IN MY NANA'S HOUSE: GRANDPARENT HOUSEHOLDS IN FIJI

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This paper uses a combination of household census data and case material to examine change in grandparent status and role in Fiji in the context of development and the impacts of modernization and population aging. On one hand, there is more need and pressure for grandparents to be caregivers of grandchildren and sources of stability and continuity within family and home. On the other, there are the increased costs associated with greater longevity among the grandparent generation, such as care of a frail and dependent grandparent. Social exchange theory is used to compare these costs and benefits across five grandparent household types that vary according to composition and headship.

POPULATION AND SOCIETAL AGING, and more specifically the increasing prevalence and practice of grandparenting, are widely understudied areas in contemporary Pacific societies. Attention to the well-being of people at later stages of the life-course, and the contributions they make within the family and community, are often overlooked, especially as they become frail and dependent. Like many nations in the throes of development, Fiji is experiencing changing social circumstances that include growing concerns with unemployment, poverty, urbanization and international migration, as well as growth in female labor-force participation. These changes have resulted in an increased need and pressure for grandparents to act as the caregivers of grandchildren and to represent a source of stability and continuity within the family and home (Barr 1990; Bryant 1993; Panapasa 2000; Plange 1992; United Nations Development Program 1997). Counterbalancing this are the increased costs associated with greater longevity for members of the

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grandparent generation, such as care of a grandparent who has one or more chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and disability. One of the growing challenges to families is integrating both the benefits and costs of grandparenting into the family support system.

This paper addresses these issues by examining the structure and headship patterns of grandparent households and offering insights into the role and influence of grandparents in contemporary Fijian society. Headship is held by the person designated on the census record as recognized by the household as being in charge and having overall control of the home. Grandparenting is defined as the relationship between older people and their biological or adopted grandchildren. Throughout the Pacific, and elsewhere, longer lives for women mean that there are more grandmothers than grandfathers, hence the paper's main title: *In My Nana's House*, in my grandmother's house.

The paper uses a combination of census and interview data for an integration of quantitative and qualitative analyses. The use of census data means that I can associate grandparent/child dyads from the household roster can be identified when these individuals are directly related to the household head, but not when family members are classified under such census designations as "other relative" or "nonrelative" of the head of household. Consequently, the paper looks at a group of grandparents conservatively as defined by the census. While this does not impair either the validity or the generalizability of the results, the restrictions that census-based household definitions place on the ability to assign family relationships across all household members is a consideration in the analyses and conclusions. The qualitative data used in this paper were collected during two periods of fieldwork and provide insightful information on the real life experiences of grandparent households in Fiji. The qualitative data included case studies collected through a series of personal interviews with the elderly household head in his or her home. The interviews examined a series of structured topics related to family support and coresidence but the questions encouraged open-ended responses so the interview could shift from topic to topic in a way that provided comparable results but did not impose a formal structure on the discussion.

Using a theoretical framework of social exchange, the household living arrangements of older people are examined and their headship status is used to differentiate variations in power and status among grandparent households. Grounded in economic theory, social exchange theory is based on economic cost-benefit models of social participation and the means by which individuals within social units such as households negotiate care,

support, and other positive forms of interaction (Dowd 1975; Lee 1985). The grandparenting role fits this theoretical construct as it represents the exchange process between older persons, other family members, and grandchildren. Grandparents can play an important role in the well-being of families and grandchildren in Fiji. When grandparents are active in behaviors that contribute to the economic, physical, and emotional care of grandchildren, these contributions benefit the household unit and help justify the cost of social support, caregiving, and medical expenses associated with physical care that the grandparent may need.

When we factor in the headship status of the grandparent within the household, we can identify shifts in the "opportunity structure" of this simple exchange model. In general, the contributory aspects of the grandparenting role are seen as representing a negative function with time. As grandparents age, the risk of impairment and frailty increases, and when this occurs they have fewer social resources to offer the household. Reduced resources result in declining status and a decreased ability to exert power in their social relationships (Cowgill and Holmes 1972; Dowd 1984; Hendricks 2001; Treas and Logue 1984). With advancing age and increasing levels of impairment, they may be forced to accept substandard levels of care and support if they are unable to offset their costs with their contributions and keep a balanced exchange within the household (Lynott and Lynott 1996). Headship can impact the pace of this decline in status as homeowners will have higher power and status within their own household as compared with older persons who live in the home of a child or relative.

Fiji: The Place and Its People

Fiji is a multiethnic nation located in the center of the Pacific Ocean slightly south of the equator and bordering the international dateline. It consists of 330 islands of which one-third are inhabited, and the islands are distributed over 1.3 million square kilometers of ocean with a total land area of 18,333 square kilometers. In 1996, the total population was 775,077 of which over 90 percent resided on the two major islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu (Fiji Ministry of Information and Media Relations 2003). The three largest ethnic groups are indigenous Fijians (51 percent), Indians (43.7 percent) whose ancestors were brought to Fiji to work on cotton and sugar plantations when Fiji was under British colonial rule, and Rotumans (1.2 percent) whose heritage is traced to the Polynesian island of Rotuma which has long been politically a part of Fiji (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2000). Population aging in Fiji has increased steadily over the past thirty years with the median age

increasing from 16.5 to 21.2 years between 1966 and 1996. In the same period, the size of the population aged sixty and older increased from 3.5 percent to 5.4 percent. This growth among older adults is expected to continue, reaching 7.0 percent of the population when data from the census of 2007 are reported and 13.0 percent by 2026 (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1998; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999).

Like many developing countries, Fiji lacks any major national-level entitlement programs for income security or health care in old age and its pension program with the Fiji National Provident Fund is often inadequate to cover the full expenses of older adults (Barr 1990; Panapasa 2000; Plange 1992). Care and support for older people are typically provided by family members and this care is reciprocated by the older persons who provide assistance to the family through tasks such as baby-sitting, domestic help, gardening and, on occasion, financial support (Panapasa 2000; Rensel and Howard 1997).

Grandparents and Household Organization

Social scientists have made considerable efforts across the years to better understand the influence and activities of grandparents within the family and household unit (Coyle 1998; Drucker-Brown 1985; Ikels 1998; Sokolovsky 1997). Grandparents have been documented as caregivers, transmitters of knowledge, and sources of continuity and stability (Robertson 1995; Smith 1995). In contrast, some of the research suggests that grandparents act as competitors with children for limited household resources and are perceived as a cost and a burden for the family unit if they become disabled or chronically impaired (Martin 1990; Palloni 2001; Panapasa 2002; Panapasa and McNally 1995; Vatuk 1990).

The study of grandparenting in the developing world suffers from a lack of broadly generalizable information such as basic demographic indicators that can be used to measure the role of the grandparent as a family member. Except for a few small qualitative studies (Barker 1997; Rahman 1999a, 1999b; Vatuk 1990), little is known, for example, about the household structure in which grandparents reside and their status within the household as a mediating factor for power and authority. The Fiji census data can be used to examine the residential structure of older people who live with their grandchildren as opposed to those who do not. By examining patterns such as household structure and headship we can learn about the different types of households in which grandparents reside and variations in the ability of grandparents to impact the lives of their grandchildren.

The coresidence of grandparents, adult children, and grandchildren is widely considered a necessary condition for maintaining a decent quality of life among older people in developing nations (Apt 1996; Hermalin, Roan, and Perez 1998; Rahman 1999a, 1999b). While not a perfect solution to the needs of the older adults, coresidence represents the best available insurance for older adults to obtain adequate care and support on an ongoing basis (Knodel, Chayovan, and Siriboon 1991; Martin 1990; Martin and Kinsella 1994). The combination of lack of entitlement programs for older members of society and pension systems that benefit only a select few typically results in older adults living with and relying on the family for support, especially among the oldest old (Andrews and Esterman 1986; Martin 1989). However, this support is often reciprocated by the older adult through baby-sitting and other contributions (Hermalin, Ofstedal, and Chang 1992).

Extended family coresidence creates opportunities for ongoing activities that define the grandparenting role by providing direct, immediate, and daily access to grandchildren. Preliminary work by Knodel and others (Knodel, Chayovan, and Siriboon 1991; Knodel, Saemgtienchai, and Obiero 1995) has suggested that in Thailand residential proximity can provide similar opportunities for both the care of older adults and the ability for grandparents to provide support to families with grandchildren, but there is little empirical evidence for this assumption in the developing world generally. In Fiji, where issues of access, a limited communication infrastructure, and social norms all present barriers to noncoresident care, it can be assumed that grandparents who do not live with their grandchildren have only limited contact with and impact on their lives and as such are peripheral to the exchange networks that mark the coresident grandparent/grandchild relationship.

It is often argued that the transmission of information and cultural values across generations is a central benefit of active grandparenting (Mueller, Wilhelm, and Elder 2002; Szinovacz 1998). A less well understood aspect of this process is the role of the grandparent within the household structure. Prior work in Fiji has found grandparenting to involve multiple roles as caregiver, socialization agent, disciplinarian, and authority figure (Panapasa 2000). However, it is not simply the act of being a grandparent that matters, but also status and role in the household in relation to the grandchild. Grandparents who are the heads of households, for example, may present more economically stable and powerful households for grandchildren to live in. Such households often contain multiple income earners with both household head and adult children engaging in labor-force activity. In such households, the grandparent would be expected to have significant influence in the day-to-day management of the household and in the decision making that underlies household economies.

The Demographic Structure of Grandparent Households: A National Sample

This study draws on household data from the 1986 and 1996 Fiji censuses (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1988, 1998) to identify grandparent household types and to put the role and influence of today's grandparents in societal context. All households containing grandparents age fifty and older were examined to provide a comprehensive picture of household composition for the time period. The data were organized on the household level so specific residential types could be identified regarding the structure and roles of coresident grandparent/grandchild dyads. Three household types were defined according to the role the older household member plays in terms of grandparenting: head of household grandparent, coresident grandparent, and noncoresident grandparent. Case studies collected in 1997 and 1998 are used to illustrate each grandparent household type, to sample the grandparenting experiences of the three primary ethnic groups, and to explore the influence of social and economic circumstances.

Types of Grandparent Households

Based on the preceding discussion, five specific household types can be identified to provide a deeper understanding of the distribution of older adults by grandparent household type and insight into the structure of similar residential systems in the Pacific and elsewhere. The five types are:

i) Type I. Grandparent-headed household where grandparent is household head or spouse of head with at least one grandchild living in the household.
ii) Type II. Coresident grandparent household where grandparent is not household head with at least one grandchild living in the same household.
iii) Type III. Secondary grandparent household where grandparent lives with relatives with or without grandchildren.
iv) Type IV. Grandparent- or older adult-headed household without grandchildren living in the same household.
v) Type V. Grandparent or older adult coresident of household without grandchildren living in the same household.

Grandparenting Heads (Type I)

In this type of household, the grandparent is household head or the spouse of the head. This situation occurs when grandparents are the owners or

primary residents of a household unit that also includes adult children and grandchildren. These adult children may coreside due to economic considerations, such as being unable to afford an independent household. Field interviews with families and social service organizations suggest that such situations are often the result of a negative experience such as marital dissolution or legal problems, but they may also result from more positive behaviors such as altruism where coresidence gives family members access to job opportunities and health services, especially in the urban centers. Grandparent heads have the strongest impact in the practice of grandparenting as they control the home in which the grandchild and the parent of the grandchild live. Household power and economic decision making tend to reside in this type of grandparent, and as a consequence he/she can influence concerns such as educational choice, access to nutrition, health care, and a host of other issues that are central to the well-being and progress of coresident grandchildren.

Case study 1. Mr. Marika, an ethnic Fijian, is a healthy-looking sixty-seven-year-old retired schoolteacher who lives with his wife and grandson. He is well cared for by his wife who has health problems but still rises every morning to prepare his meals and help him get ready to work in his small plantation. Mr. Marika is economically well off compared to many older Fijians. He has his own home, of concrete construction, with three bedrooms and modern appliances, and receives a small pension. He works in his garden every day and grows vegetables for his family. He is proud that he can provide for his wife and assist with his grandson's education in Suva city while the parents are assigned to teach in the outer islands. His wife and family defer to him, and he will freely give advice on issues related to the activities and well-being of the family. He feels children no longer respect older people as they did when he was young and that this is a poor reflection on Fijians today and the way they are raising their children. He is determined to instill a sense of respect and responsibility in his grandson and spends time instructing the child in Fijian values as well as school learning.

Case study 2. At seventy-seven years of age, Mr. Mishra, an ethnic Indian, is a very successful, retired businessman. He and his wife, Sarita, age seventy, live comfortably in the second-floor apartment of a two-story residential building made of concrete and located in an urban town on the main island of Viti Levu. Living in the same shared compound but in separate housing are Mr. and Mrs. Mishra's sons and their families who provide much emotional support and when necessary assistance with both personal and

instrumental activities of daily living. With prior incidence of stroke, Mr. Mishra's physical capabilities are limited and his speech is slightly impaired. Nevertheless, he looks presentable and carries himself with considerable dignity. Due to his position as the family patriarch, Mr. Mishra and his wife are revered and seen as successful role models for their children and grandchildren who continue to manage the family business.

Case study 3. Ms. Hanisi is a seventy-six-year-old Rotuman retired from a major hospital where she worked for thirty-five years. She lives in a wooden house with three bedrooms with an unmarried brother, unmarried son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren. Ms. Hanisi welcomed her daughter-in-law and grandchildren to her house as her son got into trouble with the law and was unable to provide for his family. The household income consists of Ms. Hanisi's pension and her unmarried son's income. Her daughter-in-law and brother are unemployed and assist in household activities instead. Ms. Hanisi is in good physical health. She has a slight hearing impairment and eyesight problems which prevent her from crocheting and reading the Bible and hymnals. However, she attends the Rotuman District Association, which meets once a month to plan activities with other members from the same district. She receives a lot of attention and care from the adults in the home and her grandchildren are very helpful with running errands. Since her unmarried son often travels on business, the other adults often assist with her needs. Ms. Hanisi is treated with great respect within the household and considered a valuable source of advice on family matters and the cultural code related to traditional functions such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms.

Coresident Grandparenting (Type II)

The coresident grandparent role occurs when the grandparent is not the household head but lives in the home of a child where grandchildren are present. This type of household often occurs due to loss of a partner, the onset of frailty and disability, or the need for some form of care and support between the parties involved (Barr 1990; Panapasa 2000; Plange 1992). This is the typical grandparent/grandchild dyad situation that is often discussed in anthropological literature on the role of older adults in developing country settings (Rhoades and Holmes 1995; Sokolovsky 2001), and in research on the support and nurturing aspects of grandparents as care providers (De Vos 1990; Ofstedal, Knodel, and Chayovan 1999). Older Fijians residing in this form of household are the group we would expect to be providing

nonmonetary contributions such as baby-sitting, housekeeping, and transmission of values to the household economy. However, because they are in direct competition with grandchildren for household resources they do not control, they are at higher risk of economic vulnerability and unmet needs than grandparenting heads. As prior work has shown, they are also at higher risk of abandonment in the event of disability, impairment, or the inability to provide reciprocal services to the household (Panapasa 2002; Panapasa and McNally 1995).

Grandparents who live in the homes headed by adult children typically represent a different level of status and power within a household. Such grandparents are often older, economically inactive, and less able to fully contribute to the household economies. Activities such as childcare are seen as one way to reciprocate for the support provided by the family, but the ability of these grandparents to impact the household decision-making process is limited.

Case study 4. Mr. Isireli, an older ethnic Fijian, lives in a rural village with his daughter and three grandchildren in an open traditional-style thatched house. At night, Mr. Isireli lies in the farthest corner from the door, and the other members of the family spread out on the floor as well. Mr. Isireli is supported by his daughter and receives no income of his own. He has been able to do gardening around the house until recently. Now, however, due to the progression of diabetes he can barely walk. In past years, he would go to Suva city for a medical checkup once a month, but he no longer has the money for transportation and could not travel even if the funds were available. His daughter gives him very little assistance in terms of money since she has her own children to care for. However, she helps by giving him herbs and Fijian medicine. The district nurse has never paid him a visit, nor does he get assistance from the village nurse since she is not trained to help someone as seriously ill as Mr. Isireli. Despite his limitations, Mr. Isireli tries to be helpful around the house and helps baby-sit his grandchildren.

Noncoresident Grandparenting (Types III–V)

This role is represented by older Fijians who live in households where there are no residents who are formally identified as grandchildren. The main category (Type III) consists of persons aged fifty and older who are neither the head nor parent of the head of the household in which they live. This type of residential structure is common in Fiji where 14 percent of the older population lives in households in which they are either a secondary relative

(sibling, aunt, uncle, and cousin) or a nonrelative. This household type is the weakest and least desirable form of household structure for older adults regardless of grandparenting status because they have only limited say or control over household economies.

Other varieties of noncoresident grandparenting are older adults who are either the heads of households without grandchildren present (Type IV) or a coresident in a household without grandchildren (Type V). This often occurs when children and grandchildren move away from the grandparents' home to set up independent living in a separate town or overseas and on rare occasions because the older adults do not have any grandchildren of their own. Economically, these household types are desirable for older people as they are not in direct competition for resources with coresident grandchildren. However, they put limitations on the older adults' ability to directly interact with grandchildren who reside in other households. The following case study depicts the typical circumstances of a grandparent resident in a noncoresident grandparent household setting.

Case study 5. Keresi Bilo, an older ethnic Fijian widow, is very sickly. She lives with her nephew in a dilapidated house and does her cooking outside over a fire. She receives twenty dollars a month from her late husband's ex-serviceman pension and relies on her nephew and the generosity of her neighbors for food, clothing, and some money. With the rising costs of public transportation and medical treatment, Keresi relies on the health services of the village nurse, which are subsidized by the government. The cost of traditional medicines is included.

How does the experience of grandparents who coreside with their grandchildren compare to those without coresident grandchildren? Are there potential benefits from coresidence that imprint themselves on the demographic record of household formation? These are very basic questions that have not, as of yet, been systematically examined within the context of Fiji.

Table 1 presents a summary distribution of grandparent household types in Fiji during 1986 and 1996 by age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, and economic status. Of immediate importance is the overall stability of household types across the ten-year period. In the face of economic downturns, political instability, and the pressures of modernization and rapid change in Fiji, this finding suggests that the observed family units have an inherent cultural stability that has remained consistent in the face of massive upheaval of the economic and social fabric of Fiji since the 1980s. Despite a 25 percent increase in the number of individuals aged fifty and older between 1986 and 1996, the overall distribution of household forms remained virtually unchanged. In 1986, 38 percent of older adults lived in grandparent-headed

households, 11 percent in coresident grandparent households, 14 percent in secondary grandparent households, 36 percent in grandparent- or older adult-headed households without grandchildren, and 2 percent in grandparent or older adult coresident households without grandchildren present. Ten years later in 1996, the proportions were respectively 36, 10, 14, 39, and 2 percent.

In general, this represents a positive finding for older people and grandparenting roles because it suggests that a large proportion of older adults are able to maintain some stability in household power structures. The decade between 1986 and 1996 was a turbulent one for Fiji. With the political, economic and social instabilities arising from coups in 1986 and 1987, the social structure was significantly altered. The large-scale out-migration of Indians resulted in virtually no net population growth for the nation during the ten-year period. In many ways, Fijians generally were negatively affected by the unrest with downturns in employment, education, and foreign involvement. Despite these changes, however, the basic household structures for older adults remained largely unchanged. This suggests a high degree of stability in family formation and residential choice among the population as a whole that has proved to be resilient. Because there is such similarity in the structure of these households across time, discussion can focus on general patterns relevant to both periods. The percentages are drawn from the 1996 census data unless otherwise specified.

Headship and Grandparenting

Most grandparent-headed households (Type I) in Fiji are headed by older male adults in their fifties peaking at ages sixty to sixty-nine before steadily declining with increasing age. Grandparents who are household heads or spouses of head are able to maximize opportunities for daily contact with grandchildren. They enjoy a situation in which they have economic and social control of the household and can have a strong impact on the care, socialization, and intergenerational exchanges within the household. As the household head, the grandparent is a powerful figure with authority and responsibility for day-to-day contact with grandchildren and can have a major impact on the socialization and development of the grandchild.

In contrast, a similar proportion of older adults live in homes without grandchildren present (Types IV and V). This is interpreted as a choice on the part of either the grandparent or the parents of the grandchildren as another analysis has shown that two-thirds of all grandchildren in Fiji do not live with a grandparent. Because of near universal marriage of adults and ongoing high fertility, almost all older adults have children and potentially

TABLE 1. **Percentage of Older Adults by Grandparent Household Type and Demographic Characteristics, Fiji 1986, 1996.**

	1986 Household Type[1]					1996 Household Type				
	I	II	III	IV	V	I	II	III	IV	V
All older adults	37.6	0.9	13.8	36.0	1.7	36.1	9.9	13.6	38.6	1.9[2]
Age										
50–59	38.7	4.9	11.5	44.0	0.9	35.2	4.4	11.9	47.5	1.1
60–69	40.5	13.4	14.3	29.7	2.2	41.6	12.6	13.5	30.4	2.0
70–79	30.7	24.7	19.1	22.2	3.4	32.3	22.8	18.3	22.5	4.1
80+	20.2	32.9	26.4	15.4	5.1	19.0	32.8	26.6	15.8	6.0
Gender										
Male	38.9	5.2	11.9	43.3	0.7	37.3	4.9	11.6	45.4	0.8
Female	36.2	16.7	15.8	28.6	2.8	35.0	14.6	15.5	32.1	2.8
Unmarried females[3]	19.5	30.6	29.0	15.8	5.1	19.7	27.6	29.3	18.1	5.3
Marital status										
Single	4.1	8.7	65.5	20.7	1.1	6.1	7.7	60.5	24.6	1.1
Married	43.7	5.4	7.9	42.3	0.8	41.7	4.9	7.5	45.1	0.9
Widowed	25.2	29.9	21.9	18.1	4.9	26.5	26.8	21.0	20.7	5.0
Separated	13.9	14.3	38.5	30.0	3.3	16.3	8.4	36.0	36.7	2.6
Ethnicity										
Fijian	36.0	10.1	18.0	33.9	2.0	36.0	8.5	17.0	36.7	2.0
Indian	41.0	11.8	8.3	37.6	1.4	38.0	11.6	8.7	40.1	1.6
Rotuman	32.3	15.7	19.0	30.8	2.4	28.6	12.8	20.7	35.2	2.7
Other	25.8	.0	16.7	46.9	1.6	23.7	8.3	17.8	48.0	2.2

TABLE 1. **Continued**

	1986 Household Type[1]					1996 Household Type				
	I	II	III	IV	V	I	II	III	IV	V
Economic status										
Employed	40.2	2.1	8.2	49.3	0.3	40.6	1.9	7.1	50.1	0.4
Unemployed	34.0	8.7	20.6	34.7	1.9	21.1	8.8	28.9	32.3	2.0

Source: Fiji Bureau of the Census 1988, 1998.

Notes:

1. I. Grandparent-headed household where grandparent is household head or spouse of head with at least one grandchild living in the household.
   II. Coresident grandparent household where grandparent is not household head with at least one grandchild living in the same household.
   III. Secondary grandparent household where grandparent lives with relatives with or without grandchildren.
   IV. Grandparent- or older adult-headed household without grandchildren living in the same household.
   V. Grandparent or older adult coresident of household without grandchildren living in the same household.
2. Due to rounding, some percentages do not add to 100.
3. Unmarried females comprise women who are not listed as the spouse of the head of the household.

grandchildren (Panapasa 2000). Almost 90 percent of grandparent- or older adult-headed households without grandchildren (Type IV) report having living children, but consistently at least 20 percent of these grandchildless households lack the presence of adult children suggesting that such households reflect a choice driven by complex family decisions. While many of these older household heads may very well live in close proximity to grandchildren, distance impacts their ability to play a role in the grandchildren's lives. Even living a few houses away from a grandchild introduces walls and barriers to the ongoing socialization and behavioral reinforcement that is part of the coresidential process. When distance is translated into miles, urban *versus* rural, or international separation, the barriers to contact and exchange of knowledge may become insurmountable. A number of American studies have found that grandparents who do not coreside with grandchildren have only a marginal effect on the grandchildren's lives; the grandparents have less responsibility and contact due to both physical as well as emotional distance (Goldscheider and Lawton 1998; Silverstein and Parrott 1997).

Coresidence and Grandparenting

Living in the home of a child, while common in Fiji in both 1986 and 1996, represents a less popular residential form. Only 11 percent (1986) and 10 percent (1996) of older adults lived in coresident households (Type II), where the grandparent resided in an adult child's household with grandchildren present. Grandparents in coresident households represent a pool of primary caregivers and as such help influence the socialization of grandchildren on a daily basis through baby-sitting and other supportive activities such as cooking, cleaning, and house-sitting. While the presumed level of interaction between grandparent and grandchild is thought to positively benefit both parties, it is also a reflection of the lower levels of power and authority associated with being a nonhead within the household.

Under a system of reciprocity for support and care, older persons who live within the homes of their children help provide a benefit to the household by caring for grandchildren. This need for reciprocal contributions may help explain why less than 2 percent of Fijians age fifty and older coreside in households without grandchildren present (Type V). Prior work (Panapasa 2000) has argued that from a strictly support perspective these are optimal households for the older people if care is altruistic, as they do not have to compete with children for scarce economic and social resources. Under a reciprocal model of care, however, older persons who do not own their own households would typically be found in households where they could provide

an ongoing contribution such as childcare in exchange for care. While no direct measures of exchange exist in census data, disparity in the distribution of residential form implies that older people are more welcome in households where they can make a constructive contribution to the household economies either through headship or childcare. Households where older persons simply coreside with their adult children represent very rare occurrences suggesting a rationale for the strength and stability of the multigenerational household in Fiji.

Older Adults as Secondary Household Members

Almost 14 percent of older adults lived as members of secondary grandparent households without grandchildren (Type III) in both 1986 and 1996. While this represents a sizable proportion of the older population, the census data cannot inform their role as grandparents. Due to the structure of census data and the need to relate household members to the head, secondary grandparent households represent a mixed group of individuals who cannot be directly linked to other members of the household. It is clear from qualitative work that older adults who have limited power within such a household unit that factor negatively impacts any grandparenting role they might seek to assume (Barr 1990; Panapasa 2000; Plange 1992). Further research is required to learn more about the role such older adults play in their Fijian households.

Sociodemographic Variation Across Grandparenting Types

Table 1 also depicts demographic variation in the grandparent household types. Change in the structure of households with members aged fifty and older between 1986 and 1996 is small even for broad demographic characteristics such as age and ethnicity. This stability across time suggests that period effects did not play a measurable role in changing household composition and residential choice among the older population. It also argues for the long-term stability of the extended family system in Fiji.

Cohort effects clearly play an important role in shifting household structure among older Fijians and their place as grandparents within families. For grandparent-headed and grandparent coresidential households the effects of age and mortality can be seen in the transition from headship to coresidence. Older adults in their fifties represent the vast majority of household heads or spouses of heads for both types of grandparent-headed households (I and IV). With increasing age, however, a rapid decline in headship is observed and by age eighty only 15 to 20 percent of the older

population are heads of households; however, declines in headship are much slower among older adults who have grandchildren in their homes compared to those who do not and more grandparents who head households with grandchildren present retain headship beyond the age of eighty.

As headship declines with age, a complementary increase occurs in coresident households (Types II, III, and V). This can be seen as a cohort movement away from headship and towards coresidence as age, widowhood, and impairment impact autonomy and increase the need among older people for support and care from the family. The strongest shift is in coresident households where grandparent/grandchild dyads are maintained. This household type increases from representing only 5 percent (1986) and 4 percent (1996) of older adults at age fifty to 33 percent by age eighty. While longitudinal measures are lacking, the shift is consistent with qualitative findings that suggest a life-course transition of grandparents in grandparent-headed households to coresident households with grandchildren present (Barr 1990; Plange 1992). The shift in secondary grandparent households with or without grandchildren present (Type III) is also marked—from 11 and 12 percent at age fifty, to 26 and 27 percent at age eighty plus. Secondary grandparent households may well represent the primary residential form among older Fijians who do not maintain direct coresidence with grandchildren. As a result, they have less access to family networks for late-life living and support.

Gender differences in household type are marked with males representing the majority of household heads and females present as spouses of heads. Females are more likely than males to coreside with their children and they are slightly more likely to be found in secondary residential forms. Older women without spouses are predominantly found coresiding with adult children and grandchildren or with relatives, although 20 percent maintain headship of households with adult children and grandchildren present.

Current marital status also impacts the household type an older person resides in. As expected, never married and separated older persons are predominantly concentrated in secondary grandparent households but they are also represented in older adult-headed households without grandchildren. Married older adults are much more likely to head households both with and without grandchildren. Widows show a fairly even distribution across four of the five household types, grandparent coresident households without grandchildren (Type V) being the exception; however, there may be a strong gender bias in the proportion of males becoming household heads and females living as coresident grandparents or as secondary members of established households.

The census data show only minor differences by ethnicity. While Indians have somewhat higher proportions of older adults acting as household heads, these differences are not marked. Indians are, however, much less likely to be residing as secondary household members compared to other ethnic groups. Among households where the older grandparent is coresident, Rotumans represent the largest proportion followed by Indians, Fijians, and other minor ethnic groups. Overall, though differences do exist in the structure of household type by ethnicity, they are not striking and seem to represent an expected variation arising from the ethno-cultural diversity of Fiji's population.

Differences in economic circumstances as measured by employment status are instructive. Older adults who are household heads have much higher rates of economic activity compared to those in other household types, and employment status is much lower among those residing in alternative household types. While both the 1986 and 1996 census data show 40 percent of older adults heading households with grandchildren present and 50 percent of those heading households without grandchildren being employed, only 2 percent of older adults who coreside with adult children and grandchildren and 7 percent of those living in secondary households are economically active.

Conclusions and Implications

This paper has used a combination of household census data and case material to examine the changing role and influence of grandparents in Fiji in the context of development and the impacts of population aging. Social exchange theory provided a framework for comparing the benefits and costs of contemporary grandparenting across five household types that vary according to the presence of grandchildren and the status and position of the grandparents.

Fijian grandparents can and do successfully influence the lives of grandchildren without sharing a home with them but the household based grandparent/grandchild dyad is a potentially powerful context for their role in socialization, support, and caregiving and the maintenance of cultural norms on the importance of family. Both sides of the relationship benefit from coresidence as the child gains from early care and support by the grandparent, and as they age together, the child can increasingly contribute to the care and support of the grandparent.

Like grandparenting among the Chamorros in Guam (Torsch 2007) and Anglo-Europeans in small-town New Zealand (Keeling 2007), the role of being a grandparent in Fiji is complex and can be expressed in various ways depending upon the access grandparents have to grandchildren and their

status and power within the household unit. Grandparents who have some measure of control within a household either as heads or the parents of heads can be expected to have a greater impact on the socialization of the grandchildren under their care and may help reinforce traditional values that are essential to the support systems of older adults in developing nation settings (see Apt 1996 and Rahman 1999a, 1999b for African and Asian case material). In Fiji, such reinforcing mechanisms may be among the few avenues available to older people to cope with a rapidly changing socioeconomic structure which is ill-prepared for the needs of an aging society. While this is not directly evident from analysis of the census data, the older adult residential patterns that emerge are consistent with those indicated in the interview data.

The overall analysis suggests marked differences in the position and experience of Fijian grandparents between households that contain grandparent/grandchild dyads and those that do not, and differences when the grandparent is the head of the household or lives in the house of an adult child. In life-course perspective, age plays a major role in transitions from autonomy to dependence regardless of the presence of grandchildren. Still, older household heads who live with grandchildren are likely to maintain control of their homes for a longer period than do heads lacking coresident grandchildren. Further, though more research is needed, it may be that grandparents who head households containing grandchildren will find it easier to transition into a supportive role in the home of an adult child when they can no longer maintain their own home.

As is the case in almost all aspects of social aging, Fijian women and men appear to follow different life-course transitions into specific household types, and these differences may significantly impact their expectation of and access to care and support as they age. While in part an artifact of differential mortality, grandmothers are more commonly found as coresidents in the homes of their adult children while grandfathers tend to remain the heads of their own homes. When and if headship becomes a disadvantage is unclear but many findings of gender and aging research indicate that older men are largely dependent upon their wives for care while women develop broader networks of care and support that serve them better in later years of life (Kim and Kim 2003; Shaw 2005). Level of economic activity also plays a central role in the type of household an older person is associated with. Not surprisingly, headship is associated with employment, and withdrawal from labor-force activity is associated with coresidence in the home of another.

The implications of sociodemographic characteristics for the grandparenting experience are widely discussed in the research literature on grandparenting in the United States and other developed country settings

(e.g., Szinovacz 1998). Further work is needed to fully understand the Fijian and other developing world contexts.

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