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Fengyan Tang

University of Pittsburgh, fet7@pitt.edu

Heejung Jang

HEJ10@pitt.edu

Elizabeth Mulvaney

eam65@pitt.edu

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*Research Article***Asian American Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren:
Findings from the Census 2010-2012 American Community Survey**

Fengyan Tang
Heejung Jang
Elizabeth Mulvaney
University of Pittsburgh

Correspondence can be directed to Fengyan Tang, fet7@pitt.edu, School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh, 2318 Cathedral of Learning, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

Abstract

Research on grandparent caregivers has received growing attention, yet information about Asian American grandparents is limited. Using 2010-2012 American Community Survey (ACS) data, this study provides a national profile of Asian American grandparent caregivers across ethnic groups by region (East, Southeast, and South Asians) and examines socioeconomic and cultural factors related to grandparent caregiving. Of the over half a million Asian Americans who lived with grandchildren during 2010-2012, about 16% reported as primary caregivers, and over 31% lived in grandparent-headed households. Compared with East Asians, South Asian grandparents were less likely to be primary caregivers for their grandchildren, but no difference was observed between East and Southeast Asians. East Asian grandparents, especially noncitizens, were more likely to care for their grandchildren than native born citizens. Marital status, citizenship, language spoken at home, employment, and poverty level were related to the odds of being the primary caregivers, but the relationships varied by ethnic groups. Findings indicate ethnic heterogeneity in Asian American grandparent caregiving and the necessity for future research in this understudied population. In general, grandparent caregivers and their households may face greater financial challenges than non-caregivers. Attention and effort are needed in policy and practice arenas to address specific individual and household needs after taking into account ethnic, cultural, and economic characteristics.

Key words: grandparent caregiver, ethnic differences, multigenerational co-residence, Asian Americans

Research on grandparent caregivers has received growing attention, probably due to a rapid increase in the number of grandparents caring for grandchildren in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010-2012 American Community Survey, about 7.1 million grandparents lived with their grandchildren who were under the age of 18, comprising an increase of 22% since 2000 (i.e., 5.8 million) (Census Bureau, 2014a; Mutchler, Lee, & Baker, 2002). Among these grandparents, 2.7 million were primary caregivers responsible for most of

the basic needs of co-resident grandchildren (Census Bureau, 2014a). Specifically, Asian Americans comprised 7.3% of grandparents living with grandchildren and 2.9% of primary caregivers (Census Bureau, 2014a). The trends and issues surrounding grandparent caregiving are closely related to the changes in family structure, with an increase in multigenerational co-residence during the past three decades (Keene & Batson, 2010).

Cultural and racial variations exist in grandparent caregiving and family structure. Compared with other racial/ethnic groups, Asian Americans are more likely to live with their grandchildren in a multigenerational household but less likely to be primary caregivers or live in a skipped generation household (Mutchler et al., 2002). In addition to the important values of filial responsibility among many Asian cultures (Miyawaki, 2015), socioeconomic and cultural factors may contribute to the variance in grandparent caregiving and household structure (Keene & Batson, 2010). Yet, few studies have systematically examined sociocultural and economic factors and ethnic differences in grandparent caregiving in Asian American populations.

We address the limitations in past research by documenting a national profile of Asian American grandparent caregivers, assessing ethnic differences in the associations of socioeconomic and cultural factors with primary caregiver status. The purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of the characteristics of and ethnic differences in grandparents raising grandchildren in this understudied population. We used nationally representative data from the Census Bureau's 2010-2012 American Community Survey (ACS), providing one of the first quantitative examinations of U.S. grandparent caregiving by Asian Americans. We examine ethnic differences by region, that is East, Southwest, and South Asia, which are classified by Asian countries of origin or descent based on the United Nations Statistics Division's geographic region and composition guidelines (United Nations Statistics Division, 2011; Lee, Martins, & Lee, 2015; Xie & Goyette, 2004). Our analyses in the whole and subsamples will investigate the ethnic heterogeneity in grandparent caregiving and the extent to which differentiation within the Asian American population is attributable to socioeconomic and cultural factors.

Background

A majority of previous studies on grandparent caregivers focused on the general population, African Americans, or Latino samples, and racially or culturally comparative studies usually excluded Asian Americans (Yancura, 2013). Only a few empirical studies have examined the patterns and characteristics of grandparent caregiving among Asian Americans (e.g., Kataoka-Yahiro, 2010; Phua & Kaufman, 2008; Yoon, 2005). Asian American families place a great importance upon familial duties and obligations, multigenerational co-residence, and intergenerational support (Xia, Do, & Xie, 2013). Compared with the general older population, Asian Americans are more likely to care for their grandchildren on an extensive day care basis, engaging in co-parenting or short-term help, rather than taking the role of custodial parents (Yee, Su, Kim, & Yancura, 2008; Yoon, 2005). Caring for grandchildren is viewed as part of parenthood or family obligation in some cultures (Kataoka-Yahiro, 2010; Zhou, 2012). Also, multigenerational co-residence is more common among Asian Americans than in other racial/ethnic groups, with the highest rate (over 25%) among Asians in their late 60s to early 80s (Mutchler et al., 2002). Co-residence may facilitate the practice of traditional familial responsibilities and address financial difficulties of the household (Keene & Batson, 2010). Immigration also increases the likelihood of co-residence, which may help recent, older immigrants deal with practical challenges and address the family's needs for childcare (Glick & Van Hook, 2002; Yoon, 2005).

A very limited number of studies examined the ethnic characteristics of grandparent caregiving by countries of origin. Using data from the 2000 Census, Phua and Kaufman (2008) examined the effects of householder status, ethnicity, and immigration on grandparent caregiving, comparing six ethnic groups (Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Asian Indians, Koreans, and Vietnamese). Findings indicated that those in the young-old groups (60-64, 65-74), females, native-born, and householders were more likely to take on grandparenting responsibilities than their peers (those aged 85+, males, recent immigrants, and non-householders) (Phua & Kaufman, 2008). Compared with older Japanese Americans, Asian Indians were less likely to take the caregiving responsibility, but no other ethnic groups were significantly different from Japanese (Phua & Kaufman, 2008). Maternal employment is one important reason for grandparent involvement in childcare in East Asian immigrants. Many Chinese and Korean older women moved to the U.S. to take care of their grandchildren so that their adult children, especially daughters or daughters-in-law, would be able to work in a family business (Yoon, 2005). In Filipino American families, grandparents provide extensive care for their grandchildren, taking grandparenting roles as a normal expectation (Kataoka-Yahiro, 2010). They reported a high level of role satisfaction, which was correlated with better perceived health status (Kataoka-Yahiro, 2010).

Household structure is associated with childcare demands, social support, and financial stress that vary across ethnic groups (Goodman & Silverstein, 2002; Hayslip & Kaminski, 2005). With co-residence and financial support, intergenerational “time-for-money” exchanges, particularly in the form of grandparents caring for grandchildren, may contribute to family relationships and well-being, as shown in the studies among East Asians (Ko & Hank, 2014; Maehara & Takemura, 2007). Further, householder status is predictive of caregiver responsibility (Phua & Kaufman, 2008). Grandparents living with grandchildren are likely to be primary caregivers if they or their spouses are the householders. As shown in the 2000 Census, 94% of grandparent caregivers were either the householder or the spouse of the householder, and 34% lived in skipped generation households where adult children were not present (Hobbs, 2005). Being the head of a household indicates the power to control and allocate family resources and responsibility for the co-resident grandchild (Phua & Kaufman, 2008).

A life course perspective has been used in understanding the contextual importance of grandparent caregiving. The themes of historical time and place, human agency, timing of lives, and linked lives, within the life course perspective framework, are important to understand grandparent caregiving (Phua & Kaufman, 2008). Ethnicity and immigrant status reflect the effects of historical time and place and the influence of human agency on different aspects of linked lives (Phua & Kaufman, 2008). Taking on grandparent caregiver responsibility is not only based on human agency in response to family obligation and economic situations but also is shaped by the life circumstance, cultural norms, and timing of life events, such as immigration (Giele & Elder, 1998; Phua & Kaufman, 2008). Cultural differences embedded in race/ethnicity are observed in family caregiving and household structure (Keene & Batson, 2010; Yancura, 2013). In addition, immigration and the associated social changes affect each individual life and family caregiving (Zhou, 2012). Recent older immigrants are susceptible to financial hardship and psychosocial distress; they tend to live with adult children and are involved in grandchild care (Kataoka-Yahiro, 2010; Keene & Batson, 2010).

In this paper, we examined one dimension of linked lives, that is, grandparents caring for grandchildren, and how it is related to ethnicity, socioeconomic and cultural factors—the key dimensions of social stratification reflective of historical time and place, human agency, and

timing of life events (Elder, 1994). Specifically, the study answers the research questions: 1) How do Asian American grandparent caregivers differ across ethnic groups? 2) What socioeconomic and cultural factors are related to primary caregiver status among Asian American grandparents in general and in each ethnic group?

Methods

Data Sources and Sample

We used the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data from the 2010-2012 ACS. The ACS is the annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, replacing the decennial census long-term surveys and providing socioeconomic, demographic, and housing information (Torrieri, 2007). The Census Bureau produces the PUMS files so that data users can create custom tables and retrieve data that are not available through the summary ACS data products. The three-year PUMS is a subset of the 2010, 2011, and 2012 ACS and Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS) samples, representing about three percent of the U.S. population and households (Census Bureau, 2014b). Data were collected from January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2012, with a total of 4,013,480 housing unit records, 8,992,672 person records from households, and 396,941 person records from group quarters or institutions (Census Bureau, 2014b). The Census has imputed missing data with various methods.

Systematic random sampling was applied in data collection (Census Bureau, 2014b). First, records of households and records of persons in group quarters were sorted respectively within each state by certain characteristics, including ACS weighing area, interview code, household type, householder demographics, the size and type of group quarters, and others. Then a random number was chosen between zero and the sampling interval to initialize a counter, which was then used in selecting subjects at each record. All households selected were placed in the PUMS household sample file, which was further matched to the ACS sample of persons. All persons in selected households were placed in the PUMS person sample, and all selected persons in group quarters were added to the sample (Census Bureau, 2014b). The response rate for the housing units was 97.3 % and that for group quarters was 95.1% across all states and Puerto Rico in 2012 (Census Bureau, 2014b).

In this study, we selected one respondent from each household—those who lived with grandchildren and self-identified as Asian Americans ($N = 14,334$), representing 541,953 in the population nationally. Among them, about 20% were identified as East Asians, 30% Southeast Asians, and 15% South Asians based on their origin of country or ancestry. The remaining 35% did not specify their country origins, with a very small number of respondents reporting they were from combined Asian groups. Table 1 presents unweighted sample sizes and weighted population sizes by national origins within ethnic groups. The weighted population sizes were generated using a weight variable designed by the Census.

Table 1

Asian American Population by Region and National Origin in 2010-2012 ACS

Region	National origin	Unweighted $N = 14,334$ n (%)	Weighted $N = 541,953$ n (%)
East	Chinese	2,134 (14.89)	78,456 (14.48)
	Japanese	331 (2.31)	10,442 (1.93)
	Korean	435 (3.03)	17,999 (3.32)
	Total	2,900 (20.23)	106,897 (19.73)

Southeast	Cambodian	236 (1.65)	8,321 (1.54)
	Filipino	2,396 (16.72)	85,436 (15.76)
	Hmong	164 (1.14)	7,403 (1.37)
	Laotian	198 (1.38)	8,371 (1.54)
	Malaysian	4 (.03)	157 (2.9e-04)
	Thai	71 (.50)	2,497 (.46)
	Vietnamese	1,341 (9.36)	50,348 (13.86)
	Others	24 (.17)	997 (.18)
	Total	4,434 (30.93)	163,530 (30.17)
South	Asian Indian	1,623 (11.32)	68,817 (12.7)
	Bangladeshi	80 (.56)	3,039 (.56)
	Pakistani	223 (1.56)	8,869 (1.64)
	Others	8 (.06)	270 (5.0e-04)
	Total	1,934 (13.49)	80,995 (14.95)
Not specified		5,066 (35.34)	190,531 (35.16)

Measures

Grandparent caregiver. Respondents were asked whether they were responsible for most of the basic needs of any grandchildren under the age of 18 who lived in the household. The response was coded into caregiver (1) or non-caregiver (0).

Householder status. Respondents were grouped into (1) householders or the spouses, if they self-reported as the householder or the reference person (i.e., the person in whose name the home is owned, bought, or rented and who is listed as “Person 1” on the survey questionnaire), or the spouse of the householder/reference person; or (0) non-householders/spouses, or household members with or without a relationship to the householder (e.g., father, roommate). In other words, Group 1 was viewed as the grandparent-headed households (GHHs), while Group 2 was non-GHHs.

Cultural factors. Cultural factors included citizenship status and language spoken at home. Citizenship status was created by combining the responses to the questions about citizenship and birth location, coded as (1) native born citizen, (2) foreign born citizen, or (3) foreign born noncitizen. Language spoken at home included (0) English, or (1) a language other than English.

Poverty status. The ACS provides poverty status by comparing household annual income to a set of dollar values or poverty thresholds which vary by family size, number of children, and the age of the householder (Bishaw, 2012). In this study, poverty status was measured by household income (1) below the 100% federal poverty threshold, (2) 100% to less than 200%, or (3) 200% or above.

Socio-demographics. Socio-demographics included age (in years), gender (0=male, 1=female), marital status (0=not-married, including the widowed, separated, divorced, and never married, 1=married), education (0=high school graduate or less, 1=some college or more), and employment (0=unemployed/not in the labor force, 1=employed).

Health status. Health status was indicated by a count variable of disabilities in hearing, vision, independent living, ambulation, cognition, or self-care, with responses coded as 0, 1, or 2 or more, due to the uneven distribution.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was first conducted to obtain the overall distribution of all the variables under study. Bivariate analyses, including chi-square and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests, were used to compare East, Southeast, South Asians, and the not-specified group in socioeconomic and cultural characteristics among grandparent caregivers. Binary logistic regression models were estimated to examine the relationships of cultural factors, poverty, and socio-demographics with the odds of being a primary caregiver. The logistic model predicts the logit of binary outcome variable from independent variables, and logits are converted into odds ratios (*OR*) for ease of interpretation. Maximum likelihood estimate was used to choose parameters that maximized the likelihood of observing a particular outcome value (Czepiel, 2003). Non-caregivers were used as the reference group. A person-level weight variable and a stratification variable for complex survey data were used to generate accurate estimates and standard errors in logistic regression models. Analyses were conducted using STATA software.

Results

Of the over half a million Asian Americans who lived with grandchildren in the United States during 2010-2012, about 16% ($n = 84,302$) were primary caregivers, and over 31% ($n = 169,613$) lived in GHGs (Table 2). In this population, the average age was 66 ($SD = 10.0$); 62% were female, 67% were married, 60% had high school education or less, and 26% were employed. About 41% were foreign born noncitizens, and only about 8% spoke English at home. Over 8% lived under the federal poverty threshold, and about one quarter reported having at least one disability.

Table 2

Descriptive Characteristics of Asian American Population in 2010-2012 ACS

Characteristics	Unweighted $N = 14,334$ n (%)	Weighted $N = 541,953$ n (%)
Primary caregiver	2,485 (17.34)	84,302 (15.56)
Householders/spouses	5,535 (38.61)	169,613 (31.3)
Age (Mean/SD)	65.86 (10.00)	65.79 (10.02)
Female	8,845 (61.71)	337,146 (62.21)
Married	9,841 (68.65)	361,881 (66.77)
High school education or less	8,504 (59.33)	326,385 (60.22)
Employed	4,007 (27.95)	139,676 (25.77)
Citizenship		
Native-born citizen	893 (6.23)	30,271 (5.59)
Foreign-born citizen	8,104 (56.54)	291,494 (53.79)
Foreign-born noncitizen	5,337 (37.23)	220,188 (40.63)
Speaking English at home	1,261 (8.80)	43,133 (7.96)
Poverty		
<100%	1,206 (8.41)	44,926 (8.29)

100 -199%	2,850 (19.88)	107,910 (19.91)
200% or above	10,277 (71.70)	389,107 (71.80)
Disability number		
0	10,790 (75.28)	410,995 (75.84)
1	1,476 (10.30)	53,226 (9.82)
2 or more	2,068 (14.43)	77,732 (14.34)

Table 3 presents the profile of primary caregivers across groups by region. Ethnic differences were observed. East Asian caregivers were oldest in age ($M = 62.6$, $SD = 9.3$), less educated (68% with high school education or less), least likely to be employed (30.2%), most likely to be foreign-born noncitizens (47.2%) and to live under the poverty guideline (18.2%).

Table 3.

Comparisons of Ethnic Groups in Grandparent Caregiver Status with Bivariate Analyses
($N = 14,334$)

	East	Southeast	South	Not-specified	Bivariate Analyses
Age (years), M (SD)	62.64 (9.30)	58.86 (10.30)	59.83 (8.09)	61.20 (10.20)	$F = 13.98^{***}$
Female	63.04	61.89	54.30	64.91	$\chi^2 = 56.29$, $df = 3$
Married/ partner	72.45	73.30	89.40	70.67	$\chi^2 = 216.31^{***}$, $df = 3$
High school or less educated	67.69	51.71	53.11	57.04	$\chi^2 = 191.43^{***}$, $df = 3$
Employed	30.23	53.61	38.06	41.80	$\chi^2 = 426.84^{***}$, $df = 3$
Citizenship					$\chi^2 = 459.58^{***}$, $df = 6$
Native-born citizen	10.33	8.20	1.98	8.98	
Foreign-born citizen	42.50	63.09	54.37	60.14	
Foreign-born noncitizen	47.16	28.71	43.65	30.88	
Speaking English at home	13.06	8.68	17.20	14.61	$\chi^2 = 119.01^{**}$, $df = 3$
Poverty					$\chi^2 = 137.37^*$, $df = 6$
<100%	18.16	12.01	11.47	15.47	
100 -199%	26.51	24.32	19.72	20.20	
200% +	55.33	63.67	68.82	64.34	
Disability number					$\chi^2 = 70.12$, $df = 6$
0	86.94	84.11	81.30	82.75	
1	8.22	7.40	7.27	8.87	
2+	4.84	8.49	11.42	8.38	
Grandparent-headed household	50.15	74.18	63.16	63.86	$\chi^2 = 451.68^{***}$, $df = 3$

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

By contrast, Southeast Asian caregivers were most likely to be employed (53.6%), foreign-born citizens (63.1%), and to live in GHHs (74.2%). South Asian caregivers were most likely to be married (89.4%), speak English at home (17.2%), and have income above 200% poverty threshold (68.8%). Logistic regression analyses were conducted in the whole sample—East, Southeast, and South Asians respectively—to examine the associations of socioeconomic and cultural factors with caregiver status. In general, older age was associated with lower odds of being a primary caregiver across all ethnic groups (Table 4). Marital status was associated with

higher odds of being a primary caregiver only among South Asians ($OR = 1.98$). Employment status was related to higher odds of being a caregiver among all Asian Americans ($OR = 1.17$), and particularly, in Southeast Asians ($OR = 1.34$). Compared to native-born citizens, East Asian foreign-born noncitizens were more likely to be primary caregivers ($OR = 1.96$). Speaking a language other than English at home was associated with lower odds of being a primary caregiver ($OR = .72$) in the whole sample, especially in South Asians ($OR = .51$). Having household income above the poverty line was associated with lower odds of being primary caregivers for the overall sample, East Asians, and Southeast Asians, but not for South Asians. Compared with East Asians, South Asian grandparents were less likely to be primary caregivers ($OR = .69$). Grandparents living in GHHs were far more likely than those living in non-GHHs to take care of grandchildren in the whole sample and the three subsamples.

Table 4

Logistic Regression Results of Factors Associated with Grandparent Caregiver Status
($N = 14,334$)

Variables	All Asian Americans		East Asians		Southeast Asians		South Asians	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
Age	.96***	.004	.95***	.008	.97***	.006	.96**	.01
Female	1.07	.07	1.04	.15	1.01	.11	.89	.18
Married	.96	.07	.80	.13	.90	.11	1.98*	.60
Some college or higher education	1.05	.06	1.08	.15	1.13	.12	.88	.17
Employed	1.17*	.09	1.08	.20	1.34*	.16	.95	.26
Citizenship (ref: native born citizen)								
Foreign-born citizen	1.15	.16	1.50	.48	.66	.15	.59	.37
Foreign-born noncitizen	1.18	.17	1.96*	.68	.69	.17	.70	.44
Language spoken at home (ref: English)								
Another language	.72**	.10	.68	.20	.91	.18	.51**	.13
Poverty status (ref: <100%)								
100 to 199%	.61***	.06	.54**	.12	.61**	.12	.85	.28
200% or more	.48***	.05	.34***	.06	.46***	.08	.80	.24
Number of disability (ref: 0)								
1	1.06	.11	1.27	.32	1.03	.18	1.07	.30
2 or more	.81*	.08	.62	.19	.84	.15	1.39	.39
Ethnicity (ref: East Asians)								
Southeast	.94	.08	—		—		—	
South	.69**	.08						
Not-specified	.94	.08						
Grandparent-headed household (ref: non-GHH)	3.84***	.27	2.75***	.43	4.22***	.53	5.93***	1.50

Note: Odds ratios (OR) and standard errors (SE) were reported.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .00$

Discussion

This study contributes to the scarce literature on Asian American grandparent caregiving in the United States by presenting a national profile of grandparent caregivers, assessing ethnic or regional differences, and examining socioeconomic and cultural factors. In line with the life course perspective, findings indicate that ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and immigration, which

may reflect the effects of historical time and place and social stratification, have significant relationships with grandparent caregiving—a pattern of linked lives in later life. In general, younger age, employment status, speaking English at home, less household income, and living in GHHs are associated with higher odds of being a primary caregiver in the whole sample. Yet, significant ethnic differences were observed. Compared with East Asians, South Asian grandparents were less likely to take on the responsibilities of a primary caregiver, but no difference was noted between East Asians and Southeast Asians.

Specifically, among East Asian grandparents, foreign-born noncitizens were more likely than native-born citizens to take on the primary caregiver responsibility. This result is inconsistent with Phua and Kaufman's (2008) finding that recent older immigrants were less likely to care for grandchildren than native grandparents in the general population of Asian Americans. It is possible that studies examining Asian grandparents as one group miss ethnic differences and the different roles of immigration and citizenship in caregiving. As shown in the literature, East Asian grandparents, especially Chinese and Koreans, often feel obligated to help adult children with childcare to cope with various post-immigration challenges, including finances, employment, and career development (Chen, Liu, & Mair, 2011; Yoon, 2005; Zhou, 2012). East Asian families may view grandparents' caring for grandchildren as a family adaptive strategy, thus older immigrants would likely play a significant grandparent caregiving role in multigenerational families. Similar to the culture of familism among East Asians, Southeast Asians (e.g., Filipinos) place a high priority on interdependence, loyalty, and solidarity within the family (Kataoka-Yahiro, 2010). This may explain why there was no difference in their odds of being primary caregivers for their grandchildren as compared with East Asians.

In addition, the study showed that economic disadvantage is a significant factor related to caregiver status among East and Southeast Asians, indicating that grandparent caregivers and GHHs may face greater economic difficulties than non-caregivers and that poverty may be both a cause and an effect of grandparent caregiving (Park, 2006). Working grandparents were more likely to take the caregiving responsibility among Southeast Asians, implying that labor force participation and childcare are both family strategies to deal with financial difficulties and maintain family well-being in this group.

Differing from East Asians and Southeast Asians, South Asians were less likely to be primary caregivers, and socioeconomic factors such as poverty level and employment were not significantly related to the odds of being a caregiver. Indeed, cultural factors such as marital status and language spoken at home were associated with the odds of being a primary caregiver. Marriage is virtually universal, and divorce rates remain generally very low (Jones, 2013), which may explain the importance of marriage in family caregiving and multigenerational co-residence in this population. Traditionally, South Asian (especially Indian) families have been greatly influenced by a patriarchal, joint family system, with mothers, grandparents, and other elders playing a significant role in parenting (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). Taking advantage of British influence on their education system in the home country, most South Asians are proficient in English (Phua & Kaufman, 2008); thus speaking a language other than English at home seems a disadvantage and a potential generational gap, reducing the chances of non-English-speaking South Asian grandparents taking caregiving responsibilities. These findings imply that grandparent caregiving may be based on family system and language ability among South Asian grandparents.

Among all three ethnic groups, the head of a household or the spouse tended to report as the primary caregiver for co-resident grandchildren, indicating the dual responsibilities of running

a household and caring for grandchildren in multigenerational households. Formation of a grandparent-headed household may be an important adaptation for providing grandchild care and addressing family economic needs (Baker, Silverstein, & Putney, 2008). Grandparents caring for grandchildren are already at increased risk for financial strain, poor physical health, psychological distress, and social isolation (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2005). Taking the householder responsibilities may incur greater challenges.

Although we examined ethnic differences by region, the study is limited by the consideration of diverse countries and ethnicities in three aggregated groups and the exclusion of other groups. There is tremendous diversity in Asia, with over 40 countries and more ethnicities than countries. The ACS sample lacks respondents from Central Asia, West Asia, and Native Hawaii and Pacific Islands. Notions of ethnic and national identity carry political, social, and familial meanings and are not captured in the current study. However, grandparent caregiving is a growing phenomenon, and it cuts across the lines of social class, race, and gender (Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, & Driver, 1997; Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2003). The challenges faced by the grandparent-headed households are similar across ethnicities, especially when grandparent caregiving is stressful with negative personal, interpersonal, and economic consequences (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2005). Future research needs to focus on specific characteristics of Asian American grandparent caregivers and the diversity in household structures, investigating whether and what social services and programs are culturally and linguistically appropriate to meet both caregivers' and family needs.

Another limitation to this study is the definition of primary caregiver, which was based on the single criterion of responsibility for most basic needs of a grandchild. Primary caregiver could also be defined by the intensity and length of caring for physical and emotional needs, including information about the type of care responsibility, such as basic needs, personal care, medical care, or financial responsibility. The study also lacks information about the number and characteristics of children receiving care. In addition, respondents may have different definitions or understanding about what is meant by "primary caregiver responsibility." It is possible that adult children in multigenerational homes, if asked, might also identify themselves as having the "primary caregiver responsibility" for this same set of children.

Conclusions

Despite these limitations, this study provides a national profile of Asian American grandparent caregivers and improves our understanding of the factors associated with grandparent caregiving across three aggregated ethnic groups. In general, South Asian grandparents were less likely to be primary caregivers of their grandchildren as compared with East Asian grandparents, and no difference was noted between East and Southeast Asians. Socioeconomic and cultural factors had different associations with the odds of being a primary caregiver across ethnic groups. Lower family income and non-citizenship were related to the odds of being a primary caregiver among East Asian grandparents. Among Southeast Asian grandparents, poverty and employment were related to the odds of being a primary caregiver. For South Asians, marital status and speaking English were important factors for being involved in caring for grandchildren. Immigration, non-citizenship status, limited English abilities, and limited social and financial resources are underlying challenges facing Asian American grandparent caregivers, with substantial variations across ethnic or regional groups. Attention and effort are needed in research, policy, and practice arenas to address the specific individual and household needs after considering ethnic, cultural, and economic characteristics.

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