families, with no exception, outlined the crucial position of hierarchy and its subsequent operation in Chinese culture in their domestic interactions. Moreover, most of the grandchildren who lived in the same neighbourhood as their grandparents raised the concept of hierarchy in expressing their thoughts on traditional values. This finding may be explained the research of Tung, Chen and Liu (2006), who articulate that the reason for maintaining an extended family in Taiwan is an intense sense of Chinese tradition in the family context. In other words, people living in extended families may have stronger attitudes about Chinese culture. In line with Tung et al.'s research, my finding is supported; namely, that people who live with their grandparents or live closer to their grandparents are more likely to abide by or articulate more traditional values.

Through the narratives on individualism by the single-parent family grandchildren to the strong ideas about collectivism of the grandchildren who live together with or closer to their grandparents, the impact of living arrangements does not relate to 'closeness' in a western sense, but to values of interpreting traditional and individualistic concepts in this research. The findings above demonstrate the advantages of exploring the influence of living arrangements, rather than focusing on geographical distance, with respect to the connection between grandparents and grandchildren and the interpretation of traditional collective and imported individualistic concepts.

### 7.3.3  Any exceptions?

As shown above, the grandchildren who live closer to, or together with, their grandparents expressed more traditional values in their discussions. However, there are some exceptions. There are two grandchild informants who live far from their grandparents but still describe their families as being more traditional. Cindy and Oliver are representative of this situation; they strongly present their ideas about traditional values. They also offer explanations to rationalise views of the 'big family', even though their own families are nuclear and they live far from their grandparents. They cross this physical living arrangement 'boundary' and consider their nuclear families as 'big families' because of their frequent contacts and close relationships.

Example 7.3f

Oliver:       *My family is quite big even though we don't live together... we contact each other regularly and closely.* (Grandson, 22, living distant from his grandmother)

Oliver's responses triggered an intriguing discussion about how people do not merely interpret their family as extended or nuclear because of living arrangements or distance, but because of the quality of the family members' relationships. Due to their level of intimacy, he categorised his family as a 'big construction'. Therefore, he shared lots of his opinions about what traditional values were and how they worked in his family.[45] Cindy's account tells a similar story about her family life when she explained why her family is a 'big family', even though she lives only with her parents and an older brother.

Example 7.3g

Cindy:       *We have to go back to visit my grandparents every two or three weeks although we live far from each other... My parents go back even more often... we contact quite often.* (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandfather)

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[45] More information about Oliver's perspective is presented in Chapter Five.

During her interview, Cindy consistently expressed how her family is a traditional one, and why she has to conform with cultural values quite deeply. Mostly, she attributed this situation to her parents' attitudes, which are mentioned in her narratives about what traditional values are.[46] She raised the issue of parental influence to explain why she lives in a more traditional circumstance, pointing out the significance of the intermediate (parent) generation on grandparent – grandchild interactions. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two), there is an influence of the intermediate generation on grandparent–grandchild relationships, and this is shown by Cindy's case. The intermediate generation understandably has stronger attitude towards traditional doctrines and is more strongly influenced by authoritarian principles. This is because the social environment in which they grew up was filled with more traditional values, and it may explain why this generation is critical and decisive in affecting the grandchild generation through more traditional approaches. However, the effect of the parents on grandparent–grandchild issues was not included in this research, which is another area of potential study that will enhance understanding of the dynamics in the domestic arena.

Significantly, the frequent contact described by Oliver with his grandparents and the effects of the parental generation in Cindy's account, both support the idea that the claims of belonging to a 'big family' cannot be defined simply by the size of a family. In this research, the grandchild interviewees employed more complicated statements regarding whether their families were large or not, relating to the way in which grandchildren interact with their grandparents. By and large, family format conveys different stories about the grandparent–grandchild relationship compared to the distance existing between family members, because the narratives of the grandchild interviewees involve more domestic contexts to explain familial interactions.

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[46] More information about Cindy's perspectives is presented in Chapter Five.

## Section Two: Wider structural transformations

Societal structures changed enormously between the generations of the grandparent and the grandchild interviewees. In this research, I primarily pay attention to the influence of educational expansion, mass media and governmental policy in discussing Taiwanese societal factors on grandparent－grandchild interactions. Moreover, the focus of the governmental grandparent–grandchild-related policy in this research mainly stems from propaganda existing in Taiwan today. The official Acts are outlined here as part of the investigation into the intentions and efficiency of these policies; the offer of better official aid for grandparents and grandchildren is to be expected.

Information on societal transformations primarily came from the interviews, from discussions about in what ways today's society differs from the past and the subsequent influence on grandparent–grandchild relationship. Probing questions were asked, such as: 'Is society different from the past?', 'Have you ever thought about the reasons why being a grandchild is so different from the past?'. The questions were posed if the participants had not made their arguments clear. Similar enquiries were made in the interviews of both the grandparent and grandchild cohorts. In contrast, I directly asked some interviewees about the influence of educational expansion, mass media and official policy; these interviewees were those who did not actively or spontaneously talk about such changes in society. I put forward specific questions based on these three factors, such as: 'What do you think about the influence of educational expansion, mass media and official policy on your life and grandparent–grandchild relationships?'.

In the following sections, I first argue that the differences in content and participation of education between grandparent and grandchild generations lead to the specific perspectives both on individual and family issues. This comes through both the grandparents' and the grandchildren's narratives. Next, I will focus on the way in which the respondents indicated and estimated the influence of mass media on their family lives. Huge improvements in the last few decades, in terms of cyberspace,

news flow and other technological devices, are included as factors that affect people's lifestyles. In the last section, I present the evaluations and opinions of my interviewees on government policy, to explore whether they are affected and in what ways. The consequences of these policies from the interviewees' perspectives, and any further suggestions they make, are also outlined in order to highlight how they evaluate related policies.

## 7.4    Educational expansion

## 7.4.1  Increasing participation

As mentioned in the introduction (Chapter One), the societal context in Taiwan has changed over time. Correspondingly, the educational system has also echoed these changes. Taiwanese society was primarily based on labour-intensive industries, like the textile industry, which led economic development in Taiwan before 1980 (Hermalin et al. 1994). This economic situation depended on the labour of the current grandparent cohort. As a result, they had far less opportunity to go to school and gain qualifications when they were of school age. A great number of the grandparent interviewees categorised their insufficient childhood education as a major difference between being a grandchild then and now. They described how family cooperation was essential for surviving the toughness of their living conditions; this was the main reason they could not go to school. James's grandfather, for example, straightforwardly pointed out the disparities between his own life and the his grandchildren's, in terms of the time allocated to education. This notion was supported by Sean's and Lily's grandmothers.

Example 7.4a

James's grandfather:        *We had to plant some food and offer our energies to help our family, but what grandchildren do after schools now is to their homework… We had to*

*share familial burdens, but they seem to not need to assist their family.* (Living distant from James)

Example 7.4b

Sean's grandmother: *It is sort of destiny that we weren't allowed to enjoy being educated. We did not have time since we had to help our family.* (Living in a grand-family with Sean)

Example 7.4c

Lily's grandmother: *I am not very literate… because of the civil war and a lack of materials. Not many people had a chance to go to schools in my generation. I think it is a contributing factor to the difference between me and my grandchildren. Going to schools seems to be the most important thing in their lives now.* (Living distant from Lily)

In the statements above, the grandparents described their lack of opportunity to get an education, and they referred to the level of educational expansion between their childhoods and those of their grandchildren. For better understanding, these personal stories offered by the grandparent generation should be seen in the light of the era when they were children. In the introductory chapter, the political and social circumstances of both mainland China and Taiwan were in a state of upheaval, and industry was based on agriculture or textile production, both of which were highly labour-intensive. As a result, people at that time hardly received any formal or higher education because their time and labour were basically committed to their family for communal benefit. The educational statistics of the national archives back up this contrast in educational participation of these two generations. Among people who aged 20–29, around 65% are graduates of colleges and universities; for the older generation, aged 65 and older, only about 9% have finished their college or university education (Ministry of Interior 2009). This seven-fold difference in completing tertiary education clearly indicates the different level of access to education between the generations, and reflects the difficulties the grandparent generation faced in going to school. The current level of importance given to educational achievement and increasing opportunity fuels the greater prevalence of being educated among today's younger generation.

In addition to educational expansion in current Taiwanese society, the system and content of the education itself seem to account for even more differences in being a grandchild across the generations.

## 7.4.2 Different educational contents

The greater prevalence of education is one argument for the disparities between the childhoods of the grandparent and the grandchild generations, but the current curriculum also contributes to education gaps between grandparents and grandchildren. In the past, Confucian-related values formed the basis of what was taught to students. However, the mainstream education in Taiwan, and the rest of the world, is now governed by western standards of scholarship. In contemporary Taiwan, education now presents western images of individual behaviours and family relationships (Stafford 1995; Thornton et al. 1994), even though the traditional context is still included (Hsieh 2004). Being educated in schools thus provides a bridge that connects pupils with western ideas, namely those of America and Europe (Thornton et al. *ibid*). Here an assumption is borne out in the grandparent and the grandchild informants' testimonies; namely, that the grandchild generation of today is more familiar with western values because they have been educated accordingly, unlike their grandparents who had fewer means of accessing western culture. Both the grandparent and the grandchild informants considered that western ideas and trends had become dominant influences in education.

Correspondingly, Jamie underscored the contribution of cultural changes to changes in being a grandchild. It is important to emphasise that much of the content of education is no longer based on Confucian ideology.

Example 7.4d

Jamie: *The ideas I have learnt from education are all from western scholarship, even including the Educational Theory I am studying now. Everything is all western, and eastern consideration is very little.* (Jamie, 24, living in the same city as her grandmother)

According to Jamie, western concepts seem to be predominating in the educational arena. It is worth pointing out Jamie's educational background to indicate the degree to which western concepts have affected the Taiwanese curriculum. She is a Masters student, majoring in education in a national education university. Importantly, she was impressed by her school syllabus, which was filled with and made use of the resources of western academia. The depth of western influence in the educational domain of contemporary Taiwan is quite clear from the fact that that the resources for the students in the national universities are based on western academia. It is interesting that a number of the grandparent informants felt the same way, even though they have no access to the educational system. The employment of western values in the present curriculum is another way in which being a grandchild is not the same as it once was, in the grandparents' opinions.

Example 7.4e

Cindy's grandfather:    *Children in the current society are different from the past in that school education means more to them and teaches them in a western way... Yes, I think they hardly take our advice since they are facing something more modern, new and individualistic from schools. The eras between the present and the past are varied.* (Living distant from Cindy)

Cindy's grandfather clearly highlighted the different educational systems and participations between the past and the present, as reflecting to the insufficient resources of education in her own era. She further indicated the content of present-day education has been strongly guided by western perspectives, and taken over from Chinese guidelines. He also suggested that being educated in a western way might be the reason that the grandchild generation no longer takes the advice of seniors, because of a preference to be more modern and individualistic. This is the opposite of what traditional Chinese-based education teaches juniors, namely that conformity towards seniors is very important; this adds to the tension between traditional education and the current western system in his understanding. His opinion is also supported by other grandparent and grandchild informants, who suggest that the changes in educational content may have affected the attitudes and

behaviours of the current grandchild generation. This discussion will now go into more detail about what those educational transformations are, and how they affect the grandchildren's behaviours – again, from the point of view of the interviewees.

### 7.4.3 Potential outcomes

The interviewees highlighted the new trend in contemporary education in Taiwan, which has seen a shift from Chinese guidelines to western principles. Basically, this ongoing phenomenon is seen as leading to people becoming more individualistic, which is somewhat contradictory to traditional Chinese collective and group-interest concepts. As a result, grandchildren behave differently from their grandparent counterparts in that they start to prioritise individual concerns.

As mentioned by Cindy's grandfather, these young people are less likely to follow the advice of their seniors; this statement is seconded by other grandparent interviewees. For instance, Wednesday's grandmother shared her opinions on the negative relation between being educated and being Xiao-Shun. She told me that:

Example 7.4f

Wednesday's grandmother: *The current phenomenon is that people who are less educated are more Xiao-Shun than those who get higher qualifications. People who are well educated are always far-sighted in that they set goals for the far future for themselves only; not their original family. They are too independent to think about other people.* (Living distant from *Wednesday*)

Wednesday's grandmother connected educational achievement with the degree of being Xiao-Shun in a negative way, due to the subsequent self-centred preference and increasing independence of the youth. For this reason, obtaining more education seems not to be appreciated, while the concern falls down on interpersonal interactions. Similar discussions are revealed in the grandchildren's interviews.

For example, Annie highlighted the potential influence of academic qualifications of the young generation on grandparent–grandchild relationships.

Example 7.4g

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *How about education? Do you think it matters in the domestic area? If yes, can you talk more about how education influences the domestic sphere?* |
| Annie: | *In my case, I don't think it matters that much.\** |
| Interviewer: | *How about other people?* |
| Annie: | *I think people may rebel against their seniors because young people nowadays think they are better educated than their seniors. That causes damage to familial harmony... The higher the qualification people get, the stronger individual opinions become.* (Granddaughter, 18, living in a three-generation family) |

*Annie stated here that parental influence is very strong and this will be presented under the section on other family-related factors in the grandparent–grandchild interaction.

Annie's narrative proposes a positive link between stronger personal opinions and more qualifications, and the potential for arguments between older and younger generations because of the self-confidence that comes with being better educated. Notably, rebellion, which is viewed as the opposite behaviour of conformity, is too referred to by the grandchild generation, reflecting the ideas of Wednesday's and Cindy's grandparents. It indicates that the potential for tension in grandparent–grandchild relationships that arises when the grandchildren are educated, is not only a concern for seniors, but also a concern for the youths.

In fact, some grandchild interviewees even more directly highlighted the incompatibility between the perceived detrimental features of the western educational content and traditional values. For example, Chris argued that people are led along an opposite path from the traditional one because the concept of being independent is promoted in contemporary educational spheres.

Example 7.4h

| | |
|---|---|
| Chris: | *I reckon that the culture has changed a lot in the society.* |
| Interviewer: | *Which part of culture do you mean?* |

| Chris: | *Education? I think?* |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *Can you talk more about this? I don't get it clearly.* |
| Chris: | *The trend of education at the moment copies the way the West works. It is a bit contradictory to our tradition, which is Confucianism and focuses on collective values. However, the current condition differs from the past in that what we care more about is independence and individualism, and this is what western education brings and teaches.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother) |

According to Chris's narrative, western education has affected traditional education, and the original collective values have weakened, so that students in Taiwan are less familiar with traditional philosophy. Another interviewee, Kevin, also elucidated how this western influence in mainstream education changes people's behaviours, pointing out that the required achievement in the curriculum is responsible for this less family-concerned transformation.

Example 7.4i

| Kevin: | *I think education, nowadays, isn't concerned with familial issues. It, to some extent, encourages people to compete with each other for better achievements. As a result, the likelihood of becoming more and more selfish and self-centred is getting higher and higher. People are more individualistic under these conditions.* |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *Can you say more about how this happens?* |
| Kevin: | *I think there is a lack of education relating to familial things at schools and that people are behaving inappropriately in families, especially when parents are also busy earning money and have no time to educate their children about their family. Hence, there is nobody to teach the young generation about the importance of traditional familial rites and manners. Gradually, young people will become more and more selfish and not give any consideration to others, including their family members. They are becoming unfamiliar with their families.* |
| Interviewer: | *Why does education in Taiwan, do you think, lack this consideration?* |
| Kevin: | *I think the principle of education in Taiwan emphasises the achievements in curricula and then slightly ignores emotional concerns and domestic stuff.* (Grandson, 21, living in the same city as his grandmother) |

In Kevin's understanding, there is a positive relationship between being more competitive academically and being more self-centred or selfish. He also argued that the attention paid to academic achievements, which are very personal interests, detracts from considerations of the wider family. He pointed out the possibility for tension between individual benefit and communal advantage. Wednesday's account echoes this. She believed that academic competition is placed to the fore, therefore, family-related issues are considered less important.

Example 7.4j

Wednesday:           *I think people pay attention to educational achievements, rather than the consideration of family things – it is all about competition.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in the same city as her grandmother)

Kevin and Wednesday pointed out in a very straightforward way that the self-centredness is a consequence of people focusing too strongly on their educational achievement, and they speculate on the decrease in consideration for other family relatives. Importantly, this particular perspective gets support in Yan's book *The Individualization of Chinese Society* (2009). Yan explains that ideological collectivism in Chinese rural society, which has undergone many social developments, has been replaced by a slogan of individualism in life competition. In other words, it seems that maintaining a competitive attitude may explain the condition in which people are led to be more individualistic and less collective. In line with this, I propose that the far-reaching effect of education in present-day Taiwan can be deemed as the present of experiencing individualistic values.

School education achieves more than just conveying information or knowledge; it also helps to cultivate character (Berkowitz and Bier 2005; Stafford 1995). Education reaches deeply into a human being's life in that it also educates people morally, to behave appropriately, according to societal standards (Meyer 1988). Importantly, the traditional education system taught people the virtue of being collective within a group (Confucian Analects; Miller and Makela 2005; Park et al. 2005; Rozman 2002), which is very different from the content of the present curriculum. These perspectives were argued in Fan's research (2007), which was conducted in Beijing,

Hong Kong and Houston. Crucially, Fan's research suggests the idea that western education emphasises the importance of independence, individuality and equality, which has changed the traditional direction of education in East Asian countries. Accordingly, through the use of interviews, the author indicated that western education is responsible for the difficulties seen in family care in contemporary society.

It is true that the grandparent and grandchild interviewees have gone through different education environments, either in terms of content or participation, but the thoughts of being independent, individualistic, competitive, self-centred and even selfish are perceived by both the grandparent and grandchild interviewees when describing how present education places people. This indicates their understandings about the profound effects of education and their perspectives are, to an extent, supported in Fan's academic research, which highlights the significance of this phenomenon.

It is also noteworthy that these discussions about educational expansion are in a general tone; the interviewees did not specifically recall their personal experiences to argue its influence on their families. Annie expressed concerns about the potential negative effects–, but rejected its effect on her family, yet she still considered that the detrimental effects of education on family interactions apply to other people's families. This preference for arguing on a general level rather than sharing personal stories is an interesting phenomenon in this study. The phenomenon might not be explicated by the existing data of this research because it was not expected in the research setting. However, the link between being educated and harm to family relationships is undeniable according to these interviewees.

In conclusion, the influences of educational expansion are diverse, but two categories were strongly emphasised in the interviews – the distribution of time, and being more individualistic. According to the narratives of the grandparent interviewees, spending more time at school than at home and generalisations about contemporary society signify a transfer in authority from family seniors to school teachers. More

importantly, the content and prevalence of current education are closer to western values, as noted by both the grandparent and the grandchild interviewee. Furthermore, it is also understood that the consequences of western-led education are individuality and self-centredness. Both the grandparents and the grandchildren considered that this transformation in education drives people to less interdependent; they are not as collective as they once were, in exchange for pursuing more individual goals. A similar situation has also arisen through exposure to the mass media, whereby very foreign ideas and trends have reached Taiwan.

## 7.5    Mass media

In this section, I argue how mass media is described as affecting grandparent–grandchild relationships and to what extent grandparents and grandchildren recognised that they have been influenced by it. As aforementioned about imported concepts in the literature review, the influence of mass media plays an important role nowadays in people's daily lives in that televisions and the internet are the main channels through which to access western individualistic-associated notions. As for the technological improvements of fashionable devices, what influences have they brought into the lives of the grandchild generation and what are the subsequent consequences to grandparent–grandchild relationships?

### 7.5.1  Different circumstances: past and present

Television was launched in Taiwan in 1962, and its popularity has increased greatly; more and more people have this device in their home – 26.5% in 1992 and 82.2% in 2001 (The Database of Taiwan Television 2012). Spitulnik (1993) discussed the functions of mass media; its powerful influence in human society circles continually, integrating into many areas of life and helping to shape society and the attitudes of the people. Chen (1998) also suggests that the media functions as a cultivator for

citizens in society. Both western and eastern research has identified the critical role of the media, which shapes our society and culture.

In the past in Taiwanese society, in accordance with the massive requirements for labour in labour-intensive industries and the deficit of technological devices, people's lives were less interfered with by the world outside the family. Cable television was not legalised until 1993 in Taiwan, indicating that the massive and powerful influence of media on Taiwanese society is relatively recent (Li 2001). Additionally, newspapers, magazines, television and the internet are all media channels from which people can gauge the latest trends (Rozman 2002; Spitulnik 1993; Thornton et al. 1994), helping to investigate how mass media affects Taiwan and its population. There is a difference in the level of exposure to media of grandparent and grandchild generations, and this is likely to cause disparities in their lifestyles and social backgrounds. I discuss the influence of media on the narratives of the grandparents and the grandchildren separately, in order to help clarify whether or not these two cohorts react differently to its influence. The background of the conversation is the argument about disparities in being a grandchild between the past and present, and the would-be differences between the current environment and society of the future.

## 7.5.2  Grandchild informants' perspectives

As for the effect of mass media, the grandchild interviewees not only shared how this new technology facilitates their lifestyles, but also emphasised the difference between its influence on them and their grandparents.

### 7.5.2.1 Influence on grandchild generation

The data from the grandchildren interviewees showed that the influence of mass media is consistently associated with familiarity with the West, especially individualistic concepts. Mass media is seen as a medium between eastern and

western societies, transiting western information and ideologies into eastern countries. However, what affects people is not the mass media *per se*, but the role it plays. The interviewees conveyed their beliefs that independence is a product of the West, imported into the society by the media. Chris, for example, clearly pointed out that media, as a tool, spreads western values through Taiwanese society to emphasise that individualism is a trend in line with development.

Example 7.5a

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviewer: | *Can you think more about that why people will treat their parents or seniors differently in the future?* |
| Chris: | *I think, most importantly, mass media has to be responsible for why people, most of the time, think about themselves only.* |
| Interviewer: | *Is it the thing you mentioned when we talked about the trend of being individualistic? Are they related?* |
| Chris: | *Yes. I think the media has played a crucial role in spreading the concept of individualism in our society.* |
| Interviewer: | *What makes you conclude in this way?* |
| Chris: | *In my opinion, I think it continually transfers westerns ideas into our life. It encourages people to learn what independence is, so that people can do everything if they feel like doing it. There are so many things relating to individualism. You won't give consideration to others. Actually, it is not something either good or bad, in that it goes both ways. This is something that my parents and grandparents did not have when they were young.* (Grandson, 25, living in the same city as his grandmother) |

Chris expressed a belief that people will be able to exercise more freedom if they learn how to be more individualistic – through the mass media. He identified one function of media in importing western concepts into Taiwan, thus providing people with an opportunity to know or to experience something unfamiliar to both his parents and grandparents, contributing further to generational differences. A similar argument for the role of the media in Taiwan is presented by Grace. She considered media to be an intermediary, facilitating a flow of useful information between Taiwan and other countries. By so doing, it exposes people to external ideas and inventions, and thus broadens their knowledge and capabilities.

Example 7.5b

| | |
|---|---|
| Grace: | *I think people are more and more open-minded and independent.* |
| Interviewer: | *Okay. But what makes you think so?* |
| Grace: | *I think it is because of the prevalence of television and the convenience that cyberspace brings. I think mass media is a contributor, flowing technology and knowledge. Therefore, it is easier for people to receive information which comes from other counties.* |
| Interviewer: | *Which are these countries you refer to?* |
| Grace: | *The USA or the UK, I think.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a single-parent family with her grandfather) |

She attributed broadening of views and gaining independence to exposure to foreign resources in the mass media, enabling people's lifestyle to be more self-dependent. In relation to the advantage what the media has brought into the grandchildren's life, it seems to suggest that the need for collectivised practice decreases as technological improvements facilitate human beings' life.

Based on the data, there is a link between the exposure to the media and the level of being individualistic in that the grandchild informants argued that they have experienced various western concepts through the medium, namely independence and individualism. In terms of the grandchild interviewees' accounts, Taiwan has somewhat opened its gates to embrace individualistic-related values imported from and become influenced by the West because of the functions of mass media.

## 7.5.2.2 Influence on the grandparent generation

The influence of mass media was examined not only for the grandchild generation, but also the elderly, again using information from the grandchildren's interviews. From their point of view, the mass media also gives their grandparents a chance to connect to with the world outside the family, with the potential to broaden their views, add colour to their lives, and keep them up to date with events in the wider world.

Example 7.5c

Cindy: *The grandparent generation is more open-minded than it was and I think technology can explain this transition. My grandfather sometimes lives with my family or in my uncle's house and, because of this, he knows more about what young people are up to. He also likes to watch soap operas and he sort of notes the things that go on in society by the plots of these programmes. This is saying that the television is a medium for my grandpa to know what things are happening outside the family as he isn't like us, who have so many chances to experience these new progressions in person. (Granddaughter, 25, living distant from her grandfather)*

The key point to emerge from Cindy's data is that she identified television as a medium for conveying things that happens outside the family to somebody who is restricted to the family, mainly referring to the elderly – and her own grandfather in this case. In this way, the links forged by mass media between Taiwan and western countries are also regarded as a bridge connecting the worlds inside and outside the family for elderly people.

Oliver's narratives also support this point of view. In his narrative, he indicated his belief that television can, to a degree, widen old people's horizons.

Example 7.5d

Oliver: *I think the influence of television programmes also affects grandparents in that grandparents get a shock from external phenomena outside the family. In this case, they start to loosen their previous standards and find out that there is more than one possibility for children's futures. They too start to respect the interests and the opinions of their juniors and they try to understand what those new things are and how they work in their offsprings' lives. (Grandson. 22, living distant from his grandmother)*

According to Oliver, it is obvious that grandparents also have an opportunity to approach new ideas and try new things, and they also learn how to accept and respect new innovations in the process. Hence the elderly can connect with the people in the young generation by knowing more about what happens in their lives through the information obtained from various forms of media.

In brief, according to the understandings of the grandchild generation, the ways in which the mass media has affected both age groups are very similar, in that the primary result of exposure is the widespread dissemination of western ideas throughout Taiwan. By broadening their worlds via mass media, Taiwanese people can easily access and experience things that are non-Chinese. Now the discussion turns to an exploration of how the grandparent respondents perceived the effects of the mass media. Will they raise different perspectives from the grandchild generation because they may be more benefited from the media because of their physical immobility? Age-related physical deterioration deprives the elderly of their mobility; they are less likely to approach the world outside the family or experience many aspects of modernity for themselves. Thus, the mass media provides a means to compensate for the reduced mobility of old people. Or will they show more negative judgements on the effects of the media as they are less familiar with the media.

## 7.5.3  Grandparent respondents' viewpoints

The influence of mass media was regarded in similar terms by the grandparents. However, they focused mainly on its influence on their grandchildren's lives, indicating that they were less sensitive about their own circumstances and potential changes. They described the extent of its influence on their grandchildren's lifestyles, and argued what media has brought into their society. In brief, children's lives have become more complicated. From their point of view, there is simply too much information on the television and internet. Of course, this technology was not around when they were children. Take a look at the following narrative as an example.

Example 7.5e

Jason's grandfather:      *Our environment has been changing all the time and new inventions just appear day-by-day. People in the past were more pure and easy-going. Children in the current society have their own, strong opinions and ideas and are more independent. They may feel bad or overact if you get involved too much in their life.*

Interviewer:              *Why do you think so? Any reasons to explain your thoughts?*

Jason's grandfather: *I think people are influenced a lot by external cultures spread by mass media. In the past, people just followed their seniors' rules and fulfilled their demands which meant they didn't rebel against their seniors. However, this situation doesn't exist anymore.* (Living distant from Jason)

Rebellion is mentioned here as a possible outcome of having strong personal thoughts. This statement once again makes the link between being more individualistic and potential harm to family harmony (reflecting to the example 7.4e, 7.4f and 7.4g). As in previous discussions about being well-educated, this grandparent highlights an association between being individualistic and being rebellious, which indicates the tension between being more individualistic attitude and maintaining collective manner.

Oliver's grandmother concurred. She suggested that there are complications for young people in the current environment, not least because of the many opportunities for them today. Although she did not raise any negative aspects about the media, as Jason's grandfather did, she stated that being more independent, and relying on one's self more, is understood to reduce the opportunity to take part in collective events. Kevin's grandmother too articulated that being more independent is an outcome of exposing mass media.

Example 7.5f

Oliver's grandmother: *The children were really pure and had simple lives in my generation, since we didn't have this access (referring to media) to new information and knowledge, due to the lack of televisions. In contrast, my grandchildren or young people nowadays look at the world from different angles and they possess far more resources to experience things than we did a long time ago. In this situation, they are more independent, smarter, and quickly reactive. This is all because of the development of society and computerisation.* (Living distant from Oliver)

Example 7.5g

Kevin's grandmother: *My grandchildren get lots of information from cyberspace and they can do everything online. They are more independent because of this resource (referring to mass media), which we didn't have in our era. This is the way*

These testimonies suffice to illustrate ideas about how and to what extent mass media operates in contemporary environments, and what its consequences are. According to this data, it can be argued that grandparent interviewees relate the exposure of mass media to a tendency of grandchildren to be more independent, with regard to the their increased knowledge and resources – with the consequence that the requirements for interdependence and interactions with the family decrease.

More importantly, as I have argued consistently through the analyses, people have different standards in their judgement of the operation of 'independence' in people's lives. Based on the data of this research, the idea or process of 'being more independent' deserves further discussion because it has such different roles in private and domestic domains.

In Chapter Five, I discussed the range of evaluations made by the grandchildren interviewees about being individualistic for personal and communal benefits. Not surprisingly, this also applies to the grandparents' narratives about the increasing exposure to media and resulting being more individualistic. Comparison of the narratives reveals that Oliver's and Kevin's grandparents indicated some positive effects of being more independent. However, Jason's grandfather expressed specific concerns about how the media can ruin family harmony. Exploring the content of the material more deeply reveals a more specific phenomenon: while being independent is regarded as a harmful influence on family-related issues, it is also appreciated for enriching people's lives and capabilities. Thus, for non-family-related aspects, the interviewees show approved of it, because they recognise the value of becoming more independent, achieving aims and being more capable. Yet these processes conflicted with traditional ideas about family, and about the harm it does to collectivistic cooperation.

## 7.6    **Official policy**

## **7.6.1  Background**

This section portrays current government policies over the last few years. In this time, the government has attempted to restore the position of seniors in the family, promoting their high status and family ethics. Just how this policy influences grandparent–grandchild relationships is the focus of the discussions that follow, again from the perspective of the interviewees.

Before looking into the aforementioned grandparent–grandchild policies, it is worth outlining the previous policies for care of the elderly, in order to provide a basic understanding of how Taiwanese society operates it official resources towards family assistance. In the case of Taiwan, the government concerns itself with five primary categories in the domain of family policy. These are:

*Financial security*
*Gender equality*
*Family support*
*Prevention and solutions for familial issues*
*Social inclusion*

Information on these areas is drawn from the government (Government Executive Yuan 2007). The reports were based on official research, with data collected from across the country. None of these five family-care domains related specifically to grandparent–grandchild relationships, which are simply included as part of a wider category.

At present, there are two policies relating to grandparent–grandchild relationships specifically. The first, called *Grandparent Week*, dates back to 2008. The other, which came into regulation two years later in 2010, is called *Grandparent Day*.

According to the official records mentioned above, the government states its concerns about the lessening of traditional values in the younger generation. They describe that seniority, intergenerational interactions and the level of respect are not as they were. Therefore, they intended to bring traditional Chinese values in family life back to the fore in family-related policy. Therefore, various activities for grandparents and grandchildren are provided during both events, with the primary aims of strengthening the importance of intergenerational heritage, interactions and understandings. The grandparent generation is expected to act as a bridge for connecting past and present, so that the young people learn to respect and have fun with their elderly relatives. The intended consequence was that grandparents would be brought closer to their families and young people would be more willing to and more appreciative of the contact with their seniors (Minister of Education 2008, 2011).

Significantly, the focus of this research is on these two policies, within their particular political dimension, rather than on pensions or social security for the elderly, primarily because of the role of traditional Chinese values in government propaganda, which is relevant to the research interests of the present study. Mainly, there is no practical assistance to families, but family moral education instead. The ideas of seniority and collective benefit are substantially highlighted in the agendas of these two policies, which reflect on the decline of traditional Chinese values as evidenced by previous research (Cao 2009; Lu et al. 2006).

In Rodger's (1995) and Gillies's (2005, 2008) studies, the emphasis on morality in the domestic sphere is argued for. In terms of the tendency to individualism or neo-liberalism, Rodger expresses concern about the effect of moral malaise on family structure, and thus calls for recognition of individual responsibility for the family. On the other hand, Gillies highlights the British government's focus on moral education for the parent generation, adopted to alleviate the decline in traditional values of duty and responsibility for parenting. However, she argues that multiple structural factors have produced this domestic challenge, so that parenting seems to need additional support apart from moral regulation. What should we conclude from

these developments? In Taiwan, the government seems to realise how severe the problem of decrease in traditional values concerning family assistance might be. In addition, does the Taiwanese administration's promotion of Grandparent Week and Grandparent Day, and its emphasis on traditional collective values in Taiwan, mean that the administration endorses the moral regulation undertaken by the British government – despite   the latter's insufficiency, as pointed out in Gillies's research (2005)? More interestingly, with reference to Taiwan as a fundamentally collective-based society, it can be asked: would the promotion of traditional values of duty and obligation towards family individuals have better consequences for family interaction if it became the focus of political policy?

However, improving policies for the elderly involves conflicting interests; for example, although the government wants to meet the needs of older people, finding such resources is challenging. This policy is aimed at maintaining and strengthening the traditional family provision of assistance, which would complement or subsidise any financial and physical support that they provide (Ofstedal et al. 2002). Leading on from this statement, therefore, I suggest that limited resources of the government could be one motivation for this drive to promote traditional values about seniority, rather than funding care of the ageing population themselves. In other words, anything that strengthens intergenerational connections will improve the level of support for their daily routines in the domestic arena, thus reducing the burden on the government. In fact, whether or not grandparent–grandchild relationships gain any benefit is so far unknown, because there is a lack of empirical data. Hence, from a more critical viewpoint, it is worth questioning the official intentions of promoting or re-instating traditional values in Taiwanese society; after all, they might simply be a mechanism for avoiding funding the care of the ageing generation.

This is why the following interviews are so important, as they unfold how people feel about and evaluate these regulations. They may also give some indication of how effective these policies are, and thus indicate to what extent political measures outside the family can influence interactions within the domestic arena.

At the beginning, I intentionally asked both the grandparents and the grandchildren about their perceptions of these two policies. Subsequently, I asked them to estimate the effect of the two Acts on their relationships and interactions – but only if they did not specifically raise the issue themselves. I also questioned all the interviewees about their other thoughts or suggestions about the effects of official policy on their family domains. By so doing, I could gauge the effects of these political measures on the lives of people in Taiwan, specifically in the domestic sphere.

## 7.6.2 Efficiency of the policies

During the interviews, I was quite surprised by the paucity of knowledge available on these two regulations – it was far beyond what I had anticipated. When I was planning my research, I did not expect the interviewees to be very familiar with governmental policies because the participants are all grandparents and college or higher-education students. The social roles and statuses of these individuals mean their lives are more attached to family or school, and therefore perhaps limited, so they would not have many opportunities to hear about government policy. In fact, a small number of the grandchild interviewees studied in disciplines related to family relationships or social work, so they knew about these policies; the remaining informants, however, were totally unfamiliar with the regulations. This begged the question of how the propagation of information on these policies could be so inefficient.

Generally, the grandparents and the grandchildren in this study perceived the influence of the two official policies in a pessimistic way. Most of them expressed the view that the regulations had no influence on their familial interactions. There are two possible reasons why these government policies are not having any effect on the family. One is that pre-existing family relationships and atmospheres are more important to make such intervention irrelevant. The other is that the propagation of these official policies to date has been limited, in that the aims are not clear and concise enough for the targets.

## 7.6.2.1 Family relationships outweigh policy interventions

The majority of the informants believed that the existing interactions within their families are the most important factor for structuring their grandparent–grandchild relationships. Thus, external influences encouraging closer relationships do not actually affect them significantly. Their arguments chiefly focused on the view that neither intimate nor distant grandparent–grandchild relationships would be affected by governmental policies of this nature, and that the pre-existing situation in the family would predominantly determine how family members interact. This is what Annie told me:

Example 7.6a

Annie: *It may work if grandparents and grandchildren are close already, but I wonder what happens with the people who are not close to their grandparents and grandchildren. I am afraid that it would not operate well in that kind of situation.* (Granddaughter, 18, living in a three-generation with her grandmother)

Annie expressed that official policy might work better if grandparents and grandchildren were already well connected as in, they might enjoy having a special day or week to celebrate together; otherwise external influences would probably not have much impact; this revealed her doubts about the policy.

Grace articulated that the efficiency of governmental measures are limited when grandparents and grandchildren are already intimate, because they do not need the hoped-for benefits of such policies. In Grace's view, families who are not close would probably feel uncomfortable taking part in these suggested activities are, so again they are not helpful.

Example 7.6b

Grace: *I think we don't need those things because… say, Father's Day, we celebrate together with my father and my grandfather since we are really*

*intimate. There is no need to regulate another Grandparent Day to remind me how important my grandparents are as I know it already. These sorts of things are slightly fake and pretending-to-do-something holidays or Acts can sometimes embarrass family members if they are not close. I don't think this should be a primary purpose of the government.* (Granddaughter, 21, living in a lone-parent family with her grandfather)

Example 7.6c

Chris's grandmother:      *Oh, I didn't know about these two policies before… I think the intention of the government is to be appreciated. However, I think my family would not be influenced a lot as we are happy together and close enough already.* (Living in the same city as Chris)

Again, although Chris's grandmother appreciated the intentions of the policies, she denied the influence of the Acts on her family because she regarded the atmosphere within her family as good enough. They do not need other activities, organised by the government, to maintain the closeness between family members.

According to these testimonies, official regulations do not have an impact on grandparent–grandchild relationships, either in positive or negative family situations. The interviewees suggested that the quality of family relationships is the primary governing force structuring their lives in the domestic domain. They could not see how these current government-led attempts to influence family relationships would reach its aims. Based on these accounts, I propose that official policy, viewed as an outside family force, is failing to reach inside families and affect their functioning.

### 7.6.2.2 Immaturity of current policy

Given the apparent inefficiency of this government campaign, improvements are needed alongside more scheme-specific promotions, to make the good intentions and have better outcomes. These suggestions were made by both the grandparent and grandchild respondents, reflecting the immaturity of the current social policy, possibly providing evidence of its implausibility. According to the informants'

responses, the content and promotion of the policies is not sufficiently mature; the aims were not made clear and the information available about it was still poor. The informants further doubted whether the government had accurately identified what people want and need. The effort and expenditure involved in holding events and producing policies would be less meaningful if the government does not really understand the state of family interactions

Example 7.6d

| Grace's grandfather: | *I don't think those events help. As I just mentioned, a relationship is developed over time – it is not built up over some temporary occasions. Government cannot just ask people to care about domestic things, what… twice per year?! No, it is not viable.* |
| Interviewer: | *Okay… Have you ever thought about the intentions of those policies?* |
| Grace's grandfather: | *I don't know, actually, but I think it is meaningless to me and my family.* |
| Interviewer: | *Can you imagine the outcomes of these regulations for somebody else if you don't think they affect your family?* |
| Grace's grandfather: | *No. I don't think I can imagine its effect on other people. It is just too impractical and vague… it depends on different conditions of each family.* (Living with Grace in a lone-parent family) |

Grace's grandfather highlighted how building up relationships is a long-term effort, and one-shot celebrations are limited in their effectiveness. Moreover, Amber made a more direct claim to argue that the two regulated policies have difficulty in succeeding in practice because of the unclear aims and contents, in her understanding.

Example 7.6e

| Amber: | *I suggest that the government should have known what it wants to promote in our society. They have to make the objectives clearer and they have to understand what kind of grandparent–grandchild relationships people want and need. By so doing, the government can fulfil their own… and their citizen's requirements at the same time. So far, the policies are still really blurred to me. However, I think it can be a reminder, reminding people they might have to contact their grandparents, but I think that is all. Nothing can really be achieved or helped by this in practice.* (Granddaughter, 22, living in a single-parent family with her grandmother) |

According to the responses in this study, the grandparents and grandchildren are still in some doubt about what Grandparent Day and Grandparent Week are all about, and how these policies might benefit them or the wider good. Both the grandparent and the grandchild respondents commented on the inefficiency of the policies, stemming from inadequate promotion or the blurred intentions, so they – as the targets of the Acts – have no idea how they will benefit from them. In their understandings, the schemes merely organise some general activities for grandparents and grandchildren to take part in on a short-term basis, namely for a day or a week per year. However, they question the efficiency and effectiveness of these 'one-off' occasions of the existing policies.

If this is a realistic judgement on the propagations of the two Acts, and it might be said that the government exists 'in its own world', then imagine how its regulations and legislation would support people who are in urgent need of other kinds of help and assistance or who just need consistent official encouragement. However, the governmental policies do not begin to take into account the real facts relating to the exact conditions of families and the nature of family relationships, so this feedback is of limited value, based on the narratives of both the research interviewees.

## 7.7    Conclusion

This chapter chiefly focuses on five significant domestic–demographic and social factors in order to explore whether grandparent–grandchild relationships have been influenced by transformations in these dimensions over time.

The first factor was gender. The data for the grandsons and the granddaughters in this research are not consistent with those of previous research, that indicate girls may have more contact and closer relationships with their grandparents, compared to their male counterparts. However, both the female and male grandchildren in this study

evenly provided emotional and practical assistance to their grandparents, although the way they do it is different. In addition, different family structures are associated with different approaches to interpreting collective and individualistic values. The narratives showed that the grandchildren, who lived under the same roof with, or close to their grandparents, expressed more collective perspectives in their interviews, and the grandchildren from single-parent families saw individualistic concepts through a noticeably negative lens.

With the transformations taking place in education, the popularity of mass media, and the propagation of official policy, young people find themselves in a new society, which is very different from their parents' and grandparents' generations in terms of their living and social circumstances. Western-based education has the effect of spreading the values of individualism (Fan 2007) and this statement is supported by the findings of this study. The narratives of the grandparent and grandchild informants acknowledged the introduction of western ideas through the education system. In possession of more resources nowadays, young people have become more capable and independent, and able to deal with their personal issues with less assistance from their families. However, this individual development of the younger generation is highlighted by both the grandparents and grandchildren as being responsible for weakening family ties.

The rapid development of mass media has resulted in the spread of western trends into Taiwanese society, again propagating ideas of greater individualism and independence among the grandchild generation – with a mixed reception. The individualistic concepts inherent in this mass media are not appreciated by the interviewees when it causes other people to ignore others' opinions and needs. However, naturally the opportunities for personal achievement or individual interest that are associated with individualism and independence are seen as positive influences. All in all, the youth in Taiwan are more likely to count on themselves more, and live in less interdependent circumstances, which demonstrate their capabilities and competence. As for the media's effect on old people, the elderly

obtain more knowledge and news by watching television, which gives them more opportunities to see the world outside the family.

As for political policy, the informants discussed it in terms of pre-existing family relationships. Both the grandparent and grandchild generations cited the immaturity and poor propagation of the policies: *Grandparent Week* and *Grandparent Day*, and how that may contribute to its failure to meet its expected aims. A great number of the participants stated that only a fuller understanding of the core issues within families, and long-term plans, would expect for better results of official policy since the current short-term or one-off efforts seem not be enriching the intergenerational relationships of the respondents in this study.

To conclude, various domestic–demographic changes and wider social transformations have shaped people's attitudes towards their families over time, especially with respect to being a grandchild across the generations. Based on the research data, the effects of educational expansion and mass media in Taiwan have shifted its people from a Chinese-based attitude to a more western-led manner of behaviour in the domestic arena. This phenomenon is highlighted as an ongoing process, which may argue that Chinese collective principles are not as dominant as they once were in Taiwan, but co-exist with perceived individualistic concepts. According to the collision of these two value systems, exploring grandparent–grandchild relationships chronologically and from multi-dimensional aspects in Taiwanese society provides a wide-angled lens through which to view grandparent–grandchild interactions, familial interactions, and gross changes in a more complete framework. As a result, the interwoven connections between culture, society and families can be seen more clearly.

# 8    CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

## 8.1    Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I will first piece together the findings to correspond to original research aims and questions, as highlighted in Chapter One, by drawing on the testimony of the interviewees presented in Chapters Four to Seven to produce a synthesis of the findings. After this, I will further explore some unexpected implications from some of the outcomes of this present research, which mainly relate to the influence of the current process of individualism on grandparent–grandchild bonds in Taiwan. During my articulations, as the only researcher, I will discuss the implicit data behind the accounts of the interviewees. Finally, the findings of this research will be evaluated in order to consider the potential implications for further research and official policies of the Taiwanese government. In so doing, this research will extend and enrich the existing body of knowledge in this particular field, building up more information on grandparent–grandchild relationships in Taiwan.

## 8.2    Data discussions

The research aims and questions were focused on investigating the perceptions, the reported behaviours and the interactions with grandparents, of grandchildren in society with an ageing population – Taiwan. Meanwhile, the cultural and social contexts – referring mainly to the interwoven ideologies of collectivism and individualism – are also considered in this small-scale study, to explore how grandparent–grandchild interactions are influenced by the two value systems. Paradoxically, these two ideologies have some incompatibilities in directing people's behaviour, since collective ideas emphasise an in-group interest, whereas individualistic thoughts lead to a self-oriented perspective. In addition, social and demographic    transformations    over    recent    years    have    also    complicated

grandparent–grandchild interactions, so that family function does not work the same way as it used to. Therefore, a few social factors were selected to explore how social changes affect grandparent-grandchild relationships, in terms of the research interests and goals.

## 8.2.1  Piecing all findings together

In Chapter Four, the discussion mainly centred on role orientation, role enactment and explanations of the reported role performance, in terms of the narratives of the grandchild generation. Firstly, the grandchild interviewees saw their domestic position in the context of the following three ideas: lineage inheritance, their enhanced status in the family, and family assistance. Secondly, the grandchild participants, in articulating how they supported their grandparents, specified that they had provided both emotional and practical help. Lastly, they suggested lineage considerations, intimate grandparent–grandchild relationships, and the desire for reciprocity as explanations of their grandchild provision.

Importantly, from role perceptions, role performance of being a grandchild, and their reasons for giving family support, not only did it consistently emerge that grandparent–grandchild relationships preserved their traditional boundaries. Take the focus on linage as an example, it certainly expresses the effect of traditional Chinese culture on family interactions. However, in addition, a few new tendencies within these intergenerational interactions were underlined. For instance, the arguments within the grandchildren's discourses about the rising status and increase in personal rights of grandchildren in the family seem to point to more balanced grandparent–grandchild relationships in the present-day Taiwanese family. Arguably, in a hierarchical society, balanced relationships between intergenerational relatives seem to be challenging principles of superiority and inferiority. But we must ask: how did the new trends arise in the family and influence family interactions? Is that development related to the values of individualism or the result of individualistic processes, since personal choice and freedom are rather representative of the

concepts of individualism (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Yan 2003, 2006)? With regard to this question, we move on to the next section, about the interpretations of traditional collective and imported individualistic values, which may help to determine whether there is a connection between the idea of balanced grandparent–grandchild relationships and the understanding of individualistic concepts. If the link does not exist in the research discussions, is there any reason to rationalise this phenomenon?

Carrying on into Chapter Five the uncertainty generated in Chapter Four, the chapter outlines how the grandchildren interpret the nature of individualism and its impact on family support, together with their understandings of traditional collective values and the influence of those values. On the one hand, three categories were generated to express how they understand traditional collective values, namely hierarchal code, role responsibility and collectiveness. The way the grandchild generation comprehends the meanings and effects of the Chinese collective paradigm in the domestic sphere corresponds to existing research (Jordan 1986; Fan 2006, 2007). On the other hand, an unbalanced interpretation of individualism-related concepts emerged, since only selfish or utilitarian individualism was portrayed as existing in society and in their families, on the basis of the grandchild generation's accounts. Being more independent and less considerate of others are described as representative features of individualism-related concepts. Although the grandchild participants still evaluated the influence of collective-based doctrines more highly than that of individualistic-led tendencies in their families, the effects of the values of individualism and the results of the individualisation processes in Taiwan are substantially argued for. This confirmation of the impact of individualism-related ideas makes clear that greater personal rights and freedom are operating in the lives of the grandchild interviewees at present, which illustrates the difference in their lifestyle from that of people in the past. In line with this statement, we may question the findings of Chapter Four, in which the grandchild respondents did not employ purely tradition-related notions to make sense of their family orientation and behaviour. Instead, perspectives more associated with individualism are underscored

to explain their family support, as illuminating the strength of individualism and individualisation in the domestic domain.

In Chapter Six, arguments about how individualistic-associated concepts have affected interactions among family relatives lead on to discussion of the transformation in grandparent–grandchild relationships and interactions over time. In this section, the focus is on exploring any disparity across these two generations in the state of being a grandchild, by determining how both the grandparent and grandchild interviewees viewed the changes in the grandchildren's role from one generation to the next. In the main, both sets of accounts confirmed that the key features of earlier generations of grandchildren were their greater obedience and their higher level of contribution to the family. Briefly, both the grandparent and grandchild participants had parallel understandings of how the shifts in being a grandchild across generations were generated, the greater liberty from their families possessed by today's youth, compared to that of their earlier counterparts, was identified. From the increase in personal rights and choice of role orientation, and the explanations for the role performance attached to being a grandchild as discussed in Chapter Four, to the interpretation of individualistic concepts and their consequences for family life in Chapters Five and Six, the ongoing process of becoming more familiar with individualism and individualisation is consistently outlined. From the perspective of the sole researcher, the phenomena surrounding the operation of the values of individualism and the results of the processes of individualisation suggest that, at least from the viewpoints of the researched participants, the influence of individualistic concepts has spread throughout the country – Taiwan. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the strength of traditional collective values is not considered to have disappeared from family relationships, since that factor was underlined throughout the research.

Finally, the data in Chapter Seven were explored to identify how domestic–demographic and wider social transformations have altered the grandparent–grandchild relationship. To this end, the grandchildren's gender and family composition were categorised as domestic–demographic factors which

highlight the disparities between male and female and the effect of various family formats on grandparent–grandchild relationships. On the other hand, educational expansion, mass media and official policy were grouped together as examples of wider social transformations, to argue how education and mass media are regarded as conduits of individualistic-related concepts in Taiwanese society. In this section, the points of view of the grandparents and grandchild interviewees further highlight how the operation of individualistic concepts is ongoing, because of the influence of education system and mass media. Meantime, it is confirmed that, according to the participants' understandings, the values of individualism and the process of individualisation powerfully affect contemporary Taiwanese society. In addition, in the discussion of political policy on family interaction, two specific policies have arisen in response to the perceived decline in the quality of grandparent–grandchild relationships. Accordingly, it was felt by the grandparent and grandchild participants that the policies had failed to achieve their initial aims because of being unclear and impractical.

The research aims of this study were achieved in the course of the aforementioned discussions, which were based on the narratives of both grandparent and grandchild respondents. The findings reveal a trend that argues for the progress of individualism throughout Taiwanese society. Nowadays, the youth of Taiwan are experiencing individualism or undergoing individualisation in their daily lives: from the perception of the condition of being a grandchild to the explanation of grandchildren's provision for family seniors; from the interpretation of individualism to the enactment of being a grandchild at the present time; and from the effects of demographic and social transformations to the transformation of the grandparent–grandchild relationship. This conclusion is supported by the grandparents' and grandchildren's observations to the effect that they have more freedom and fewer constraints. Although individualistic values in different dimensions of grandparent–grandchild relations are processed to varying extents, this phenomenon in Taiwan cannot be overlooked. Importantly, as I have argued throughout the entire discussion, where and how individualism is embedded – while

not completely usurping the role of traditional values – still holds salience in the family interactions and behaviours of the researched participants.

Significantly, the discourse of the grandchildren yielded a number of interesting and critical arguments about individualism in relation to the connections among cultural, social and family themes. Accordingly, the following section will focus on crucial phenomena of individualism at play in contemporary Taiwan, articulating how individualism and individualisation are understood in Taiwanese circumstances.

## 8.2.2  Individualism in Taiwan

The ideas and values expressed by the grandchild interviewees are generally consistent with their reported behaviours; the perception of the role of grandchildren is used to explain the interactions they have with their grandparents. Moreover, the understanding that the grandchild respondents have of traditional values and imported concepts generally matches the way in which they see the influence of these values on the grandparent–grandchild relationship. However, during the analysis, suggestions were made about some of the implicit effects of perceived imported individualistic values on grandparent–grandchild interactions; these were not directly pointed out by the research informants, but based on interpretation of the interviews.

### 8.2.2.1 Being freer or less obedient?

In being a grandchild in the present, the manner of being freer or less obedient is a matter for debate among both the grandparent and grandchild respondents. According to the narratives of the grandchildren, young people in Taiwan seem to have more freedom, and are less influenced by traditional constraints than their grandparent at that the same age. Significantly, the grandparent interviewees confirmed this opinion, that young people in current society are more likely to have more liberty from family norms, and are less likely to be obedient to their seniors.

However, in agreeing that the current grandchild generation has a freer lifestyle, the grandparents and grandchildren made different evaluations of the outcomes of increased freedom – being freer? Or being less obedient? The findings were then used to determine what having more freedom brings into the young people's lives.

As for the perceived increasing freedom of the youth, reported by both the grandparent and grandchild interviewees, the grandparents proposed that the family is a less dominant influence than school on the grandchild generation, in view of the amount of time spent becoming well-educated nowadays, together with improved economic conditions in contemporary Taiwan, which further free the youth from having to devote time and labour to their relatives. This is why the grandparent participants claimed that their grandchildren are not as confined to the domestic arena or as compliant towards their seniors as previously. On the other hand, the grandchild generation chiefly emphasised personal choice and decision-making powers, as well as the possession of greater individual liberty in their lives. In their narratives, the grandchildren argued that they have different standards for organising their interests and domestic requirements, and the idea of being less compliant was not shown in their conversations. They simply tended to prioritise their individual considerations and did not view exercising more freedom for personal goals as being contradictory towards or incompatible with meeting their grandparents' needs; the idea of being 'less obedient' was not brought up at all to describe their interactions with their grandparents.

Arguably, these two generations envision different consequences of the condition of 'having more freedom'. In relation to this disparity, I suggest that their different generational locations account for these inconsistent interpretations offered by the grandparents and grandchildren (Mannsheim 1952; Pilcher 1994). As highlighted in Chapter Seven, exposure to education and media is a phenomenon of the grandchild generation, confirmed by both the grandparent and grandchild interviewees, and one of the main functions of education and mass media is to spread individualism-related ideas. Reflecting on what was argued in the conversation of the grandchildren, we can see that they considered one of the two primary characteristics of individualism

to be stronger personal abilities, a view that reinforced the positive impression of individualism. In this vein, self-priority turns out to be a function of greater independence, since the requirement for interdependence is weakened. In relation to the effects of individualistic values, the grandparents had less to say than their grandchild counterparts, and education and media were seen in terms of not having been social resources at the time when the grandparents were kids. These different generational phenomena seem to explain the different opinions of the grandparent and grandchild informants in regard to the possession of more freedom and its consequences.

## 8.2.2.2 Individualistic concepts against collective practice?

After acknowledging how individualism may implicitly affect the behaviour of grandchildren in the family, it is important to look at the interplay between traditional collective values and imported individualistic concepts in grandparent–grandchild interactions. This will shed light on whether or not these two value systems are truly incompatible or contradictory, as discussed in Chapter Five and as shown by previous research (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Mill 2007; Yan 2010). In general, the grandchild interviewees interpret collectivism as a force gathering people together, working and aiming towards communal goals, whereas individualism is regarded as independence, and is characterised by expression of personal consideration and even selfishness, with the emphasis on personal interests. The existing research on this subject also suggests that individualism is a process of de-traditionalisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim ibid; Mill ibid; Yan ibid), indicating the potential for tension between these two value systems.

At this stage, it seems there is nothing to qualify this incompatibility between traditional Chinese collective and perceived imported individualistic concepts, because they entail opposite goals; this holds true both in the narratives of the research and the results of preceding studies. However, a more intricate interplay between collective and individualistic values is discussed in the following section,

based on a number of unexpected connections between collective practice and individualistic consideration, were implicit in the narratives of the grandchild interviewees. In their accounts, for instance, there are a number of features concerning the perceived imported values in this study– self-priority, self-centred consideration, being more independent, being less considerate of others. By and large, these effects of individualistic values are either evaluated in positive ways, for personal development, or negatively, with regard to the communal good. Nevertheless, no statements directly suggesting a positive association between individualistic concepts and collective practicality emerged during analysis of either the grandparent or the grandchild respondent's narratives. However, referring back to the explanations given by the grandchildren about their assisting their grandparents, it can be seen that they underlined the importance of the quality of grandparent–grandchild relationships and the desire for reciprocity. In terms of the reported reasons for intergenerational collective practices, there seems to be a reversal of the commonly perceived stereotype of individualistic values, which perhaps damage in-group benefit.

First, considering the quality of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren; the grandchildren provide their help provision for their grandparents. This reason seems to illustrate that intimacy in the relationship is regarded by the grandchildren as an important factor in offering their labour and time. The emphasis on self-drive of the grandchildren for such bottom-up transfer indicates how this 'personal feeling' underpins the assistance they give to their grandparents. Furthermore, the desire for reciprocity is crucial, according to grandchild interviewees, for describing their willingness to help their grandparents out of difficulty. The concept of reciprocity is derived from the fact that the grandchildren were aware how much they had gained from their grandparents, thus they felt it was time to 'pay back' some of it when they are capable of doing so. Reciprocity is too strongly rooted in 'self-driven' thoughts, in which 'paying back' becomes a consequence, again implying a move to more balanced relationships between juniors and seniors. This desire to keep a balance between giving and receiving is attributed

to the idea of the balanced reciprocity,[47] on the continuum of interpersonal flow (Marshall 1972).

However, what do the grandchildren's explanations mean in respect of the influence of individualism on grandparent–grandchild interactions? It is significant the grandchildren in this study use self-driven explanations for their provision of help in relation to collective practices, without getting traditional doctrines involved. It seems that a positive connection between individualistic considerations and collective benefits has been made, whereby the individualistic features are utilised by the grandchildren to explain collective practices. This not only reverses the negative impacts of being individualistic on the collective advantage, but also challenges the understanding of the grandchild interviewees, and the results of previous research concerning the incompatibility of collectivism and individualism. Although the negative statements were highlighted between individualistic ideas and collective mutuality in both the grandparent and grandchild accounts, some positive benefits of individualistic ideology associated with collective activities in this study cannot be neglected.

In line with the above arguments, the use of individualism-driven factors to explain collective practices perhaps indicates that the grandchild informants, to some extent, have incorporated individualistic concepts along with the maintenance of traditional values to guide people's behaviour, even in family interactions. Therefore, the appeal to traditional values to rationalise collective assistance is not the only possibility; rather, the self-driven component of giving assistance is now underlined to explain intergenerational support. Such a phenomenon can also be confirmed as an outcome of Western norms of reciprocity and individualism. Bengtson and Putney, in their article (2000), indicate that individualism-related concepts are a dominant motive in producing collective advantages. Briefly, the link between individualistic concepts and collective practice is not a paradoxical one. In addition, this claim may imply that the operation of moral individualism in the lives of the grandchild generation (Durkheim 1933) leads to a greater focus on consideration for other individuals, at

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[47] For more information see, see Chapter Three.

the same time as personal rights and choice are highly evaluated. However, information about moral individualism was barely discussed in the accounts of the participants during the interviews, so this claim must await more empirical evidence if a clear picture of such a phenomenon is to emerge.

Notwithstanding the lack of information on moral individualism in this study, the next section will address the extent to which the impact of individualistic concepts has reached this collective-based society, as well as shedding light on the processes of individualisation in the life of the young generation in Taiwan.

### 8.2.2.3 Incomplete individualism, limited individualisation

To what extent the value of individualism has developed in Taiwan remains unclear and the results of individualisation processes are rather variable, concerning different aspects and different groups. As mentioned in Chapters Five and Seven, in the discourses of the grandparent and grandchild participants, the influence of individualistic tendencies on personal benefit is positively viewed, whereas the effect of individualistic – related concepts on communal considerations is negatively evaluated. Accordingly, the developments of individualism and individualisation deserve a further exploration in Taiwan. Before looking further into the ongoing phenomena of individualism and individualisation in Taiwan, I return to how other Asian research had explored the process in eastern countries, which helps to depict a clearer picture of the general developing situations of individualism and individualisation in other East-Asia countries.

Yan (2009) articulates that individualism in China is always understood by the elite and the populace 'as a form of egoism, involving selfish, anti-sociable and utilitarian interests, without any consideration of other individuals' rights and interests'. He continues to say 'other elements in Western individualism, such as liberty, equality, freedom and self-reliance, have largely been overlooked' (p xxxiii). Instead, Chinese people have only experienced 'managed individualisation' (p xxxi), in which people

'have accepted the constraints imposed by the party-state and have internalised the party-state's prescribed direction for the development of the individual under social socialism' (p xxxi). With reference to the limited understanding of individualism and the limited process of party-state-managed individualisation, Yan claims that Chinese people only underwent a process of experiencing individualisation without individualism (ibid). Similarly, Chang and Song (2010) expound that, in Korea, 'individualism is readily associated with moral defects, and is almost equated with egoism' (p 540), whereas individualisation was presented in the phenomena of Korean women by 'sabotaging social reproduction' and 'forgoing or ending marriage' (p 540). These changes were considered 'a matter of practicality rather than ideational changes' (p 539). In this case, the strategy of women in Korea of being an individualistic entity were barely regarded as processing towards individualism, rather they were seen to be going through the process of risk-aversive individualisation. The authors propose that Korean women had been undergoing a particular individualisation without individualism. The arguments of their research, about how the incorporation of individualistic values has been processed in Chinese and Korean countries generally maintain a specific condition – 'individualisation with individualism'.

However, the development of individualism and individualisation in Taiwan expresses a different picture. Concerning the data of this study, my argument echoes neither situation, and nor does it reflect Yan's (2009) and Chang's and Song's (2010) explanations for the absence of individualism in those two countries. Importantly, the way in which I interpret individualism and individualisation perhaps indicates my disapproval of the content of the statements mentioned in these two pieces of research. As I have distinguished the terms of individualism and individualisation in the Chapter Two, as well as the distinctions defined in the aforementioned research, individualism is a philosophy that leads people to behave with certain values in mind, whereas individualisation relates to the procedures, expressions or operations of the perceived values of individualism.

With reference to these definitions, I propose that individualisation is rare in any society if the citizens do not acknowledge the existence of individualism. In other words, individualisation is regarded as a happening fact, embodying the perceived individualism in reality. Understandably, individualism and individualisation overlap to some extent, and the boundary between them can become blurred. Most of the time, they co-exist. I am not stating there is any causal relationship between them, but they do complement each other.

Crucially, Taiwan has actually gone through a similar set of processes as Korea and China, but the statement arguing the absence of individualism is not shown in my research. Overall, bearing in mind the definitions of the two terms, the condition in Taiwan is claimed in the context of this research to be 'incomplete individualism, limited individualisation'. First of all, the interviewees in this study did not fully address the concepts of individualism, but they did demonstrate a number of features of individualism in their lives. For instance, being freer, more independent and less considerate of others were frequently categorised as features of individualism, and the features of liberty and self-reliance were not mentioned in their narratives. Indeed, some characteristics of individualism are not present in this small-scale study. However, as mentioned in the literature review, there are many dimensions to be considered in identifying individualism, none comprehensive enough to correspond fully to the term. These dimensions include selfish individualism (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Jamieson et al. 2009), moral individualism (Durkheim 1933; Santore 2008) and risk-averse individualism (Chang and Song 2010). It is a multi-dimensional terminology, which covers diverse phenomena. Therefore, the absence of individualism in Yan's Chinese, and Chang's and Song's Korean, research contexts would not be argued as a case in this research, but it is undeniable that the acknowledgement of individualism in Taiwanese society is not completely possible.

Putting aside the statement of incomplete individualism, limited individualisation is significant in the context of the present research. In their narratives, the grandchild generation confirmed the presence of self-priority and self-interest in their lifestyles

because of being more independent and capable. However, when it comes to consideration of other people's interests – a character of traditional collective values – the grandchildren stated that they were still mindful of the concerns of in-group benefits, while any conflict that exists is between individualistic preference and collective maintenance. With regard to the traditional cultural constraint revealed in the data, the process of going through individualisation has been limited, according to the content of the grandchildren's interviews. Therefore, the term of 'limited individualisation' is applied. According to the outcomes and statements of this research, I suggest that the condition 'incomplete individualism, limited individualisation' is more representative of Taiwanese society today.

To sum up, the influence of individualism and the process of individualisation in Taiwan are still in progress. The data of this study have consistently supported the idea that the whole society, especially the young generation, has been affected by individualism and individualisation. Meanwhile, the subsequent consequences are also demonstrated by both the grandparent and grandchild generations. Indeed, the collision of traditional collective values and imported individualistic concepts creates disharmony in the interactions within family members relating to personal interests and communal considerations. However, neither of these value systems completely champions the other; instead they will eventually amalgamate in a unique way to introduce individualistic-led tendencies in this collective- based society of Taiwan.

## 8.3    **Further suggestions**

This study cannot satisfy all questions. Some questions and unexpected points of interest were not foreseen in the initial research settings of this study, but only emerged during analysis of the data. The number of unanticipated findings in both the grandparent and grandchild generations will now set the scene for more studies into grandparent–grandchild relationships, in order to enrich knowledge in this specific field. Moreover, the results of this research may improve understanding of

the grandparent–grandchild relationship, by revealing what they desire and what they are short of. In terms of such understanding of more concrete requirements of people in both age groups, it may facilitate implementation of more effective government policy on intergenerational issues. The discussions below include suggestions for further research and for potential policy on grandparent–grandchild relations.

## 8.3.1 Further research

As mentioned above, a number of unanticipated responses arose from the interviews and data construction. From these unexpected data, a few suggestions can be made for further research.

### 8.3.1.1 More influential factors

The effects of domestic–demographic and wider social features are highlighted by previous studies, and in the narratives of this research, to explore the transformation of grandparent–grandchild relationships. The grandchild's gender and family type, educational expansion, mass media and political policy are focused on in order to investigate their impact on grandparents and grandchildren. However, a great number of factors can be associated with intergenerational relationships, for instance, comparisons between the rural and urban families.

In fact, when setting up the research, I was uncertain how the location in which people lived would affect their family interactions. Therefore, although the interviewees were recruited from all over Taiwan, disparities between those living in the countryside and those living in the city do not appear in the study data. One of the reasons for this might be because of the exact locations where the interviewees were recruited. I conducted interviews in places that could all be described as cities, in northern, central, southern and eastern regions, rather than 'remote areas'. Nevertheless, these cities are either developed, or developing, and yet no major differences were found in grandparent–grandchild interactions in these locations. It is

a pity that I did not find participants in more isolated places, or in less accessible parts of the countryside, otherwise I may have obtained different data. For example, families located in more remote areas may have a stronger sense of 'staying with traditional collective values' due to the lack of contact with the world outside their limited community. As an outcome, people living in this situation might have more appreciation of the advantages of being collective compared to those who possess more individual resources to achieve diverse tasks. Therefore, this is one of my recommendations for further research; data on the disparities in grandparent–grandchild relationships between remote and affluent areas might yield some interesting outcomes.

## 8.3.1.2 Intermediate generation

The effect of the parent generation on the grandparent–grandchild relationship is subject to debate, as mentioned in the literature review. How and to what extent the intermediate generation influences the first and the third generations in families varies, because it, in turn, relies on a number of other factors, such as the age of the grandparents and grandchildren. No doubt, the influence of the parent generation on grandparent–grandchild issues plays a very crucial role because it is the medium through which grandparents and grandchildren interact from the very beginning of their relationship. Some research has been carried out on the role of parents in intergenerational interactions (Clingempeel et al. 1992; Harwood and Lin 2000; Muller and Elder 2003), but this was mainly in a western context.

In eastern academia, little is known about the effect of the intermediate generation within Confucian societies, where families might be affected by a different cultural background and social context. In fact, at the very outset of this research, the influence of the intermediate generation was not included, because the intention was to investigate grandparent–grandchild interactions alone. However, the influence of the middle generation is reported by the grandchild interviewees while discussing their understanding of traditional values and their interactions with their grandparents.

For example, grandchildren in three-generation families[48] have stronger traditional values than those in other family formats. The influence of the intermediate generation on cultivating more traditional values among the grandchild generation is argued in this research, but there was not enough evidence to determine whether they also encourage help provision; more empirical data are needed to form a more concrete picture about this. There is very little Asian- or Taiwan-based research in Taiwanese academia about the effect of the intermediate generation on intergenerational transfer. Therefore this is another specific area that would benefit from more studies on the position of the parent generation in grandparent–grandchild issues.

## 8.3.2 Governmental policy

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, official and family assistance are the two main resources for supporting care of the elderly. In Taiwan, apart from the *Labour Pension Act*[49] (Government Executive Yuan 2007) which applies to life after retirement, the Universal Health Insurance Programme is for people aged 70 or over. The government also provides financial subsidies for those who qualify as living in poverty and are over 65 years of age (Ofstedal et al. 2002). Although these existing policies go some way to maintain the living standard of the aged, the family transfer in Chinese society is still critically relied upon for the care of elders (Gu and Liang, 2000). More importantly, there are concerns about whether family support systems can deal with rapid demographic and economic changes (Kojima 2000; Ofstedal et al. *ibid*), as well as changes in social values, which are mentioned in previous chapters. Thus family resources for caring for the elderly face certain challenges and pressures in the current climate of economic and societal changes. Official assistance for the older generation is therefore a significant issue for as long as there are concerns about family support systems.

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[48] For more information see, please see Chapter Seven.
[49] The 'Labour Pension Act' is intended to protect retired workers, so they still maintain their livelihood after retirement.

Sung (2000) suggests that policy formulation needs to cooperate with the local environment to improve implementation and achievement of its aims. This may explain why the Taiwanese government has incorporated aspects of cultural values into their policies, rather than changing social and economic structures. The policies of *Grandparent Week* and *Grandparent Day* aim to encourage more frequent grandparent–grandchild interactions and to strengthen traditional collective values within the family. Furthermore, the two Acts involved looking into and confirming the virtues of seniority and associated traditional concepts, but they seem to have had little success to date. According to the respondents in this study, this is a result of inadequate promotion and unclear aims.

Thus, according to the responses of both the grandparent and grandchild participants, there is a need to set precise goals and ensure long-term progress in order to result in greater success. However, the precise nature of these precise goals and long-term progress is unclear. The need for improved grandparent–grandchild relationships was identified during the course of the interviews with both grandparents and grandchildren. To this end, a couple of suggestions follow that might contribute to better intergenerational closeness and more interactions.

## 8.3.2.1 Financial incentive

One measure to be implemented in the near future in Taiwan will encourage more involvement of grandparents in childcare. The government plans to subsidise 'grandparent baby-sitters' by 2000 Taiwanese dollars per month. The policy is temporarily named *Childcare Subsidy*. Grandparents who complete a 126-hour training course will be certified as 'grandparent baby-sitters'. After certification, they will be eligible to apply for the childcare subsidy while offering their help for their grandchildren (Ministry of Interior 2012). This official policy assumes that greater grandparental involvement would have both financial and emotional benefits, and it will also resolve the current shortage of babysitters in Taiwan.

According to the data obtained from the interviewees, monetary concerns are not involved in the provision of time and labour by the grandchildren. Instead, this bottom-up intergenerational transfer occurs because of cultural considerations, personal relationships and balanced reciprocity. However, about 40% of college students in Taiwan have part-time jobs, and what they want from the government is more opportunities for part-time work (Government Executive Yuan 2006a). These students might react favourably to a financial incentive for assisting their grandparents. Through an official policy of this kind, students would 'earn' a budget or allowance equivalent to what they might get from other part-time work. They would probably be compelled to offer more time and labour to their grandparents because they will benefit in both emotional and practical terms. This does not imply that money is the dominant inducement, but it will be an encouragement to the grandchildren. Combining an official subsidy with family labour may be an efficient way to resolve the current deficit in resources for caring for the ageing generation. Such a policy would benefit both grandparent and grandchild generations and their relationships could progress with ease.

### 8.3.2.2 Local networking

Another practical suggestion for reinforcing grandparent–grandchild interactions is to establish 'local intergenerational networks'. Both grandparent and grandchild generations could take part. This basis of this idea occurred to me when I attended a conference in Edinburgh entitled *Growing up in Scotland*,[50] where I encountered an organisation known as 'Generations Working Together',[51] which is run by the Scottish Government. In this organisation, not only are the needs of the elderly emphasised, but also young people are given a voice. They organises activities for different generations, especially the elderly and young people, encouraging them to get involved in one another's lives; the scheme is much broader in scope than simply providing assistance or responding to emerging circumstances. People who

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[50] For more information, please see http://www.growingupinscotland.org.uk/
[51] For more information, please see http://www.scotcip.org.uk/

participate in the group share their stories and experiences by doing things together, which is a relaxing and joyful activity. The scope is varied and diverse, using sports groups and faith communities, for example, to invoke people's interests and curiosity and attract their participation.

The notable aspect of this arrangement is that it is based on older and younger people *sharing*, rather than giving or receiving assistance. Because of the opportunities it provides, the participants interact with different people, offering different viewpoints and feelings, and teaching people about things they are less unfamiliar with. As a result, these people are able to learn and see things from different angles and levels of appreciation, as well as receive advice from their partners. This serves to broaden the participants' horizons in an atmosphere of gratefulness. Moreover, this local networking project has another advantage – that is, it increases the familiarity between participants. People can come from under the same roof or from the same neighbourhood. Therefore they will have things to talk to initiate their conversations, and their familiarity with their neighbours may help them to engage more deeply and quickly. Positive outcomes are very likely.

Most crucially, according to the data obtained in this research, family-related activities between grandparents and grandchildren are cited most frequently for promoting grandparent–grandchild interactions. These might include one-day outings or gardening at home. In general, resources and activities are somewhat limited within the home. However, the local community, which is seldom mentioned in the research, will provide many types of activity, such as sports groups, which may inspire new kinds of intergenerational interactions. By participating in local networking schemes, grandparents and grandchildren may leave their houses and enter a wider community to enjoy new experiences, to meet new people and to learn about a new world. Such an initiative might help grandparents and grandchildren enjoy the time they spend with each other.

## 8.4    Conclusion

To conclude, the outcomes of this research show that the grandchild generation is a valuable resource for care for the elderly in Taiwan's ageing society, and that, whatever the reasons for it, the importance of grandchildren's help for their grandparents cannot be underestimated. Having analysed the perceptions of what it means to be a grandchild, the enactment of what behaving like a grandchild entails, and the explanations for providing assistance to grandparents, we can claim, on the basis of the data from this study, that the grandchildren's role in Taiwan is built upon existing traditional collective values, as well as being affected by ongoing individualism-related concepts.

On the one hand, the narratives of the interviewees reveal how the profound embeddedness of Chinese values affects people in their family interactions. Undoubtedly, cultural ideology still has pervasive power over people's behaviour. On the other hand, those values have been, to some extent, challenged or questioned by imported individualistic concepts. Consequently, it is evident that the imported individualistic trend has shown its strength in family relationships, as the grandparent and grandchild participants have underlined its influence on the transformations in the state of being a grandchild and in family interactions over time.

What is more, traditional collective values have been less widely influential in family-related issues because of their collision with imported individualistic concepts (Rozman 2002; Wu 2004; Yu and Miller 2003). But, despite the interviewees' remarks on the decline in traditional cultural principles, the salience of those principles still outweighs the impact of individualistic tendencies. As highlighted in Kojima's article (2000) – 'cultural values that define state and family responsibilities may be the most consequential factors in determining a society's response to population ageing' (p 264), which perhaps explains why traditional values are strongly dominant in the domestic sphere, at least in this research.

Correspondingly, the interactions between grandparents and grandchildren in Taiwan today are very different from what they were formerly, for a whole host of reasons including nationwide social transformation and social development. Arguably, family interaction allows greater personal liberty and the right of each family member to negotiate responsibility for support. Most importantly, the less operation of traditional doctrines in the family does not imply that domestic cooperation must inevitably be downgraded, but rather suggests that more diverse explanations for family support might be advanced.

In terms of the empirical data generated in this study, the statement about the grandchild–grandparent transaction primarily argues that family assistance for the older generation will never disappear. The offer of help by juniors to seniors in the domestic arena is not merely the result of following the norms of traditional values; it involves personal considerations, such as the quality of grandparent–grandchild relationships and the desire for reciprocity, as argued in this research. In regard to this claim, intergenerational mutuality is supported both by collective advantages and individualistic considerations, indicating that young people in Taiwan are undergoing the process of individualisation in both social and family contexts while maintaining collective-led values.

Moreover, the interplay between collectivism and individualism is complicated and, to some extent, unpredictable, depending on circumstances and diverse events. These two sets of values seem to be antithetical, in terms of their focus on in-group benefit and personal profit respectively. However, they are perhaps not absolutely incompatible, as the connection between collective practice and individualistic ideas can be significantly substantiated. Accordingly, the evaluation of the values of individualism and of the results of the individualisation process is not as negative with regard to collective advantages as the interviewees' portrayal of these features suggested. The positive influence of individualistic ideas was implicitly employed to rationalise grandchildren's provision for their seniors, which illustrates the connection between individualistic ideas and collective practice.

Subsequently, the way individualism and individualisation have grown in Taiwan is focused upon. The development of individualism and individualisation is certainly progressing in the country, but some limitations are also crucially underscored. With reference to the data from this study, individualism is not fully understood, the emphasis being mainly on the features of selfish-utilitarian individualism, while the process of individualism is constrained by the operation of traditional cultural collectivity in the domestic domain.

From this perspective, the increasing force of individualism and individualisation is certain, but this development does not destroy the significant position of traditional Chinese norms in this society. Critically, traditional collective values are still rather decisive in guiding people's behaviour, especially in the familial context, but their effective scope has been reduced by their amalgamation with individualistic concepts in Taiwanese society. Between the powerful influence of individualistic values and the persistence of family cultivation according to collective values, a particularly Taiwanese family style has been forged. This research, employing grandparent–grandchild relationships which are tied by familial collective values but open to new individualistic trends, has explored and testified to the unique consequences for family support of the collision of traditional collective and social individualistic values, in order to illuminate the specific circumstances of Taiwan today.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: The demographic information of the grandchild and grandparent interviewees.

| Pseudonym[52] | Age | Gender | Family format |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nothing | 22 | Female | Three-generation family |
| Winnie | 22 | Female | Three-generation family |
| Annie | 18 | Female | Three-generation family |
| Matt | 23 | Male | Three-generation family |
| Keith | 21 | Male | Three-generation family |
| Wednesday | 22 | Female | Living in the same city |
| Jamie | 24 | Female | Living in the same city |
| Chris | 25 | Male | Living in the same city |
| Kevin | 21 | Male | Living in the same city |
| Jason | 28 | Male | Living in the same city |
| Cindy | 25 | Female | Living far from each other |
| Lily | 27 | Female | Living far from each other |
| Oliver | 23 | male | Living far from each other |
| Tommy | 28 | Male | Living far from each other |
| James | 22 | Male | Living far from each other |
| Grace | 21 | Female | Lone-parent family |
| Amber | 22 | Female | Lone-parent family |
| Andrew | 28 | Male | Lone-parent family |
| Sean | 30 | Male | Grand-family |
| Vincent | 23 | Male | Grand-family |

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[52] The pseudonyms were provided by the interviewees themselves.

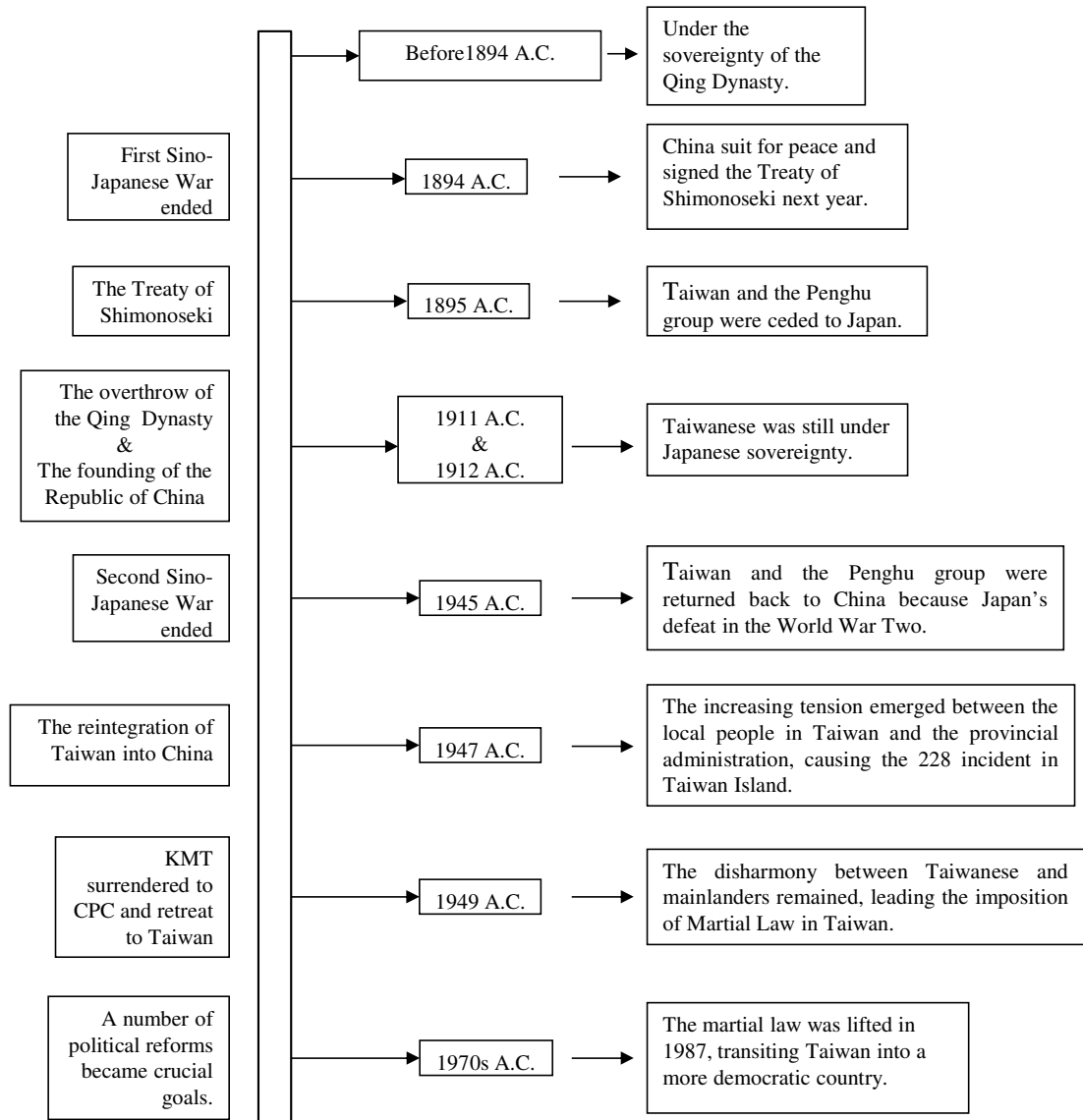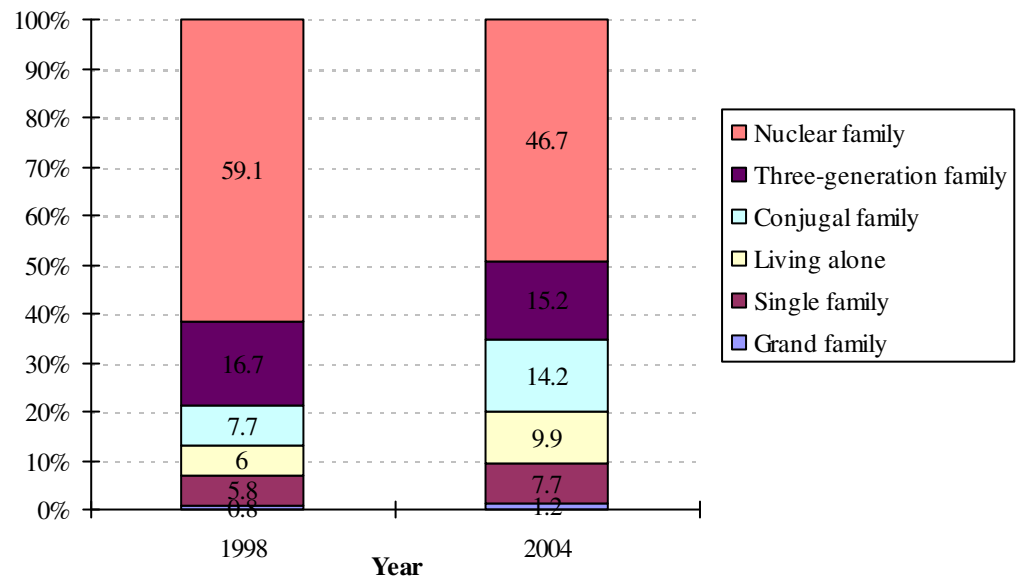| Pseudonym | Age | Childhood in | Family format |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nothing's grandfather | 80 | Taiwan | Three-generation family |
| Winnie's grandmother | 76 | Taiwan | Three-generation family |
| Annie's grandmother | 68 | Taiwan | Three-generation family |
| Matt's grandmother | 81 | Taiwan | Three-generation family |
| Keith's grandfather | 75 | Taiwan | Three-generation family |
| Wednesday's grandmother | 78 | Taiwan | Living in the same city |
| Jamie's grandmother | 76 | Taiwan | Living in the same city |
| Chris's grandmother | 76 | Taiwan | Living in the same city |
| Kevin's grandmother | 63 | Taiwan | Living in the same city |
| Jason's grandfather | 81 | China | Living in the same city |
| Cindy's grandfather | 79 | Taiwan | Living far from each other |
| Lily's grandmother | 78 | China | Living far from each other |
| Oliver's grandmother | 73 | Taiwan | Living far from each other |
| Tommy's grandmother | 78 | Taiwan | Living far from each other |
| James's grandfather | 76 | China | Living far from each other |
| Grace's grandfather | 75 | Taiwan | Lone-parent family |
| Amber's grandmother | 71 | Taiwan | Lone-parent family |
| Andrew's grandmother | 78 | Taiwan | Lone-parent family |
| Sean's grandmother | 82 | Taiwan | Grand-family |
| Vincent's grandmother | 84 | Taiwan | Grand-family |

# Appendix 2: The location of Taiwan



Source: Government Executive Yuan (2009)

# Appendix 3: Taiwanese political contexts during 1894-1970s

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| | Timeline | |
|---|---|---|
| | Before 1894 A.C. | Under the sovereignty of the Qing Dynasty. |
| First Sino-Japanese War ended | 1894 A.C. | China suit for peace and signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki next year. |
| The Treaty of Shimonoseki | 1895 A.C. | Taiwan and the Penghu group were ceded to Japan. |
| The overthrow of the Qing Dynasty & The founding of the Republic of China | 1911 A.C. & 1912 A.C. | Taiwanese was still under Japanese sovereignty. |
| Second Sino-Japanese War ended | 1945 A.C. | Taiwan and the Penghu group were returned back to China because Japan's defeat in the World War Two. |
| The reintegration of Taiwan into China | 1947 A.C. | The increasing tension emerged between the local people in Taiwan and the provincial administration, causing the 228 incident in Taiwan Island. |
| KMT surrendered to CPC and retreat to Taiwan | 1949 A.C. | The disharmony between Taiwanese and mainlanders remained, leading the imposition of Martial Law in Taiwan. |
| A number of political reforms became crucial goals. | 1970s A.C. | The martial law was lifted in 1987, transiting Taiwan into a more democratic country. |

# Appendix 4: The percentage of different households in Taiwan



Source: Government Executive Yuan 2006

## Appendix 5: Demographic information for the grandchild interviewees

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Sex:

4. Living arrangement with your grandparents

    A. ☐ Living together

        a) ☐ With father, mother and paternal grandparents

        b) ☐ With father or mother and paternal grandparents

        c) ☐ With father, mother and maternal grandparents

        d) ☐ With father or mother and maternal grandparents

        e) ☐ With paternal or maternal grandparents only

    B. ☐ Living in the same city

    C. ☐ Living in different cities

        (Please write down the transport time: ___ hours)

5. Have you ever lived together before?

    A. ☐ Yes, when I was _____ years old.

    B. ☐ No.

7. How often do you contact each other?

    A. ☐ Everyday

    B. ☐ Several times per week

    C. ☐ Once per week

    D. ☐ Several times per month

    E. ☐ Once a month

    F. ☐ Occasionally

    G. ☐ Rarely

8. How do you contact each other?

    A. ☐ In-person contact

    B. ☐ Phone contact

    C. ☐ Email contact

    D. ☐ Letter/ card contact

9. Which grandparent is going to participate in this research?

A. ☐     Paternal grandfather

B. ☐     Paternal grandmother

C. ☐     Maternal grandfather

D. ☐     Maternal grandmother

10. How would you estimate the financial condition of your family?

A. ☐     Better than the average

B. ☐     Same as the average

C. ☐     Lower than the average

Note: The low-income family is defined as that each member is distributed less than ND: 9826 dollars per month (Government Executive Yuan 2001)

11. What is your main source of allowance?

A. ☐     From my parents

B. ☐     From my grandparents

C. ☐     From other reltives (who: _____ )

D. ☐     From my part-time job:

    a) ☐     I can fully use the wage.

    b) ☐     I have give some of the salary to my family.

    c) ☐     I have to hand all the money in to my family.

12. How will you say about your grandparent's (the one you are going to introduce) health state?

A. ☐     Very healthy

B. ☐     Healthy

C. ☐     Not healthy

D. ☐     Very unhealthy

13. What time suits you best for taking part in the interview?

Time: From _____ to _____, Date:

Time: From _____ to _____, Date:

Time: From _____ to _____, Date:

**Thank you for the participation!**

## Appendix 6: Demographic information for the grandparent interviewees

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Living arrangement
   A. ☐ Living with my grandchildren
      a) ☐ With son, daughter-in-law and son's children
      b) ☐ With son or daughter-in-law and son's children
      c) ☐ With daughter, son--in-law and daughter's children
      d) ☐ With daughter or son--in-law and daughter's children
      e) ☐ With son's or daughter's children only
   B. ☐ Living in the same city
   C. ☐ Living in different cities (Please write down the transport time:___ hours)
4. How often do you contact each other? (The one who introduced us)
   A. ☐ Everyday
   B. ☐ Several times per week
   C. ☐ Once per week
   D. ☐ Several times per month
   E. ☐ Once a month
   F. ☐ Occasionally
   G. ☐ Rarely
5. What types of contact do you use?
   A. ☐ In-person contact
   B. ☐ Phone contact
   C. ☐ Email contact
   D. ☐ Letter/ card contact
6. How do you think about your health state?
   A. ☐ Very healthy
   B. ☐ Healthy
   C. ☐ Not healthy
   D. ☐ Very unhealthy

**Thank you for the participation!**

## Appendix 7: Interview guide for the grandchild interviewees

1. What do you always do with your grandparents?
   a. How often? Has it changed over time? Why?
   (Probes: living arrangement? intermediate generation? or ? )
   b. Any difference towards paternal and maternal grandparents?
   c. Similar with your siblings?
   d. Similar with your peers or friends?
   (If not, what are those disparities?)

2. How would you describe your relationship? Is there anything hindering or facilitating your interactions with your grandparents?
   a. If yes, what are those?
   b. If no, how do you explain the stability/maintenance of your grandparent-grandchild relationship?

3. Have you sensed anything different as being a grandchild between your generation and your grandparent's one?
   a. If yes, how do you explicate the disparities?
   b. If no, how do you think about this stable relationship over time?

4. The inquires about the current social contexts and the past ones.
   (Probes 1: anything different from the past? Is there anything new? What are they and why are those differences caused?)

5. How do you think about the influence of educational expansions and media widespread in your daily life? (If they don't spontaneously raise it up in the last conversations.)

6. How do you think about traditional values/ cultural values/ Chinese cultures? Any non-traditional ideas exercising in the contemporary society?

7. How do you think about the effects of official policy on grandparent-grandchild relationship?
   a. What is your opinion about the performance of the government on grandparent-grandchild relationship?
   b. Have you ever heard 'Grandparent's Week' before?
   c. Have you ever heard 'Grandparent's Day' before?
   d. (After explaining about these two policy,) How do you think about these two Acts? Any commons?

8. Can you foresee the grandparent-grandchild relationship in the future? Any difference? Or it will remain where it stands?
   a. If yes, what are they and what contributes the varying conditions?
   b. If no, what is your point of view?

## Appendix 8: Interview guide for the grandparent interviewees

1. How often do you spend time with your grandchildren?
   a. Is there any difference between sons' and daughters' children?
   (Probes: living proximity, mobility or lineage?)
   b. Has it changed over time?
   (Probes: You met more/less before? Why?)
   c. Do you do together?
   (Probes: Having a meal together, shopping or ?)
   d. If not, why don't you do things together?
   e. Has it changed over time?
   (Probes: How has it changed? For what reasons?)

2. How is your relationship?
   a. How will you state it?
   b. Is there anything considerable or any important period of your relationship?
   c. Has it changed over time?
   (Probes: If yes, why? What causes the changes?)

3. What is the role of your grandchild in family (The one introduced us)?
   a. Is there any difference among your other grandchildren?
   (Probes: If yes, what are they?)
   b. Has it changed over time?
   (Probes: If yes, why are the reasons?)
   c. Is the role of your grandchild varied from the one you played as a grandchild in the past?
   (Probe: If yes, what are the disparities and why factors do you think can explain the transformations?)

4. What have your grandchild done for you?
   a. Spontaneously? In which conditions?
   b. Following your requests?

5. What kind of assistance do you need from your grandchild?
   (Probes: transport, running errand, gardening, companies)
   a. How do you receive their assistance?
   b. If not necessary, why don't you need their help?
   c. Has it changed over time?
   d. Do they offer the provisions you have ever asked?
   e. Why do you come to them to ask for what you need?
   f. Do you expect your grandchild to do more/less for you? In which aspects? Why?

6. Do you think whether being a grandchild could be different in the future?
   a. Why?
   b. How different?

# Appendix 9: Informed consent for the grandchild and the grandparent interviewees

Hello,

My name is Tzu-Yuan Lin, a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Edinburgh, in the UK. I am conducting research on grandparent-grandchild issues, which are based on Taiwanese cultural and social backgrounds. Relationships between them seem to have changed, whilst some of their interactions are still puzzling (more detailed information on this aspect is shown in the information sheet). Now, I sincerely invite you and your grandparent (grandchild) to respectively take part in the research. Each of you may be involved in an interview (approximately 60 minutes long), which will be voice-recorded. Your views will be very helpful to my study.

If you would like to participate, please sign the form and give it back to the researcher. Thank you very much.

 I, _____ , agree to participate in the research, which investigates the grandparent-grandchild relationship and the responsibilities of grandchildren in Taiwan, and also understand the statements below:

> 1. I understand the aims and procedures of the research, and how I will be involved in it.
> 2. I know I can exercise my right not to answer any questions and I can immediately stop if I feel uncomfortable about anything.
> 3. I understand that everything I say will be confidential. The content will be used only for the research and my identity will not be shared with anybody.

Sign:
Date:

## Appendix 10: Information sheet

Detailed information about the present research:

**Research aims:** Grandparent-grandchild relationship has changed for various reasons. However, the differences of grandparent-grandchild relationships that have developed in their interactions are still unclear. This research is going to investigate these changes and further explore the influences on the orientation of and the responsibility of grandchildren within their families. Characteristics of grandchildren and their personal backgrounds will be considered in an attempt to understand to what they attribute their relationships with and assistance towards their grandparents. This will encompass various social and familial circumstances, in order to explain any possible comparison.

**Participants:** Undergraduate and postgraduate grandchildren, as well as the grandparents of these grandchildren are the informants in the study. They come from widely different backgrounds, in terms of the diverse research settings.

**Method:** In-depth interviews will be employed in this present research for achieving the research aims and interests, which regards wider grandparent-grandchild issues. Accordingly, the perspectives of the respondents help the researcher to explore the research questions more clearly, in terms of the interviewees' own narratives and understandings, rather than the researcher's interpretations.

If you have further questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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