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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF AN AGING POPULATION

**The Nature of Support from Adult *Sansei*
(Third Generation) Children to Older
Nisei (Second Generation) Parents in
Japanese Canadian Families**

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SEDAP Research Paper No. 18

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**THE NATURE OF SUPPORT FROM ADULT *SANSEI* (THIRD GENERATION) CHILDREN
TO
OLDER *NISEI* (SECOND GENERATION) PARENTS IN JAPANESE CANADIAN FAMILIES**

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The nature of support from children to parents in later life Japanese Canadian families

Abstract

Given the growing ethnocultural diversity of Canada's aging population and the increased research focus on the role of the family in the social support of older persons, it is important to explore the ways in which adult ethnic minority children provide assistance to older parents within the context of the family. The current study contributes to research on intergenerational support systems in later life in Japanese Canadian families by examining the factors, particularly the cultural value of *oya koh koh* (filial obligation), affecting the nature of support from adult children to older parents. Using data gathered from interviews with 100 older *nisei* (second generation) parents and 100 adult *sansei* (third generation) children in British Columbia, the study focuses on the frequency, quality and provision of three types of support: emotional, service, and financial. Results of logistic regression analyses indicate that *oya koh koh* has a significant effect on children's provision of emotional support, but no effect on financial or service support. Parent's health and socioeconomic status are found to have significant effects on children's provision of financial and service support. Child's availability is also a major determinant of financial support. Further, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses results suggest that *oya koh koh* has a significant effect on the quality of emotional support provided by children to their parents. Findings are discussed in terms of the North American Asian "ideal" family myth and directions for future research.

Key Words

family support, filial obligation, intergenerational relations, Japanese Canadian, model minority myth

Introduction

According to the 1996 Census, 4.4% (144,375) of Canadians over the age of 65 are of Asian origin¹. Although this figure, up from 3.2% (92,245) in the 1991 Census, reflects the growing numbers of Asian older adults in Canada, it masks demographic differences across the elderly Asian Canadian population. For example, over 90% of Chinese Canadian elders are foreign-born, compared with 15% of Japanese Canadian elders. This profound difference in country of birth may account for any observed variance in the nature of support from adult children to older parents. With the exception of Gee and Chappell's (1997) investigation into Chinese Canadian community-dwelling elders, few Canadian studies have focused on the effects of demographic indicators (e.g., gender, health status) on aging in specific groups of Asian Canadian families.

Although a number of Canadian and American studies (Bond & Harvey, 1991; Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson, 1993) on intergenerational linkages in later life ethnic minority families have found between-group differences in family relationships, little research has explored the nature of support in parent-child relations within a particular group. This is especially true of research on Asian North American families in later life, which has been limited, for the most part, to comparative studies between different Asian groups, regardless of generation (Burr & Mutchler, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz, 1997; Kamo & Zhou, 1994).

In arguing for a life course approach to the study of ethnicity within the later life family, Rosenthal (1987) focuses on the importance of understanding generational differences in the study of ethnic variations in the aging experience. An early example of intergenerational research with an ethnic minority group, Maykovich's (1980) study of acculturation and familism in three generations of Japanese Canadians finds strong intergenerational differences in the retention of traditional family values. Her conclusions provide support for Gordon's (1964) theoretical proposition that acculturation is a multi-phasic process, whether it is measured by the retention of traditional familism or the adoption of "new world" values. Similarly, Sugiman and Nishio's (1983) study of socialization and cultural duality among aging Japanese Canadians concludes that, in contrast to the traditional age-related norms of the *issei* (first generation), middle-aged

nisei (second generation) parents demonstrate decreased dependence on their children for support in later life. Ujimoto (1987) attributes this change in support expectations to generational differences in the retention of traditional Meiji-era value systems, while Matsuoka (1991), in her study on preferred care in later life, finds that gender of caregiver, parent's marital and socioeconomic status are also important factors that influence *nisei* parents' preferences for independent living and care as they age. Matsuoka's results indicate that widowed parents both prefer and expect daughters to be the providers of personal care, and lower income parents expect to rely on informal/familial support or care for economic reasons.

In terms of social support, much of the mainstream literature on parent-child relationships in later life has examined the support adult children, particularly daughters, give to older parents as caregivers (e.g., Burton, 1996; McMullin & Marshall, 1995). Given this focus, it is not surprising that many studies report a negative relationship between parental dependency and quality of the parent-child relationship; specifically, as parents become increasingly more dependent on informal assistance from family due to changes in health and/or marital status, relationships with caregiving children become more strained (Baruch & Barnett, 1983; Brody, 1985; Mindel & Wright, 1983). Further, in examining family congruence and individual well-being in caregiving families, Pruchno, Burant, and Peters (1997) conclude that there is a stronger relationship between caregiver-reported stressors (characteristics or behaviors of the care-receiver) and mental health among caregivers in families characterized by high agreement on the stressors (elder care-receivers' behaviors) than in those characterized by low agreement.

Social support and its flow from children to parents is defined and examined in a number of different ways – as financial, service and emotional assistance – in the literature on the later life family. For example, the link between parental well-being and financial assistance from children is the focus of research into adult intergenerational transfers (Hermalin, 1997; Kronebusch & Schlesinger, 1994). The factors affecting assistance with activities of daily living or service support from adult children to older parents is investigated in studies on family caregiving relationships (e.g., Burton, 1996; Cicirelli, 1992). Finally, the emotional closeness between parents and children and its impact on the quality of the parent-

child bond is explored in research into the “intergenerational stake” (Bengston & Kuypers, 1971; Bond & Harvey, 1991; Gesser et al., 1985) and “intergenerational solidarity” (Bengston & Schrader, 1982; Roberts & Bengston, 1990). For example, the intergenerational stake hypothesis explores the cross-generational nature of emotional closeness between parents and children and holds that: (1) parents’ descriptions of the relationship will be more positive than children’s; and (2) different levels of investment and development may account for these variances in relationship perceptions. The intergenerational solidarity model goes a step further, looking at emotional closeness or “affect” between parents and children as just one of six indicators of solidarity or integration between generations in the family.

Is geographic distance a strong predictor of intergenerational exchange of social support between parents and children? In a study of key factors affecting provision of support from adult children to older parents, Dewit, Wister, and Burch (1988) show that both child’s availability and physical distance between parent and child’s residences are strong determinants of social contact. They conclude that increasing geographic mobility over time “threatens to restrict access of older persons in the maintenance of supportive ties” (p.57). In addition to physical distance however, Climo (1988), in a study on the visiting patterns of adult children and older parents who live at least 200 miles away from each other, finds that there are a number of additional factors that influence contact and communication between distant-living family members. These include parent’s and children’s age and gender, parent’s family size, parent’s marital status, health status, and length of current residence. Although these findings have not been replicated with ethnic minority families in Canada, Ishii-Kuntz’s (1997) research into intergenerational relationships among Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans provides partial support for the physical distance finding: adult children in all three groups who live closer to parents provide more frequent financial support and services to their parents than children who live further away.

The availability of kin (the number of adult children) in later life families increases the likelihood of Asian American older parents living in intergenerational households (Kamo & Zhou, 1994). This finding is supported by Burr and Mutchler (1993) who conclude that the high rate of co-residence among Filipino and

Korean American women can be attributed, in part, to large family sizes among these groups. In a study with a mainstream sample on the flow of support from parents to children in later life, Cooney and Uhlenberg (1992) find that for adult children, having additional siblings reduces the likelihood of receiving advice, gifts, services, and child care from parents.

Research on the living arrangements of Asian elders has fuelled the notion that Asian North Americans are much more likely to live with family members than their White counterparts due to stronger kin networks and stronger filial traditions (Chow, 1983; Himes, Hogan, & Eggebeen, 1996, Maeda, 1983). The conception of Asian North Americans as having ideal or close-knit families is an off-shoot of the model minority myth (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997), a stereotype that attributes the educational and occupational success of Asian North Americans to their adherence to traditional cultural value systems (Takaki, 1989). The ideal family myth assumes that Asian North Americans, regardless of generation or group, greatly revere older family members and, as such, feel more obligated to provide emotional, financial, and service support to their aging parents (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997; Osako, 1976; Osako & Liu, 1986). Indeed, as recently as 1994, researchers have attributed the prevalence of intergenerational co-residence among married children and older parents in Asian American families to the strong influence of filial obligation (Kamo & Zhou, 1994). This result however, is only an example of behaviorally oriented filial piety (Sung, 1995), and does not provide support for the hypothesis that Asian North American adult children necessarily provide more love and affection (emotionally-oriented filial piety) to their aging parents than adult children in other ethnic groups.

This research examines intergenerational support systems in later life by examining the nature of support from adult children to older parents in Japanese Canadian families. Specifically, it tests the hypothesis that Asian Canadian adult children, regardless of generational status, have retained certain traditional cultural values that make them more apt to provide support to their aging parents than their non-Asian counterparts. As an examination of intergenerational relationships in Japanese Canadian families

living in British Columbia, this paper focuses on adult *sansei* (third generation) children's provision of support - emotional, service, and financial support - to their older *nisei* (second generation) parents.

This paper addresses the following questions:

1. How does an adult child's ethnic identity and adherence to the traditional value of *oya koh koh* (filial obligation) influence his/her support for his/her older parent?
2. How do "availability factors" such as geographic proximity and number of adult children influence an adult child's support for his/her parent?
3. How do "needs factors" such as parent's age, gender, size of place of residence, health status, marital status and socioeconomic status influence an adult child's support for his/her parent?²

Methods

This investigation uses data gathered from 100 older parents (55-80 years) and 100 of their adult children (30-50 years) who had agreed to participate in face-to-face interviews with the researcher during the period April 1996 to August 1997. All interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes after informed consent was received from each of the interviewees. Parents and children were interviewed separately, with the average interview time for parents being two hours and 40 minutes and two hours and 10 minutes for children.

Using the interview schedule, "Ethnic Group Membership and Old Age: The Chinese Elderly in British Columbia" developed by Gee and Chappell (1997) as a guide, an interview instrument was developed with both qualitative and quantitative components. Different schedules were developed for parents and children.

Data from the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) are used for comparisons with the data from this sample.

Sampling

The sample was randomly drawn from a list of over 10,000 Japanese surnames, addresses, and telephone numbers in the province of British Columbia. The original sampling frame was a compilation of

provincial subscriber lists from the *Nikkei Voice*³ and *the bulletin*⁴. Random selection was accomplished using a table of random numbers. Additional replacement interviewees were selected and kept on a separate list. The original list was stratified by size of place of residence, which is important given the scattering of the Japanese Canadian population throughout British Columbia, a direct result of the forced dispersal of the community during and after World War II.

Potential interviewees were contacted by telephone. To be eligible for inclusion in the sampling frame, the contacted individual had to be either: (1) a third generation Japanese Canadian aged 30-50 years with a living parent (of second generation) at least 55 years of age or older living in British Columbia, and non-institutionalized; or (2) a second generation Japanese Canadian aged 55 years or older with a living child (of third generation) aged 30-50 years living in British Columbia, and non-institutionalized. The first respondents selected the parent/child for the second interview. The overall response rate for the study is 52.4%⁵.

Operationalization of variables

The dependent variables of emotional, financial, and service support are operationalized, according to the adult child's responses, in two ways: (1) whether or not the adult child provides support to his/her parent; and, if yes, (2) how much support does the child provide (or, in the case of emotional support, the quality of the support that the child provides). The provision of support is measured as either "yes" or "no", while frequency of support is measured as "a lot" or "a little bit" and quality as "high" or "low".

Table 1 provides a listing of all dependent and independent variables used in the study. Adult children's adherence to the traditional cultural value of *oya koh koh* is measured as either: "high" or "low commitment", as assessed by open-ended responses to a value statement probing filial obligation. Ethnic identity is measured as either "high" (5 or greater) or "low" (less than 4) Japanese Canadian identity, according to responses on an identity continuum from 1 (Canadian) to 10 (Japanese).

The availability variables include geographic proximity and family size. Geographic proximity, as reported by the child, is operationalized as either "within 100 km" or "more than 100 km". Family size is defined by the parent as the number of adult children in the family. It is measured as either: "1-2 children" or "3 or more children".

The needs variables are parent's health status, parent's marital status and parent's socioeconomic status (measured as household income). Parent's health status, a self-report measure, is categorized as "good" and "not very good". Marital status is measured as "widowed/divorced" and "married", and socioeconomic status is operationalized as "high" (greater than \$2000) and "low" (less than or equal to \$2000) monthly household income.

The demographic variables of parent's gender and size of place of residence are measured as either "male" or "female" and "large" (population greater than or equal to 30,000) or "small" (population less than 30,000)⁶. Parent's age is measured as "55-70 years" and "over 70 years" (see Table 1).

Data analysis

The probability of adult children providing support for their older parents is a function of a range of socio-economic, demographic, and cultural variables. In the first part of the analysis, logistic regression techniques are used to measure the effects of: (1) child's adherence to *oya koh koh*; (2) child's ethnic identity; (3) child's availability; (4) parent's needs; and (5) parent's demographic characteristics, on the provision of support from children to older parents.

Logistic regression is a statistical technique that has been developed to analyze dichotomous dependent variables – in this case, support in each of the three domains is dichotomized into "provides support" (coded as 1) and "does not provide support" (coded as 0). The results of the logistic regression analyses are presented in Tables 2-4. Logistic regression produces regression coefficients, their associated standard error, a Wald statistic, significance level, and the odds ratio. An overall model chi square and its level of statistical significance are also calculated. The odds ratio is the estimated odds of the dependent variable (Y; provision of support from child) for respondents in one category (compared to another category) of an independent variable (X), net of other predictors in a model.

The second part of the analyses uses OLS multiple regression techniques to explore the effects of the same five sets of variables on the frequency of adult children's support for their parents. Interaction terms between *oya koh koh* (filial obligation) and each of the availability, needs, and demographic variables are included in the first analysis, however, only significant ones are presented. Gender of the child is controlled in both parts of the analysis.

Limitations

Findings in this study should be interpreted in light of study limitations that include a cross-sectional research design (making it difficult to render longitudinal, life course interpretations), reliance on self-report data for some measures, the non-random selection of dyad completers (either parents or children), the inclusion of different data (responses from different questions) from children and parents, and the inclusion of only the child's perspective on the provision, frequency, and quality of support given to parents. Despite the cross-sectional data limitation, the inclusion of a large qualitative component (responses to open-ended interview questions) makes the examination of historical and cultural influences on the individual life courses of parents and children feasible.

Results

Table 1 reports the percentages for the key variables in this study for both parents and children. The majority of adult children in the sample (64%) have a high commitment to *oya koh koh*. This finding supports the hypothesis that Japanese Canadian third generation adult children have strong feelings of filial obligation towards their older second generation parents. This is evident in the statement of a *sansei* son who explained,

I owe a lot to my parents. I know that they had to do without a nice house, a nice car, just so they could have enough money to raise my two brothers and me. Now that I'm working and raising my own family, I want to give something back to them. They would never ask for it, but I want to give something back to them.

Despite this commitment, fewer (51%) adult children report high feelings of Japanese Canadian identity (i.e., they feel more Japanese than Canadian). As one daughter stated,

I don't think of myself as Japanese. I'm Canadian. The only reason I have to qualify my Canadian identity is because I look Japanese. It's just due to my physical appearance. My identity is all about the way I view myself, and I see myself as Canadian with a Japanese face.

Adult *sansei* children report that they provide more emotional support to mothers (43%) than to fathers (27%). Similarly, of those children who provide this type of support, 37% report providing a "high quality"

of emotional assistance to mothers while only 23% provide this level of help to fathers. As one daughter explained,

Mom has always been more affectionate than dad. I guess that's why I feel a lot closer to her emotionally. Maybe it's a mother-daughter-thing, but I always feel like I can talk to her about anything. With my dad, it's not like that.

On a similar question on the quality of emotional support asked in the 1996 Canadian GSS, of Canadian-born respondents aged 30-50 years with a living parent over the age of 55 years, 68.3% agree to being emotionally close to their fathers and 85.6% report being close to their mothers. Although Japanese Canadian children indicate that they provide less emotional support to their parents than their non-Japanese Canadian counterparts, the quality of emotional support in the operationalized differently in the two studies. In the GSS, respondents are asked whether or not they are close to their parents, while emotional support in the Japanese Canadian sample is based on children's self-reported level of emotional closeness with parent.

Over 90% of children do not provide financial support to either of their parents. Further, of those who do provide financial assistance, the majority (77.8%) provide only a "little bit" to mothers and not to fathers. Similarly, 100% of the matched 1985 Canadian GSS sample, the most recent data available for this question, report that they do not "donate" money to either of their parents. Thus, the supportive behaviors of adult Japanese Canadian children in terms of financial assistance to older parents are reflective of the Canadian population at large.

About one-third of adult children (31%) provide service support (assistance with household duties in the home) to mothers, while only 15% provide this assistance to fathers. A single daughter explained, "I always help mom out whenever I can. She's getting older now, so I know that she appreciates the help with vacuuming and dusting, especially the hard to reach places." Again, as with financial and emotional support, the majority of those children (87%) who provide in-house service support, provide only "a little bit" to their parents. The provision of service support in the form of housework for the 1996 Canadian GSS

sample is in contrast to the current sample in that 86.9% of the matched respondents state that they do not provide service assistance to mothers and 95.7% do not provide help to fathers.

In comparing Japanese Canadian (JC) adult children with their counterparts in the 1985, 1995 and 1996 Canadian GSS, both groups report a high level of provision and quality of emotional assistance to parents. Further, the assistance pattern is the same for both groups in that more assistance is provided to mothers than to fathers. On the flow of financial assistance from children to parents, although JC children provide a little more support than “other” matched Canadians, neither group provides a lot of assistance in this domain. With regard to service support, JC children are more likely to assist parents with general in-home services than their non-Japanese Canadian counterparts. Both groups are more likely to provide service help to mothers than to fathers.

[insert Table 1 here]

Provision of Support

Table 2 reports the results of a logistic regression analysis that explores the effects of ten independent variables on an adult child’s emotional support for his/her older parent. *Oya koh koh* (filial obligation) and ethnic identity of the child are the only variables that gain statistical significance. Adherence to *oya koh koh* is noted in the words of one daughter who said,

My parents taught me by example. I saw the way they were with my grandparents – always respectful, helping out, trying to ease family conflicts...tension. I know that’s where I get it (*oya koh koh*).

None of the availability, needs, or demographic measures are significant, but parent’s socioeconomic status (SES) (.08) and the interaction between *oya koh koh* and parent’s SES (.07) approaches significance.

[insert Table 2 here]

The results of a logistic regression examining how key variables affect the adult child's provision of services are presented in Table 3. The traditional value of *oya koh koh* is not found to be significantly associated with service support provision, however the availability measure of geographic proximity is significant. The need for assistance due to parent's health, marital, and SES is a significant predictor of service provision from children to parents. If a parent's health status is "not good", s/he is "widowed or divorced", or s/he has a "low" monthly income, children are more likely to provide service support. This is demonstrated in one daughter's response,

When dad died, mom was left alone in this big house. We worried about her a lot in the beginning because she had just had heart surgery. She needed some help with the groceries and cooking. I lived the closest so I started coming out to see her three times a week just to do some housecleaning and cook her some meals. My sisters and brothers all offered to chip in a little bit of money for my expenses and such, but I don't need it. Mom needs it more than I do, so I give it to her.

Also, the size of parent's place of residence and his/her age is significantly related to service support provision; that is, the smaller the parent's place of residence or the older the parent, the more likely s/he is to receive service support from a child. As one son commented,

I think that getting old is hard on dad. He's near 80 and lives alone in a small place in New Denver. My wife and I try and get down to see him as often as we can in the spring/summer – maybe twice a month - when the roads are good. We stock up his freezer whenever we visit, do a full cleaning of the house and yard...still I know it's not enough.

[insert Table 3 here]

Table 4 presents the results of a logistic regression predicting the provision of an adult child's financial support for his/her older parent. As with service support, *oya koh koh* and the availability measures are not statistically significant. However, the needs measure of parent's SES is important; the more financially "needy" an older parent is, the more likely his/her adult child will provide financial support to him/her. As one son explained,

Dad's got a small pension from the cannery. I'm sure that his government payments don't go very far either. I worry about him a lot. He says he's fine, but we worry. He won't accept money – no cash. He's too proud for that. It's a Japanese-thing – so stubborn. We have to find ways to sneak it into the house. That's the only way he'll take it.

Although *oya koh koh* does not have a significant main effect, one interaction effect is found to be significant. The significant interaction term of *oya koh koh* and parent's socioeconomic status shows that the lower the parent's combined monthly income, the greater the effect of filial obligation on the provision of financial support to older parents.

[insert Table 4 here]

Frequency of Support

The results of the ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression on the frequency of adult children's emotional support given to older parents are presented in Table 5. Child's level of *oya koh koh* and ethnic identity are both significantly related to quality of emotional support provision; that is, the higher the level of commitment to *oya koh koh* or the greater the feelings of "Japanese" identity, the higher the perceived quality of emotional support to the parent. Further, parent's socioeconomic status and age are significantly related to quality of emotional support provision. These findings indicate that either: (1) as a parent's SES declines; or (2) s/he ages, adult children are more likely to provide a higher quality of emotional support. Providing this support is sometimes difficult as evidenced in the words of one daughter,

How do you repay your parents for all they've done for you? It's a tough question to answer, eh? I feel sad when I see mom living in that small apartment – the neighborhood's no good. She has to walk too far to catch the bus. I always worry about whether or not she's got enough money to even get on the bus. Then I worry that someone's gonna mug her down there. She tells me on the phone everyday not to worry. Everything's OK. But I'm her daughter, I worry.

[insert Table 5 here]

Table 6 presents the results of an OLS multiple regression analysis on adult children's service support to older parents. Only parent's marital status is significantly related to the frequency of service support

provision; children provide more service support to parents who are widowed or divorced (i.e., parents who are on their own). As the oldest daughter of a recently widowed man explained,

When mom died, dad lost the will to live I think. He never wanted to come over. He just sat around the apartment watching tv, reading his old magazines. My sisters and I went over to the apartment every day in the beginning. Someone had to cook his meals and keep the place clean – it was filthy. Now....well, he's much better – thank goodness. I still go once a week to clean, but he actually cooks his own lunches and sometimes buys take-out for dinner. We each take turns inviting him for dinner on weekends.

[insert Table 6 here]

An OLS multiple regression analysis for predicting the frequency of the adult child's financial support for his/her older parent was not done since the number of adult children who reported providing financial assistance to their parents was very small ($n = 9$ or 18%). The modal SES of the nine parents to whom children are providing assistance is "low".

Discussion

A major finding here is that filial obligation has a differential impact on the provision and frequency of support in different domains. While filial obligation has a significant main effect on adult children's provision and frequency of emotional support to their older parents, it is not found to have any main effect on financial or service support. There is, however, a significant interaction effect between *oya koh koh* and parent's SES, indicating the effect of filial obligation on the provision of financial support depends on parent's SES. The model minority myth placed on Japanese Canadian adult children assumes that children would have more filial obligation to provide support, regardless of domain, to parents whose (for example) health care needs are high. This is not the case here.

Although the model minority myth infers that a stronger adherence to filial obligation and a stronger identification with Japanese heritage makes Japanese Canadian adult children more likely than their non-Japanese counterparts to provide support to older parents, neither *oya koh koh* nor ethnic identity, both self-reported measures, are significantly related to service or financial support provision. The only domain

in which *oya koh koh* and ethnic identity of children are significant main factors, in fact, is in the provision and self-reported quality of emotional assistance to parents. Thus, the results of the current study indicate that the model minority myth translates well into one area of social support to parents, but not well into others.

Children's availability, parental needs and demographic factors (geographic proximity, family size, parent's health status, parent's socioeconomic status, parent's gender, and the size of parent's place of residence) also have different effects on the provision and frequency of support in different domains. With regard to service and financial support, the significant effect of parent's health status (for service only), marital status (for service only), and SES (for both) confirms what has been found in research with other ethnic groups – that parental needs are a major determinant of adult children's provision of support to aging parents (Burr & Mutchler, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz, 1997, Koh & Bell, 1987). The demographic factors of parent's age and size of place of residence, along with the availability factor of geographic proximity are all important determinants in the provision of service support to parents, but not financial or emotional support.

Results for frequency of support regarding service provision indicate that older parent's marital status is a major determinant of support in this domain. This means that adult children are more likely to provide frequent service support to a widowed or divorced parent than they are to a married parent. In terms of emotional support, adult children's level of *oya koh koh* and their ethnic identity have a significant impact on the quality of emotional assistance provided to parents. Further, adult children are more likely to provide quality emotional support to older parents and parents with fewer financial resources than they are to younger parents and to parents who are more financially stable.

The findings around financial assistance from children to parents are not surprising given that recent research (Mitchell, 1998; Mitchell & Gee, 1996) indicates that “boomerang kids” are making their way back to the “empty nest”, and parents are once again having to co-reside with adult children in the latter stages of the family life course. Cooney and Uhlenberg (1992) examine the changes in this parent-to-child

flow of support and report that although there is a decline in support (emotional, financial, and service) after children reach the age of 30 years, the pattern of decline varies according to the type of support. This “boomerang” trend sets the stage for increased reciprocity in the exchange of support in later life families: as adult *sansei* children are finding themselves more and more on the receiving end of financial assistance from *nisei* parents, the results suggest that they may be more apt to provide help - emotional and service - in other domains. These findings provide insight into the nature of intergenerational exchanges in later life Japanese Canadian families.

The examination of support in later life families requires an understanding of the factors that affect both children’s ability and willingness to provide assistance and parents’ need and willingness to receive assistance. The results of the current study, indicating that certain parental needs, cultural, and demographic factors influence the provision and frequency of support in different areas, is a first step in exploring the complexity of intergenerational exchanges in the Asian Canadian later life families. Further, these findings contribute to our understanding of the determinants of support provision in Japanese Canadian families by underscoring the importance of looking beyond cultural factors in determining the type, quality, and amount of support from adult *sansei* children to older *nisei* parents. It is important to note here that the extent to which Asian North American families are “ideal” in their supportive behaviors and attitudes cannot be attributed solely to their cultural background, but rather to the interaction between cultural preferences within the family and older parents’ needs, children’s availability, children’s and parent’s ethnic identity, and demographic factors.

This is much less the case in Japan where research indicates that co-residence with adult children, a traditional Confucian living arrangement, remains higher than in any other developed countries (Koyano, 1995). Also, Japanese research into social support and aging indicates that although adult children’s supportive behaviors are being shaped more and more by the interaction between cultural preferences within the family, children’s availability, and parent’s needs, the cultural importance of family ties and the

centrality of the family in the social support system remain the primary indicators of “ideal” familial support, especially in rural areas (Koyano, 1995).

The current study provides insight into the differences not only across generations but also across cultures in the patterns of support from adult children to older parents. In a comparative context, although adult children in contemporary Japan are becoming more like their Japanese Canadian counterparts in their supportive attitudes and behaviors towards parents, they are still strongly tied to Confucian ideas of filial piety. These ideas, brought over with the *issei* from Meiji-era Japan, have been transformed by successive generations of *nisei* and *sansei* children to meet changing social and historical exigencies and this, in turn, has affected the nature of support from children to parents in later life.

Future Research

Interaction effects, though not significant in all support domains, need to be examined more carefully with other cultural variables in future research. Is an adult child who identifies strongly as Japanese Canadian more likely to provide emotional support to an older parent who has been interned? The interaction between adult child’s ethnic identity and older parent’s internment experience is an important relationship to test in the examination of support provision to Japanese Canadian elders at this point in history. A cohort study would best be able to explore the interactive effects between micro- and macro-level influences.

Also, in the study of the nature of support between parents and children, it is important to examine parent-child exchanges or reciprocity: if older parents give assistance to adult children, are they more likely to receive support in return from their offspring. Cooney and Uhlenberg (1992) examine three domains of *parent-to-child* support – emotional, service, and financial – and report a decline in overall support after children reach the age of 30 years. However, they do not look at the effect of this decline on the parent’s receipt of support from adult children.

Since we controlled for the gender of the adult child, we cannot comment on the differential provision of support by sons and daughters. In the study of Asian North American families in later life, it is important

to examine the supportive roles of family members as filial obligation may be culturally prescribed according to gender and birth order (Hashimoto, 1996; Maeda, 1983). This is an issue worthy of pursuit in future research.

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End Notes

¹ Includes respondents who reported their ethnic origin as either South Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Southeast Asian, or Filipino.

² Parent's language ability is not an important "needs factor" influencing support for parents. Although this is true for the current sample - 100% reported being able to understand and speak at least "good" English - language and language translation are important needs to study in new immigrant families. The elimination of language needs from first to second generation parents is important in that it reflects cross-generational changes in patterns of care within the family. For example, in *issei* (first generation)-headed Japanese Canadian households, the amount and type of support children given to parents over the life course was influenced by parent's English language ability (Ujimoto, 1987). *Nisei* children oftentimes served as translators and interpreters for their primarily Japanese-speaking parents; Canadian-born children being the parent's main communication link to the "outside" world.

³ A nationally-distributed, monthly, bilingual newsletter for the Japanese Canadian community published by the Board of Directors of the Nikkei Research and Education Project of Ontario.

⁴ A provincially distributed, monthly, bilingual journal published by the Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens Association.

⁵ Response Rate = Interviews/Interviews + Refusals. A lower response rate is expected given that the current study is dependent upon the collection of dyadic data.

⁶ Divisions are made in accordance with the population estimates of cities, towns, and villages by British Columbia Statistics.

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Table 1. Frequency distribution for dependent and independent variables

Variable	%
Emotional support (Child)	
yes	70.0
no	30.0
Quality of emotional support	
high	85.7
low	14.3
Financial support (Child)	
yes	9.0
no	91.0
Frequency of financial support	
a lot	22.2
a little bit	77.8
Service support (Child)	
yes	46.0
no	54.0
Frequency of service support	
a lot	13.0
a little bit	87.0
<i>Oya Koh Koh</i> (Child)	
high commitment	64.0
low commitment	36.0
Ethnic Identity (Child)	
high	51.0
low	49.0
Geographical proximity (Child)	
within 100 km (1 hour by car)	49.0
further than 100 km (1 hour by car)	51.0
Number of adult children (Parent)	
1-2	46.0
3 or more	54.0
Parent's health status (self-report)	
good	80.0
not very good	20.0
Parent's marital status	
married	66.0
widowed/divorced	34.0
Parent's socioeconomic status	
high	80.0
low	20.0
Parent's age	
55-69 years	46.0
70 and over	54.0
Parent's gender	
male	34.0
female	66.0
Parent's size of place of residence	
large	54.0
small	46.0

Table 2. Logistic regression on adult children's emotional support to older parents (parent/child data) ~

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Odds Ratio
child's <i>oya koh koh</i> (filial obligation)	2.9455	0.7677	14.7226 ^b	2.23
child's ethnic identity	2.7035	1.1452	5.5734 ^a	0.77
child's geographical proximity	-0.6886	0.5104	1.8201	
# of adult children (parent)	-0.0931	0.5171	0.0324	
parent's health status	-1.9687	0.6178	10.1543	
parent's marital status	-0.4588	0.8467	2.3432	
parent's socioeconomic status	-0.2380	0.5768	0.1703	
parent's gender	2.0822	0.5733	13.1907	
parent's size of place of residence	0.7924	0.5185	2.3356	
parent's age	-0.7688	0.5546	1.9220	
constant	1.6698	2.1532	0.6014	

Overall Chi Square = 64.878^b^ap<=.05 ^bp <= .001

~ In this and all subsequent tables, children's data are obtained for *oya koh koh*, ethnic identity, and geographic proximity. Parents' data are obtained for health status, marital status, socioeconomic status, gender, size of place of residence, and age.

Table 3. Logistic regression on adult children's service support to older parents

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Odds Ratio
child's <i>oya koh koh</i> (filial obligation)	3.5561	0.9883	4.4398	
child's ethnic identity	3.2110	1.0221	5.6562	
child's geographical proximity	3.5900	1.0401	11.9144 ^b	2.31
# of adult children (parent)	2.2543	0.0955	6.7781	
parent's health status	-4.3908	1.2588	12.1673 ^b	1.63
parent's marital status	-3.7467	1.0560	12.5883 ^b	1.12
parent's socioeconomic status	-2.5269	1.1901	4.5086 ^a	0.33
parent's gender	2.1103	0.7863	4.4565	
parent's size of place of residence	2.0176	0.8695	5.3842 ^a	0.84
parent's age	-1.6434	0.8341	3.8817 ^a	0.77
constant	7.7142	3.2795	5.5329 ^a	

Overall Chi Square = 91.570^b

^a p <= .05 ^b p <= .001

Table 4. Logistic regression on adult children's financial support to older parents

Variable	Beta	S.E.	Wald	Odds Ratio
child's <i>oya koh koh</i> (filial obligation)	1.1400	1.2136	0.8824	
child's ethnic identity	0.6292	1.1015	0.3263	
child's geographical proximity	-1.2382	1.3262	0.8717	
# of adult children (parent)	-2.3326	1.3919	2.8084	
parent's health status	-3.5365	1.8741	3.5610	
parent's marital status	-1.1253	1.2322	2.8862	
parent's socioeconomic status	-7.1739	2.3866	9.0355 ^a	1.14
parent's gender	-2.1538	1.2002	3.2202	
parent's size of place of residence	-1.7474	1.2395	1.9874	
parent's age	-1.5578	1.2193	1.6324	
<i>oya koh koh</i> X parent's SES	-6.6752	1.8983	8.4321 ^a	0.90
constant	-7.9840	39.9367	0.0400	
Overall Chi Square = 11.846 ^b				

^a p = .06 ^b p <= .001

Table 5. Multiple regression for adult children's quality of emotional support to older parents

Variable	B	Beta
child's <i>oya koh koh</i> (filial obligation)	0.396	0.379 ^c
child's ethnic identity	0.208	0.269 ^a
child's geographical proximity	-0.043	-0.045
# of adult children (parent)	-0.252	-0.263
parent's health status	-0.112	-0.109
parent's marital status	0.226	0.331
parent's socioeconomic status	0.238	0.247 ^a
parent's age	0.193	0.275 ^b
parent's gender	0.123	0.125
parent's size of place of residence	-0.031	-0.032
$R^2 = 0.370$		
$F = 9.536^c$		
^a $p \leq .05$ ^b $p \leq .01$ ^c $p \leq .001$		

Table 6. Multiple regression for adult children's frequency of service support to older parents

Variable	B	Beta
child's <i>oya koh koh</i> (filial obligation)	0.214	0.224
child's ethnic identity	-0.162	-0.173
child's geographical proximity	0.193	0.214
# of adult children (parent)	0.086	0.096
parent's health status	0.241	0.265
parent's marital status	0.226	0.331 ^a
parent's socioeconomic status	0.295	0.287
parent's age	-0.168	-0.181
parent's gender	-0.084	-0.088
parent's size of place of residence	-0.161	-0.174
R ² = 0.331		
F = 5.399 ^a		

^a $p < .05$

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