

# **Negotiating Eldercare in Chinese Middle-class Families: A Case Study of Tianjin, China**

In fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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March 2022



## **Abstract**

This study investigates changing views and practices of eldercare in Chinese middle-class families. It aims to understand the context in which shifting expectations, dynamics and various forms of family practices influence the lives of older people. The thesis concludes by making suggestions for policymakers, planners, and the market to provide appropriate support and options for the rising number of middle-class families.

This thesis begins by exploring the fusion of two phenomena: the rising middle-class and increasing percentage of older people in China driven by increased longevity and the one child policy. The interaction of these is producing new dilemmas for families providing elder care and new strategies. Fieldwork took place in the urban region of Tianjin, China, to collect narratives of participants' eldercare practices, their life stories and later life plans. After six-months fieldwork, a total of ten families were interviewed, including: seven families with three generations (grandparents, older parents and one-child) and three families without the oldest generation (older parents, one-child). Their family stories are analysed in three chapters (6,7,8) that discuss those families who are self-reliant; those who buy in support for the grandparents and finally those whose older parent generation are the oldest in the family who reflect on their own preferred ageing trajectory. The key findings are that in middle-class families, the grandparent generation have little need to rely on their adult children financially but can use their own good pensions. Older generations were able to use their wealth and housing assets to benefit younger generations and through that to promote familial support. Families had different interpretations of filial obligations but shared common values. For example, grandparents are happiest to age in the community with regular visits from their children. With only one child to rely on, older parents are very reluctant to burden their children and look to reciprocity in their family practices. The research revealed that while these middle-class households have stronger economic conditions, they still expect to care for the grandparent generation but, with many calls on family resources of time, need to navigate buy in support particularly when there is frailty in the very old. In the past co-residence would have supported filial piety but new living arrangements of living close by or 'living with' on a rotational or short-term basis are options embraced by middle class families. The research exposes the fragility of market based elder care support and the thesis concludes by making recommendations for building more robust services.

## **Acknowledgements**

I really appreciate the support of my supervisors, Prof. Rose Gilroy and Dr Andrew M Law, who have delivered patient guidance and warm encouragement. They have enlightened my research journey and served as role models for my future academic work. Without their help, I would not have finished this thesis smoothly. In particular, during this pandemic, I even experienced self-doubt and felt loneliness several times, but every time saw their kind comments on my draft, I was dragged out of the bad mood and back to work quickly.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to my panel, Prof. Suzanne Speak and Dr Zan Gunn, whose advice have given me a lot of help on this journey. I should also like to thank Mrs. Marian Kyte for her guidance and support during my time at the university, as well as my colleagues.

My parents have been a tremendous help to me on this research trip, as well as my friends and research participants, who have been excited by and kind enough to contribute to this study. I am the only child in my family and my parents are over the age of 60, which is my motivation for unpacking the uncertain possibilities of eldercare, since I wish that they could live in a happier and more independent fashion.

I sincerely thank my friend, Mr. Philip Ballard, for his assistance, in particular, as the first reader of my thesis draft and providing careful advice and clarification of my grammatical mistakes, misuse of words and phrases. Lastly, thanks to my examiners Dr Jieyu Liu and Dr Michael Richardson, who have spent time and patience reviewing my thesis and giving suggestions and advice.

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

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## 1.1 Research background

This topic begins with two phenomena: the rising middle class and the rapidly increasing number of older people in China. This has resulted in a diversity of lifestyles and challenges to traditional eldercare.

### *The ageing situation in China*

According to the United Nations (2015), China is expected to shift position in the rankings of aged societies from 73rd in 2000 to 19th by 2050. By 2050, the population of those aged 65+ in China will be 25 times greater than in the UK, 13 times greater than in Russia and five times greater than in the USA (WHO, 2015a; United Nations, 2017). The comparative speed of China's ageing can be seen in the 26 years it took to double its population of over 65s compared to the 69, 85 and 115 years of the USA, Sweden and France respectively (Wang, 2016; Tian, 2017).

The latest Chinese statistical yearbook from 2015 shows that the population of those aged 60 years and over has reached 220 million, or 16.14% of the total population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2016). This figure of percentage was updated to 17.4% in 2020, and it is predicted that by the year 2050, it will be 34.6% of the total population (Statista, 2021). This means that China will have the largest aged population in the world (United Nations, 2011).

What is most significant, and particularly Chinese about these figures, is that the increasing percentage of older people was brought about by the imposition of the one-child policy (Nie, 2016) and the rapid decline of children in the population. The policy was in place for 36 years (1979–2015), which resulted in women born in the 1950s having only one child, even if they had siblings. This means that this generation is sandwiched between their parents, who were encouraged to have multiple births, and their only child, who since 2016 can have more than one child. Prior to 1979, the state encouraged women to give birth and honoured those who had the most babies (Bergaglio, 2001). The one-child policy was abolished in 2016, allowing couples to have a second child; however, the fertility rate has not increased as expected (BBC News, 2018), though clearly it is too early to evaluate. The generation of one-child parents are therefore positioned between their parents with their potential care needs and their children who may need support caring for their young family.

Due to the one-child policy, by 2015, there were a total of 224.6 million only children in China, of which more than 86% were in urban areas (Li *et al.*, 2018). By 2050, the one-child families

will reach 300 million (Wang and Guo, 2015); this will be characteristic of a diminishing number of the population able to care for ageing parents and grandparents, referred to as the ‘4:2:1 paradigm’: four grandparents, two parents and one child. When the only child grows up and marries another only child, this couple is likely to have to take care of four parents and eight grandparents – without siblings with whom to share the responsibility (Zhang *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, the increased life expectancy in China, as elsewhere, has led to a discussion about raising the retirement age (Chen and Groenewold, 2017), which will mean that more individuals in their fifties and sixties may struggle to balance work and family responsibilities (Zelezna, 2018; Falkingham *et al.*, 2020). This increases the possibility of thinning care resources for older parents and dependent grandchildren whose care duties are currently undertaken by the retired sandwich generation.

### ***The emerging new middle class***

Over the last 25 years (1990-2014), there has been a marked emergence and growth of a new middle class in China driven by the economic reforms (Chen and Qin, 2014). In 2000, 5 million households were classified as middle class, just three per cent of its population (China Power Team, 2020); 225 million were in 2016 (The Economist, 2016). The number of the middle class in 2020 was approximately 700 million in China, over half of the population (Statista, 2020; China Power Team, 2020). This group is now a global consumption target and is bringing significant business opportunities to society, which is stimulating leisure growth (Song and Cui, 2009). Importantly, this rise of the middle class is not simply a matter of rising disposable income, rather the growth of China’s new middle class has been the emergence of new class-based lifestyles and values (Tu, 2016a). According to Li *et al.* (2018), the emerging middle-class households whose values and lifestyles are changing are a major influence on the practice of caring for older people.

According to Zhu (2018) in his/her paper on ‘lifestyle mobility’, middle-class Chinese people are reconceptualising their sense of home and exercising greater lifestyle mobility as they search for better homes and new types of living. Complexity comes due to the shift from co-residence with parents, which was traditionally practiced by the eldest son and has been replaced by nuclear households where each generation seeks independent lives (Bai, 2019). This is very apparent in the only-child generation, now in their early thirties, who are income rich but time poor and seem to prefer to spend their money on travel and health-oriented products. Furthermore, education is the most important factor that is helping to reshape similar

values among the younger generation in middle-class households (Song *et al.*, 2016), such as the ‘show your true self’ topic in primary school lessons in Shanghai, or the training of professional salesmen to demonstrate values that are the reverse of the traditional ‘speech is silver, silence is golden’ (Fang and Faure, 2011, p.327). These phenomena have shown that traditional ways of thinking and measuring ‘good conduct’ and ‘correct thoughts’ are being challenged, young adults focusing on self-comfort or enjoyment, such as the popular word ‘*tangpin*’ (lying flat) in Chinese social media (Zhang and Liu, 2021). In this dynamic context, there are potentially generation gaps and differences in values and lifestyles occurring between older people and their children, which may also be calling into question established family practices (Fan, 2007).

The new middle-class challenge traditional and unified lifestyles; their values are influenced by individualism and consumerism. They reshape new middle-class individuals’ filial piety values, consumption traits and living arrangements of elders and their families. Traditionally, Chinese family relations, practices and values were guided by the filial piety (*xiao*: 孝) that is related to the traditional culture of Confucian value. Adult children in urban areas now often live separately from their older parents due to better living conditions and better opportunities for work and education. Therefore, middle-class young people and their families can accept the value of buying help, such as hiring a *baomu*<sup>1</sup> (paid care worker) to provide services, because of the inequality of the income level of the rural-urban area (Wu *et al.*, 2005). This need has been met by the rising number of middle-aged women flocking into the urban centers looking for ways of making a living while the demand for *baomu* has also stimulated the rural to urban migration of women.

### ***Challenges to traditional practices of eldercare***

Traditional Chinese care practice is guided by filial piety, which is a virtue from Confucian culture. Filial piety (*xiao*: 孝) has a long history that can be traced from the pre-Qin period the concept of five cardinal relationships (*wu lun*: 五伦) (Qi, 2015a; WHO, 2015b, p.13). One of these states, ‘*fumu zai, bu yuanyou*’ (父母在不远游), meaning that children should not travel or live too far away while their parents are still alive. Additionally, a traditional family-oriented value in Confucianism asks children to show respect and obey their parents, but also to play an important role to ensure older parents’ wellbeing (Whyte, 2004; Zhu, 2018; Peng *et al.*, 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> *Bao mu* is an informal occupation, mainly focused on the developed locations of big cities in China; their work includes taking care of older people or babies.

The statement ‘*yang er fang lao*’ (养儿防老) means that older parents depend particularly on their eldest son and their daughter-in-law to take responsibility for caring practices (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003; Qi, 2015b).

Previous research of gender stereotype in the family (Lin *et al.*, 2003; Qi, 2015b) has revealed that, in practice, it is women (daughters and daughters-in-law) who ‘are more likely to provide direct eldercare (i.e., housework and emotional support), while sons are more likely to provide direct financial support’ (Luo and Chui, 2019, pp.2756-2757). But this traditional way of working has been challenged, especially during the Maoist era (Qi, 2015a), which encouraged women to join the labour market and promoted their economic independence, which broke the traditional concept of ‘man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker’ (Luo and Chui, 2019, pp.2756-2757). However, it also meant that the state promoted women as workers but did not suggest that the care of home, children and elders might be shared. It was still women’s work. So, expectations on women increased, and this double burden continues. In this, the Chinese situation is mirrored in the UK and many Western countries; however, as the findings demonstrate, new forms of market-based support are emerging.

During the transformation of the economic structure, which changed the centrally controlled economy to a market-based society, there was also a change to informal family care support; that is, from only relying on the work unit for urban elders to economic protection of retired people. A three-pillar pension system was introduced, which includes the state pension, occupational pension, and private insurance, with the first two pensions being dependent on the length of time one has worked. However, with demographic changes, there already is a significant shortfall in the pension system, and government continues to allocate more tax revenues to pay pensioners (Wang, 2016), which forces central government to make a series of plans to postpone retirement age (Zhou, 2016). Middle-aged caregivers, in the future, may struggle more to meet their multiple obligations.

Furthermore, the government advocates filial piety and familial eldercare that drives anxiety about later life among middle income families, especially the only-child generation. Scholars, such as Song *et al.* (2017) have investigated the future plans of one-child families in their preparations for ageing; Warmenhoven *et al.* (2018) looked at who would care for the older people in China that had been affected by the one-child policy; Tu (2016a) paid particular attention to one-child middle-class families’ migration patterns and the way these patterns

influenced their later life. In addition, some of the literature argues that filial piety has been eroded by high levels of education in Chinese cities (Cheung and Kwan, 2009; Nie, 2016).

In such a context, eldercare is undergoing change not only from the state policy, but also from the individual practice. Therefore, this study focuses on listening and observing family stories to understand how middle-class families respond to the changes they face.

## **1.2 Research aims, questions and methods**

Drawing inspiration from Chambers *et al.* (2009, pp. ix-x), this research seeks to understand ‘the way in which changing roles, structures and different ways of “doing family” (family practices) impact on the lives of older people and family members’ by evaluating ‘the diverse lived experience of family life for older people and how family life is carried out’. It addresses the demographic and social-cultural shifts in China that bring strain and uncertainty to eldercare within the family of three generations and their future plans.

### **1.2.1 The research aims**

This research explores the potential changes to eldercare in middle-class families, or changes in interpreting filial piety. The needs of middle-class families regarding eldercare are gathered through the ideas of three generations, bringing an opportunity to understand family practice within a life-course perspective.

Based on my literature review, this study seeks to fill three gaps in the extant literature.

- Exploring choices for middle-class older people

More than 70% of older people prefer to age in place, but nearly 40% of older adults are worried that no one would look after them when they needed care (Du and Wang, 2016, p.49). Because of the contemporary living conditions and working opportunities for young adults, there are more and more older people who live far away from their adult children. Thus, this thesis asks how we might support the expectations of middle-class older people that is a challenge for all of society.

- Extending the limited attention on the middle class

There is no systematic literature on the age distribution of the middle class and their needs while ageing in China. Therefore, this research will focus on the needs of different age groups of middle-class people while ageing, providing better choices for the middle-class older people while ageing in communities.

- Adding on research angles

Bringing three generations together to negotiate on caring issues is an underexplored issue. Building up the one-child generation’s own package to prepare for their care issues in the future has received limited attention in the research field (Warmenhoven *et al.*, 2018).

This not only concerns the choices of middle-class older people but also offers something different for a middle-class adult who is not able to take enough time to care for their older parents. Such choices give those older people in the early stages of retirement, opportunities to plan their later life, which could be good quality and enriched in the same way as their working life. In addition, they have the autonomy to choose the place in which they will age, and the mobility to become involved in social networks. This could be one of the solutions to balance financial management, the lack of caregivers and could also make older people feel engaged with the environment.

### **Why the middle class?**

- In industrialized economies, the middle class is the foundation of the market economy and democracy (Chen and Qin, 2014). This means they are the most rapidly growing group in China currently, facing a swift change of economic status. There is little research investigating changes in eldercare practice in this group.
- Middle-class older people have too high a pension to qualify for most public programmes, but often the pension is too low to meet the costs of most private-sector housing or care options; therefore, they need new choices (Binstock and George, 2011).
- An even more urgent reality is that due to the active response to the one-child policy, middle-class older people have a higher possibility of facing the situation of an empty-nest household because of the stricter implementation of the family planning policy.

### **The criteria of selected participants**

All families in this research met the criteria of being middle class suggested by Miao (2017), including living in middle-class communities, owning at least one apartment and urban *Houkou*, having a comfortable income and having a white-collar occupation. Those standards are considered as necessary conditions. The income bands that define the middle class vary between regions.

There are several resources to help understanding a middle-income. Chinese middle class was growing rapidly since the 1990s when there was a very small middle class, then increasing from three per cent of its population in 2000 to over half of the population in 2020 (Statista, 2020; The economist, 2016). Moreover, 75% of middle-class households will live in urban areas and earn 60,000 to 229,000 CNY (about £6,840 to £26,109) per year in 2022 (Barton *et al.*, 2013). This study was carried out in Tianjin, a tier-two city. According to the Hurun Report

(2018), for those Chinese people living in a tier-two city, the Chinese middle class is classified by an annual income range of 100K to 500K CNY (about £11,401 to £57,007). Therefore, combining the above conditions, I decided that the threshold of middle-class household income would start from 100K CNY (about £11,401).

### **1.2.2 Research questions**

This research investigates how a potential shift of the model of caregiving for older citizens may be occurring, from the family base to where care is mediated between families, the market, communities, government and planners. This thesis investigates the following research questions:

#### **Research question 1:**

Since 1978, economic reform and policy transitions have resulted in the rise of a new middle-class. What do they and their lifestyles look like?

#### **Research question 2:**

What are middle-class family practices concerning eldercare? How do they manage and balance their family resources to negotiate family duties between three or four generations of family members?

#### **Research question 3:**

How are expectations and responses shifting between generations? Are they still following the concept of filial piety?

#### **Research question 4:**

How can governments, market and planners come together to deliver support for middle-class families' expectations?

### **1.2.3 Methods chosen**

In this study, life-course, biographical and critical gerontology approaches were involved. As Hadley (2019, p.7) argues, the 'Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM), provided a method of understanding the individual and social context of the participants' experience'. It is an approach to narrate others' life stories, where 'in writing another's life, we also write or rewrite our own lives' (ibid). Critical gerontology concentrates on socio-structural forces rather than personal experiences (Hadley, 2019). The life-course perspective on ageing includes



linked lives, social and historical contexts, and important transitions in making choices (Katz *et al.*, 2012, pp. 9-11), which offer important perspectives of this research.

Age, in its various meanings, serves as the analytic link between changing lives, changing family relations, and changing historical contexts. Families are age-differentiated, especially because generational position defines an individual's place in the extended family structure and shapes identities, roles, and responsibilities. At the same time, families are age-integrated in that individuals of varying ages and cohorts are joined together and family-related roles and activities extend across life even as specific roles and activities shift up the generational ladder over time. (Katz *et al.*, 2012, p. 10).

#### **1.2.4 Definitions in this thesis**

The following terms are used in the thesis and definitions are as follows.

##### **Life-course:**

The life course theory includes key concepts such as life-span development, human agency, timing, linked lives, and historical time and place that connect social change and developmental trajectories (Elder and Shanahan, 2007). This study focuses on the linked lives of life course perspective, which will be discussed in chapter 3.

##### **Filial piety:**

It is a Confucian value that is widely held in East Asian cultures and among Asian immigrants, and it establishes a standard for children to respect and care for their elderly parents (Canda, 2013). Filial piety can be traced back to pre-Confucian Chinese history (Yao, 2000; Chan and Tan, 2004; Canda, 2013). In today's world, filial piety is also very influential in these places and among immigrant families that came from these places (Yoon and Hendricks, 2018).

##### **The sandwich generation:**

The idea of a sandwich generation refers to mid-life adults who simultaneously raise dependent children and frail elderly parents, but in this study, it is also considered as people who caregivers for parents and grandchildren as the same time.

### **Tianjin city:**

Tianjin city is a northern coastal and a tier-two city<sup>2</sup>. The Chinese city tier system<sup>3</sup> is a hierarchical classification of Chinese cities; however, the government has never publicly ratified this urban system (Law and Qin, 2018; Qi *et al.*, 2016). Second-tier cities are believed to be the growth engines of the Chinese economy, fuelled by large amounts of expenditure, contemporary technology, and an inflow of fresh talent (Mullich, 2011). They are cities with GDPs ranging from 68 to 299 billion dollars per year, are provincial or sub-provincial capitals, and have populations of 3 to 15 million people (Wong, 2019).

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<sup>2</sup> There are tags for cities that do not equal typical first tier cities, like as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, but stand out beyond other traditional Tier-two cities, such as ‘Tier 1.5’ or ‘developing first tier’. In this research, I used the most widely used ranking system in China to divide cities into four levels. As a result, Tianjin is classified as a Tier-two city.

<sup>3</sup> In 2019, China Briefing had posted an article ‘China’s City-Tier Classification: How Does it Work?’ to elucidate further on this unofficial system. The classifications on the website can be accessed here: <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/chinas-city-tier-classification-defined/>.

### 1.3 Thesis structure

This study ‘emphasizes the processes underpinning social activity through detailed descriptions of the participants’ behaviours, beliefs, and the contexts within which they occur’ (Green and Thorogood, 2018, p.21). This thesis enquires into complex cultural-context research questions by using case study methods. It is important to investigate private issues embedded in public and structural reform by researching through an everyday life perspective (Gilroy, 2013, p.431). Four main parts make up this thesis (see Figure 1-1 below), including the importance of this topic, a review of related literature, the choice of methods and design research planning, and the findings from the fieldwork and consequent discussion. It is explained in the first chapter that changes in family practices in middle-class Chinese families are occurring in times of wider rapid changes. The changing role of women, the importance of the one-child policy and the rising expectations of young people all impact on current and future expectations and practices of eldercare.

How to understand Chinese middle-class family’s practices on eldercare?

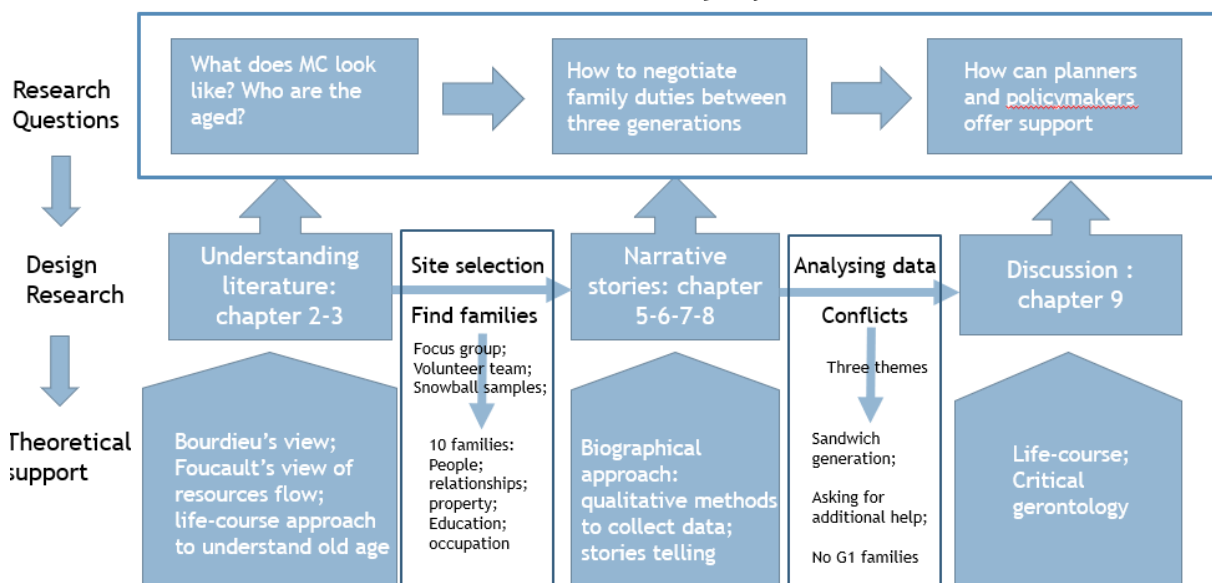


Figure 1-1: Structure of Thesis

Chapters 2–3: these two chapters try to create a clear definition of the middle-class family and what support could be delivered by the Chinese family concerning eldercare. The literature review in Chapter 2 shows the shifting of policies, the social economy and the welfare system in China; these provide a historical and cultural lens to understand the emergence of the new middle class and transitions of families’ lifestyles and values concerning caring for the elderly. Chapter 3 takes a perspective of the family’s role in eldercare, which gives a picture of how family practices shifting during a dramatic policy changing period.

Chapter 4 looks at the methodology that takes the research questions into the field. It includes the reasons for using qualitative methods, and the criteria for site selection and sampling. There were many practical tasks that became necessary when the research engaged with the real world. Although difficulties in contacting interviewees were expected beforehand and a reserve plan was devised before the fieldwork, the process of recruiting participants still accounted for a great deal of time and effort.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 portray the results from the fieldwork, which was made up of a total of ten middle-class families' stories on eldercare. First, the city where fieldwork took place is introduced in Chapter 5. Furthermore, ten families' members and their relationships are also introduced to the readers to create easier familiarity with their stories in the following three chapters. In Chapter 6, the sandwich generation, G2 is introduced as the generation that faces competing demands from two sides grandchildren and older parents. Then, in Chapter 7, some struggling G2 people start to ask for additional help. Logically, the G2 people in Chapter 7 see their later life plan as depending on self-reliance than those in Chapter 6, which was evidenced by some researchers from the family solidarity perspective (Falkingham *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, in Chapter 8, the G3 generation see their family relationships within the construction of reciprocity, which is different to the notion of filial piety.

In the discussion and conclusion chapter, complex transitions have occurred in middle-class households from generation to generation and are also being influenced by some other factors regarding practice. When families who depend on themselves in the Chinese filial piety context, turn to ask for additional help from outside their family, some complex transfers need to happen between the expectations of older parents and the responses of their adult children. This chapter discusses why eldercare is moving further away from the traditional care practices in the Chinese middle class. This last chapter reflects on family values in China, values that were guided by Confucian culture for thousands of years but have been disrupted by the values of individualism and liberty from Western society. In this context, either younger adults (G3) or older parents (G2) tend to seek meaning in their unique family practice rather than following the unified discipline that is sourced from traditional norms.

## **Chapter 2. Emergence of the Chinese middle-class stratum**

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## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews how the Chinese middle class are emerging in contemporary China and what their life looks like. To reach these goals, this chapter will examine four themes in the extant literature. The first of these themes refers to the contested number of middle-class people in China because there is no agreed definition of the Chinese middle class (sections 2.1). The second part of this chapter will examine a series of theories to define this group of people (section 2.2). A third section will explore a series of historical changes (from a planned economy society to a market economy society) to understand what has happened recently in China (section 2.3), and then a fourth section will investigate how rising socio-economic status impacts upon people's lives and values (section 2.4).

This chapter tries to establish a background to explore how political and economic transitions have affected the rise of the Chinese middle class. Theories concerning the Chinese middle-class definition will be explored to understand their values and lifestyles. This chapter, therefore, contributes to the thesis, in that it will allow us to define who the middle classes are in China whilst also providing the reader with enough preliminary knowledge to situate my interviewees and their behaviour.

## **2.2 Emerging Chinese middle class**

Chinese urban residents have significantly increased their disposable incomes and purchasing power due to rapid economic growth (Davis, 2005; Tang *et al.*, 2020). They 'took advantage of the new opportunities provided by the commodification of capital and labour' (Rocca, 2017, p.48).

These urban citizens have been through dramatic political changes in a short period. With these changes, there are shifts in values and norms, which means that even within two generations of middle-class families, the cultural differences between them are striking (Nathan, 2016). For example, wealth is the driving force for political participation, which is common knowledge among the older middle class. On the other hand, their offspring see political participation as a distraction (*ibid*).

Urban middle-class parents who are approximately 50 to 60 years old and benefited from housing privatisation are either still working or enjoying a decent pension. The younger generation (approximately 30 to 40 years old), as the children of urban residents are more likely to gain higher education opportunities. It helps them gain prestigious and well-paid jobs because this is needed in a high pressured and high-tech labour market (Rocca, 2017, p.48).

### ***Chinese Scholars define middle class***

In a 2001 Chinese Academy of Social Science's (CASS) report, Lu (2002) suggested that the middle class in contemporary Chinese society has six characteristics:

1. *The type of work (intellectual labour in a safe and clean environment).*
2. *Rights and duties at the workplace (including responsibilities, the right to speak up, make suggestions and exercise some form of control).*
3. *Income, including all perks, patrimonial assets and other benefits directly or indirectly deriving from employment.*
4. *Skills (especially education higher than high school, training and experience).*
5. *Lifestyle and consumption habits.*
6. *Moral and civic consciousness.*

With these attributes, China's middle class occupies a favourable role in various sociological dimensions (Wang, 2020, p.1315): they account for 15.9% of the total population when measured by occupations and professions, 24.6 percent when measured by salary, and 35% when measured by consumption (Li, 2003). They have an advantage in accumulating other social, economic, cultural, and political resources because of their social status (Lu, 2004).

### ***A road map to becoming middle class***

Shan (2005), from business-communication and public-relations-based scholar, has offered a detailed guide. In this popular book, *A Road Map to Becoming Middle Class (Zhongchan luxiantu)*, for example, 'is written for general readers who do not understand what the middle class is but aspire to become part of it' (Ren, 2013, p.9). The book depicts a middle-class subject in colourful language, such as wearing a grey coat, consuming green foods, and reading an orange-coloured newspaper, and outlines three main ways to achieve middle-class status: professional salaried jobs, self-employment, or starting a small business (ibid, p.9).

This phenomenon of the emerging middle class is associated with Chinese political shifts. For example, Zhang (2010) claims that the growth of middle-class housing has occurred as a result of the historical transition from socialist work unit housing to private forms of housing in recent years. This transition, she claims, corresponds to a shift in conventional political discourse regarding class from *jieji* (class) to *jiēceng* (strata). Scholars such as Rachel Heiman, Mark



Liechty, and Carla Freeman contend that in the post-1980 global neoliberal turn, ‘new middle classes’ have emerged (Ren, 2013, p.10). These emerging middle classes are linked to an American interpretation of neoliberalism characterized by multinational free trade ideologies, individual, entrepreneurial prosperity, and unabashed claims of private property (ibid, p.15). Therefore, it would be helpful to uncover middle-class clues in theoretical models and historical routes.

## **2.3 Theoretical perspectives on the middle class**

There are broadly speaking five competing theoretical definitions of the Chinese middle class. Sturzaker and Law (2016, p.37) have summarized these five models in terms of ‘a statistical-survey model, a Marxist model, a Weberian model, a combinationist model, and a post-structuralist school’. This section will discuss these theoretical models in great detail.

### **2.3.1 A statistical-survey approach**

The first of the five schools to be examined might be loosely described as a statistical school. One important scholar from this field is Zhou Xiaohong, from the Social Science School of Nanjing University, who led group research on a national survey of the Chinese middle class. This was the first time that the middle class was enumerated directly. Zhou (2005, p.45) defines the ‘middle class’ as ‘the middle-income strata’ (*Zhongchan jieceng*) consisting of six subgroups according to the criteria of occupation, income (with a monthly income of 5,000 CNY (about £569) or above) and education (a university qualification or above). It was revealed that the actual percentage of the middle class in urban China is 10.9% (Zhu, 2011).

Li Peilin, based at CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), used the first public national survey, the China General Social Survey 2006, to estimate the size of the middle class. Li Qiang, based at Tsinghua University, is also a reputable sociologist, whose major interest lies in social stratification. One of his contributions is the theory distinguishing the old middle class from the new in China (Zhu, 2011, p.52).

However, it is ambiguous to discuss the Chinese middle class only according to the statistical approach, because the variable factors defining middle class can be occupation, income level, education level, and self-identity, but taste, value and lifestyle are difficult to describe in a quantitative approach. Ren (2013, p.9) points out that there are two main research questions that are usually of central concern to this group of empirical knowledge-based researchers. The first one is to statistically describe the information about the middle class, such as who and

how many they are, how to identify them and where are they concentrated. The other is the standards of how to identify these middle-class people and give those benchmarks validity.

### **2.3.2 Marxian concern, Weberian model and Bourdieusian theory**

The second school is described as the Marxist school, which is usually the start of the discussion of class; the theory holds a view of class conflict and exploitation. It is founded on the idea that possession of the means of production is the most important factor in determining class relationships (Tsang, 2013, p.656). This theory pays less attention to skilled workers and professionals who are emerging in the market system. Some researchers are questioning the power transfers during the period of transition to a market system in a socialist country, which results in the political issues of class conflicts not being as serious. For example, Li (2012) argues that market identity has replaced political and individual status. The rapid development of the socialist market is widening the gap of understanding diverse and dynamic intermediate classes through Marxist theory in China (Tsang, 2013).

In contrast to Marx's conception of the middle class as the bourgeoisie perpetually engaged in a class conflict with the working class, the Weberian cultural tradition views the middle class as 'intermediate' strata, 'a group of people who have all sorts of property, or of marketable abilities through training, who are in a position to draw their support from these sources' (Ren, 2013, p.4). As a result, the Weberian concept of the middle class encompasses both an economic role (in terms of the production and purchase of products on the market) and a social status (in terms of honour, respect, and religion), which can be established by the consumption of goods as represented by particular lifestyles (ibid, p.4).

Weber is not against Marx's materialism but asserts that Marx provided too schematic a way to tie up economy and society in rigidly formulaic relationships that should be more open-ended and variable. Weber holds the view that the stratification of society creates three dimensions of power: economic, prestige and pure power. They are the basis of three different groups: class, status and the party (Cuff *et al.*, 2015, p.43). Additionally, Weber contributes to an important notion that social stratification not only relies on economic capital but also social status and their representation. The relationship between one's social position and education is thereby built up (Zhu, 2011, p.53); these become necessary elements to evaluate the new middle class in China.

Max Weber is more concerned with capitalist bureaucracy and social organisation than Karl Marx is with class antagonism and conflict (Ren, 2013, p.4). The Weberian model has an

impact on studies of the Chinese middle class, especially when it comes to cultural practice and consumption (ibid, p.10). For instance, Donald and Zheng (2009) conducted a thorough study into the development of middle-class taste through activities such as reading, tourism, and educational choices. They are based on French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) work on the growth of the middle class in post-war France, which centres on the concept of distinction, a Weberian expansion (Ren, 2013, p.10). They discuss how 'middle-class' Chinese subjects have used self-improvement guides, travel experience and tourism as new ways to create identity (Sturzaker and Law, 2016).

Bourdieu's definition goes on to suggest that 'middle-class families tend to have comparable cultural capital, tastes, habitus, distinction, and class' (Tsang, 2013, p.657). Bourdieu ([1979]1984) argues that a person's taste is influenced by their social circumstances and expresses that 'economic, cultural, social and symbolic' capitals can be reproduced by interactions, which create fields that divide diverse social groups. Writers in this school dismiss the concept that the identity of the middle class or the class itself is picked up by subjects in any tidy way. This school identified the middle class by consumption types; for example, Dong's (2018) study investigated a group of young urban professionals who identified as middle class through buying a specific brand of car. The challenge for this school is limited by the understanding of the dynamics and flow of class that is occurring in China, because people may either benefit or be disadvantaged by sudden changes in policy, such as second-generation people who are financially compensated for the demolition of their parents' house.

In particular, political capital gives a lens to understand phenomena and plays an important role in the Chinese market society. Ocasio *et al.* (2020, p.3), have further reviewed literature and argued 'on [the] power of organizations in light of Bourdieu's concept of capital to a political capital perspective'. They believe political capital includes 'knowledge, reputational, organizational and institutional capitals' (Ocasio et al., p.3). It is similar to social capital, but the distinguishing element, according to Coleman (1988, p. S98), is that social capital 'inheres in the structure of connections between actors and among actors.' Political capital, on the other hand, is related to a politician's positional authority, and therefore is anchored in the political order's institutional structures (Nee and Oppen, 2010). Political capital, as a source of power, can transfer to other capitals in China (ibid), which might influence individuals' lives.

### 2.3.3 Combinationist theories

This camp makes efforts to combine Marxist, Weberian and Bourdieuan perspectives in what can be called a combinationist school. Zhang Li, an anthropologist, is credited with bringing these scientific perspectives together (Sturzaker and Law, 2016, p.38). She researched a gated community in Kunming for her book: *In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis* (Zhang, 2010). According to her book, the regulation of rural migrant outsiders and other low-paid people, has resulted in the creation of new class exclusions (Sturzaker and Law, 2016, p.37). Compared with David Harvey, Zhang goes further on geographic stratification connecting with social status. Zhang, like Wu (2004), sees neoliberal development mechanisms as crucial in the formation of class consciousness. Going on from this point of view, Zhang goes on to explore the importance of homeownership in the creation of a new social community and as a common measure of one's economic status (Sturzaker and Law, 2016, p.38).

The new middle class is emerging with the advent of a differentiated housing geography, a new social stratum (Zhang, 2010, p.107). According to Tomba (2005), private gated communities provide an environment for homeowners to self-cultivate their spatial identity and govern themselves. Additionally, property is accounted as a vital 'indicator of people's economic status' (Zhang, 2010, p.6). Zhang expresses that 'new living environments come in a clearly stratified hierarchy', that the new rich have the desire to buy a certain social class by living in a particular community, as the advertisements advocate: 'luxury villa', 'garden', which 'elaborates how self-realization is closely linked to appropriate consumption' (Alpermann, 2012, p.440). The pattern of consumption in middle-class purchases demonstrate comfort and pleasure for individual purposes, 'a sense of achievement by hard work, and social pleasure by providing a comfortable life for [one's] family' (Zhu, 2016, p.9). This also could be explained by Bourdieu's research, cultural and material consumption are represented as lifestyles (Song *et al.*, 2016).

However, a discussion about state-society relations focuses on Chinese citizens' agency in establishing their own spaces to gain privacy from the state (Ren, 2013, p.12). It is normalized whether individually or socially, that the middle class is linked to their future position in calling for democracy (*ibid*). Thus, understanding the middle class in everyday life — 'elucidate the mechanisms by which reason constituted and shaped forms of action'—is vitally important (Poster, 1984, p.9), Foucault's *dispositif* will be introduced in next section.

### 2.3.4 Post-structuralism

Post-structuralism contributes to our understanding of the middle class in China in particular. Hai Ren, a representative scholar in this school, developed a Foucauldian and Deleuzian approach to the way in which ideas of class have been built in the contemporary moment. In his book (2013): *The Middle Class in Neo-Liberal China, Governing Risk, Life-Building, and Themed Space*, Ren outlines his poststructuralist theory of class through a series of concepts including Foucault's notion of the *dispositif* (Sturzaker and Law, 2016, p.39).

#### *Foucault's dispositif:*

Dispositive, is a term 'commonly used in law to refer to the legal resolution of a case or legal distribution of property through a trust or will, but its historical root is complex and goes beyond the legal domain' (Ren, 2013, p.12). The philosopher Michel Foucault uses dispositive (that is, French *dispositif*), to designate 'a configuration or arrangement of elements and forces, practices and discourse, power and knowledge, that is both strategic and technical.' (ibid).

Ren states in his book (2013, p.13), that a 'dispositive is a governmental economy' that deals 'with risks'. He refers to it as risk economy or riskonomy, which corresponds to a collection of practices, bodies of information, measures, and structures aimed at managing, governing, controlling, and orienting human subjects' behaviours, movements, and thoughts in a way that is ostensibly useful (Ren, 2013). He states that a 'middle class dispositive involves multiple lines of arrangement, including the neoliberal distribution of power, wealth, and risk; communicative distribution of the sensible; and individualized distribution of value and norms' (ibid, p.143).

Ren argues that '*jiēcēng*' (stratum) replaces '*jiēji*' (class) is not only understood as 'a repression of class and its formation', but rather 'in the middle class (*zhōngchān jiēcēng*), has become a dispositive, displacing the state apparatus of *jiēji* as in the working class' (Ren, 2013, p.143). It no longer found class in the socialist context of class struggle, but rather in a jumble of disparate factors like consumption, schooling, and property rights (ibid). Ren (2013: 145) argues that the middle-class *dispositif* promotes individualisation, a discursive narrative that encourages flexibility in Chinese subjects and a 'do-it-yourself' attitude to contemporary life. This attitude encourages the subject to compute 'new opportunities, uncertainties, risks and consequences brought about [by] this brave new way of living' (Qin and Law, 2021).

### **2.3.5 My position**

After addressing the five schools, this research relies on a Combinationist (mixed Marxist, Weberian and Bourdieuan) view of selecting a middle-class sample. This is because the post-structuralist perspective throws the idea of neat categories into doubt and deals with categories as continual (historical) sites of becoming; in this study, however, I have decided to adopt a more typological approach to the category middle class, as a tool from which I can recruit interview subjects; by taking this stance, this does not mean, I reject the idea of class as a (historical) becoming; rather from a pragmatic view the continual decentring of the idea of class would make it very difficult for me to recruit interviewees. However, and taking inspiration from Foucault's concept of genealogy, this research does indeed, look at the lives of the middle-class subjects in this study through a historical lens.

This research focuses on a group of people who have a mid-range income, are well educated and have a professional or managerial occupation and are also property owners in China. They may identify with their middle-class status or not, and they might even pay no attention to political positions, but they are indeed influenced by policy changes and/or benefit from economic reform.

Therefore, this study does not figure out what the 'middle class' actually is and how many such people are in this category; rather this study takes a historical lens for the reader to familiarize himself with those life experiences that normal urban dwellers have faced over a period of change.

## 2.4 Making the new middle class in China

The definition of the middle class in China is taken from Western culture. The continuing strength of the middle-class group is believed to be a vital element in contributing to a harmonious and stable society; indeed, if we take Ren's poststructuralist view, the development of a 'middle-class' concept has been created in China as a result of the gathering of the Chinese state powers working together to stabilise perceived crises (Ren, 2013, p.15; Sturzaker and Law, 2016, p.39). The Chinese middle class mostly focus on themselves and their family and hope for social stability to protect their personal benefits (Rocca, 2017).

Heiman *et al.* (2012) argue that 'new middle classes have been developed in the post-1980 global neoliberal turn' (Ren, 2013, p.14). They are named new middle class that is distinct from the 'traditional middle classes'<sup>4</sup>, which arose in the mid-twentieth century as a result of nationalist, modernist, authoritarian, and state-driven economic policies (ibid, p.15). Although the growth of neoliberalism is linked to the rise of the Chinese middle class, the global politics and historical expressions of the Chinese middle class are significantly different (ibid, p.15).

### 2.4.1 History of class in recent China

First and foremost, it cannot be denied that the views of Marx on class are the most influential ideas in a socialist society. For Chinese college students, Marxist political economy and dialectical theory are still compulsory courses. Marxists and other theorists discuss the political role of class in the transformation of society, which was used fully in China's Maoist era. This view assumes a class to be a group of people who are bundled and fixed together and who have their own class culture such that their actions and behaviours cannot be discussed independently of consciousness (Guo, 2012). During Mao's era, people who were labelled as the bourgeoisie, landlords, rich peasants and so on were deprived of their property. So, until now, socialist middle incomers (born around 1950)<sup>5</sup> who are careful about their property were unlike the younger middle class who were born after 1980 and growing up in a relatively harmonious society (Rocca, 2017).

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<sup>4</sup> When class labels were applied to the urban population in the 1950s, the capitalists were subdivided into three subcategories (commercial capitalist, industrial capitalist, comprador capitalist) and the petty bourgeoisie were into six (pauper, peddler, small shop owner, small factory owner, office employee, and liberal professional) (Kraus, 1981, pp. 185-186; see also Davis, 2000, p.254). Thus, the petty bourgeoisie was belonged to 'traditional middle class'. That cannot equate to the new middle class.

<sup>5</sup> People born in the 1950s equates to the fieldwork chapters' participants who are older parents, so this is the point about different middle-classes to be picked up again later.

In the early stage of breaking down social class barriers, Chinese leaders took a one-sided view of Marx's theory and focused on class conflict, while ignoring the economic-based perspective of market adjustment mechanisms. Marx argues that class represents the crucial division in society, based on the existence of private property (Cuff *et al.*, 2015). Marx defines class in terms of employment relations; that is to say, ownership of the means of production establishes an exploitative relationship (Muravchik, 2002). To avoid budding capitalism, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, land reform, the redistribution of production materials, and egalitarianism once made China's Gini Index 0.16 in the 1980 report of the World Bank Economic Mission (Li, 2019, p.35). It has been shown that the gap between the rich and the poor in society was extremely narrowed down at that time. This demonstrates an even greater level of equity than much lauded welfare states, such as Austria 0.231, Denmark 0.247, Sweden 0.25, Norway 0.252, Finland 0.256, Germany 0.281) The class view was used for political purposes and further developed in the Maoist era.

This view of class in China can be divided into two different stages up to the year of economic reform in 1978. **The first occurred from the 1950s to the 1970s**, when all households were categorised into two camps, which were the 'revolutionary class' who had no means of production, such as landless peasants and workers, and the 'anti-revolutionary class', who had property, such as landowners and right-wing intellectuals (Tu, 2016b, p.86). The classification was by a father's occupation and the person's political performance to a large degree (ibid). The label of 'class', once affirmed, would belong to the person their whole life and was difficult to change (Li, 2019). If the person was labelled 'black'<sup>6</sup>, it was impossible for him to work in any important position, and this even influenced their children. Even a good political position has a changing situation, because cadres are also facing the danger of decentralization (*xiafang*)<sup>7</sup>. People who were born around the 1930s in this study have memories of that time, and their children who were born about the 1950s may have been influenced by the 'down to the countryside' (*zhishi qingnian xiexiang*)<sup>8</sup> movement.

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<sup>6</sup> Five red categories mean family political background relates to worker, poor peasants, lower middle peasants, revolutionary cadres, revolutionary soldiers, families of martyrs etc.; Five black categories: Landlords, rich peasants, capitalists, counterrevolutionaries, bad elements, rightists, etc. (Li, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> A form of decline that has become more popular since the 1950s. The first is the decline in jobs; the second is the migration of work and life from central areas to remote areas.

<sup>8</sup> Since 1955, engaging in the countryside's construction was voluntary, and youth from 'black' five categories' background would rather go to remote areas because they cannot find other jobs in the city; the big movement started from 1968 to 1978, which planned to send educated youth to the countryside.



**From 1966**, a ten-year long turmoil started, the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), including a movement that started before the revolution which aimed to re-educate urban young people by ‘sending them down’ to learn from working with peasants. It disrupted a generation of young students’ education and career paths (Tu, 2016b, p.88), and also deprived them of the opportunity to go back to the city during that period. When the revolution ended, the classification of the ‘revolutionary class’ and ‘anti-revolutionary class’ was meaningless; this resulted in the end of class conflicts in China. At the same time, nearly 20 million, returned to the city (Tu, 2016b, p.88). This caused further pressure on the national enterprises that were already overstressed to accept more employees than they required, which resulted in many workers being laid off in the late 1980s and 1990s during the economic reform (ibid). To meet the massive demand for jobs, the government also encouraged private businesses for the first time, which became various non-state enterprises in the later market system (ibid). The reintroduction of the college entrance examination from 1978 offered another choice to those young people who wanted to continue their studies back in the city. This was the group of highly educated people who built up obvious contributions to further economic reform that required great skill and high professional qualifications, resulting in unequal socio-economic status (ibid).

**The post-1978 economic reform** encouraged diverse non-state businesses that strengthened the emergence of middle incomers. The inequality gap in incomes widened because of the large number of laid-off workers who were struggling for a living; however, in contrast, some of them were becoming private business owners (Tu, 2016b). The socialist market, cultural and management systems were still influenced by those newly transformed private enterprises that were formerly part of the state-owned sector before 1978 (ibid, p.88). This has led to the heterogeneity of the middle class, which is addressed in Tu’s work (2016b, p.89); people who had different political ‘class’ labels could achieve middle-class recognition from separate channels. In only a decade, due to their qualifications and experience, the academics from the previously disadvantaged ‘black classes’ became valued, and the bourgeoisie moved from being at the bottom of the political hierarchy before 1978 to being pioneers of the commercial economy (Tu, 2016b, p.89). Furthermore, in the 1980s, ex-cadres became determined to shift their ‘political capital’ (Wu, 2006) and turn themselves into ‘entrepreneurs’. Therefore, the current Chinese middle class does not share a ‘homogeneous middle-class identity and culture’ (Li, 2013, p.155), but has different levels of education, wealth and socio-political attitudes (Tu, 2016b, p.89).

## 2.4.2 Recent political changes in China

It must be stated that the actual push by today's emerging middle-class is related closely to the rebuilding of the education system, the reinstatement of intellectuals and the Comprehensive Economic Reform (CER), which is a market-oriented economic system but with Chinese characteristics (Hou, 2011). This is also a shift in which the leader turned the focus onto political controversy and theory to develop the economy and build up the social welfare system. The state continues to play an important role in the development of the middle class, as well as in the transfer of income, resources, and risk (Ren, 2013, p.144). To make the middle class legible and legitimate, it mobilizes legal authority through consumer rights and property legislation, as well as normative sciences like statistics (ibid).

*Table 2-1: A chronology of events affecting China's development policies*

Time	Event
1978-1984	Deng Xiaoping officially proposed to let some people get rich first. An end to the privileged position of state enterprises is signalled. Increasing emphasis occurs on greater economic openness as an instrument of development policy.
1989	Chairman Jiang Zemin confirms the direction of China's development policies, such as the extension of the market system and greater economic openness as well as measures to limit population growth. He saw the need for China to improve its science and technology policy as China catches up with the rest of the world's technological improvements.
1997	Implementation of Deng Xiaoping's 'one country, two systems' framework during the government's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong (Ren, 2013).
2002	Jiang Zemin, in his report to the 16 <sup>th</sup> Congress of the CCP, reaffirms China's policies for economic development but expressed concern about growing economic inequality in China. Given the changed economic conditions in China, it seemed that Deng Xiaoping's principle of payment according to work (expounded in 1978) was to be modified.
2007	Chairman Hu Jintao, in his report to the 17 <sup>th</sup> Congress of the CCP, then confirms support for continuing the earlier economic reforms but also indicated that policy must pay more attention to income inequality, approaching technological (and similar) barriers to China's continuing development, and environmental and energy issues.
2012	Chairman Hu, at the 18 <sup>th</sup> Congress of the CCP, reports that Deepening Reform and Opening Up in an All-Around Way is accelerating the improvement of the socialist Market Economy and the Change of the Growth Model (China.org.cn, 2012).
2017	Chairman Xi Jinping reports at the 19 <sup>th</sup> Congress of the CCP that China's economy has been transitioning from a phase of rapid growth to a stage of high-quality development (Ju, 2017).

*Source: (Tisdell, 2009, pp. 274-275).*

From this transition, it may be noticed that the leaders all highlight the market-based economic system and open environment for the economy; thus, this will be the developmental direction soon. Since 1997, the Chinese state's politics changed the discourse on capitalism and

socialism (Ren, 2013, p.145). Proposing ‘Three represents’ (or the important thought of Three Represents) and ‘the harmonious culture’ in 2002, are not only structures that distinguish between Jiang Zemin’s and Hu Jintao’s governments in terms of leadership transitions; they also reflect post-1997 governmental discourses that describe the Chinese political system’s singularities under various political conditions (ibid). As a result, the rise of China’s middle class is inextricably linked to the Chinese state’s changing politics, which no longer sees China’s political structure as a single either-or system (ibid).

Moreover, the most important point for this is the change in wealth distribution, which changes from ‘each according to his need’ to ‘each according to his work’ (Tisdell, 2009, p.276). This is the strongest driver for diversifying the development of individual choices. The proliferation of ideals and norms in the development of selves leads to the decentred distribution of authority across the middle class dispositive (Ren, 2013, p.145). Privatization is a term used by Zhang and Ong (2008) to describe drastic shifts in how ordinary Chinese people manage their lives. Based on the fact of individualization—the process of creating a ‘do-it-yourself’ way of life that ‘drifts away from the socialist standard way of living’ (Ren, 2013, p.145).

Since the beginning of the economic reform, the Chinese government has gradually reduced the degree of governmental control of national macroeconomic activities. There are two aspects that have resulted in this economic reform having mixed results; it cannot be denied that it stimulated China’s economic growth, but on the other hand, it resulted in a widening of the income gap between rich and poor. However, it also expanded the number of middle incomers (Tisdell, 2009). The points most closely related to an individual’s everyday life can be summarised in the following:

***The education system*** was broken up – during the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals were further targeted by being sent to the villages to study and be re-educated by caring for pigs and other farm animals, while uneducated peasants were used as university professors to teach the actual essence of proletarian socialism (Hou, 2011, p.422). After the speech of Deng Xiaoping that ‘science and technology are primary productive forces’ in 1985, this situation was finally reversed (ibid). Reintroducing the college entrance examination was an important sign of emphasizing education and the intellectual approach.

***Housing*** becomes a marketable commodity. ‘China’s major housing allocation mechanism before 1978 was state redistribution’ (Or, 2018, p.2393). During the planned economic structure, most urbanites leased their apartments from their work units and local councils (ibid),

which were allotted based on employee family size and job rank (Zhu, 2011, p.62). Housing reforms, which shifted the allocation process from state redistribution to market trade and encouraged private homeownership, are often considered a neoliberal turn, but not as an ideal type (Or, 2018, p.2394).

On 3 July 1998, market-controlled real estate was formally recognized by the State Council. In this process of private housing reform, employees from the government and state-owned sectors benefited from the low cost of housing ownership. There were three ways of turning property over to the individual: 'existing work-unit housing was privatized; work units built new housing and sold it to their employees at subsidized prices; and work units subsidized loans or purchase prices for employees to buy housing on the market' (Nathan, 2016, p.10). When the house allocation policy was finally interrupted in 1998, prices of commercial flats continually rose, becoming more and more expensive (Zhu, 2011, p.62).

Following the launch of the legal protection of private ownership of properties in 2007 (Hou, 2011), this strengthened the determination of people to use property to make money. This was because the economic transition ended the socialist public ownership system and multi-ownership emerged; for example, when purchasing an apartment, one can own a 70-year usage right but the land is still in the hands of the state<sup>9</sup> (Hou, 2011). Real estate has become one of the main economic pillars to push the development of China forward.

### ***State-owned enterprise system reform***

Since the economic reform, discourses concerning economic distribution to citizens have changed; particularly where people were once understood in terms of what they needed, citizens are now understood increasingly in terms of what they are worth (Hou, 2011, p.420). This is the very first stage of transferring value from the needs of a single person to a market-oriented dynamic system (ibid). With the slogan of Deng Xiaoping that 'some of the people get rich first, then others will catch up', this widened the income gap that also results in the number of middle incomers increasing sharply. For instance, many workers were laid off when state-owned enterprises were reorganised. Some of them thought that it was a great opportunity to do business by themselves; this was named *xia hai* (going into business) at that time. However, most of the laid-off workers live a relatively difficult life now, because of the low

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<sup>9</sup>No. 359 of the "Civil Code" proposes that if the period of the right to use residential construction land expires, it shall be automatically renewed. The payment or reduction or exemption of renewal fees shall be in accordance with the provisions of laws and administrative regulations (Zhang and Wang, 2020).

level of pension they receive, which is also influenced by their length of service, (*gong ling*). Although ‘it was realized that this would result in greater income inequality’ (Tisdell, 2009, p.278), the market has to be separated from unified governmental control because of a series of failures by socialist economic experiments.

### ***Welfare system transfer***

Danwei is a work unit that ‘refers to state-owned enterprises, state agencies, government departments and other organizations in the public sector, and prior to the economic reform since 1978, more than 80 percent of the urban labour force was covered by [the] danwei system’ (Ringen and Ngok, 2017, p.218). Under the planned economy, the work unit (*danwei*) arranged ‘comprehensive welfare packages’ of individuals, from the nursery for the staff’s children under one year old to the clinic for their older parents, so that almost everything besides work was handled by the work unit system (ibid).

When the planned economy was replaced by a market-oriented economy, the work unit welfare system was weakened at the same time. It was necessary to build up the Chinese social welfare system framework (Wang, 2017b, p.1) to adapt to the market system. Experiencing two lots of changes before and after the reform, the social welfare regime was founded and established in modern China. In particular, the debates about the ‘pay as you go’ pension mode and the ‘fund accumulation’ mode have still reached no definite conclusion (ibid, p.23). Since the early 1990s, China has been influenced by the suggestion of using the multi-pillar mode including the fund accumulation system proposed by The World Bank (ibid, p.23). From the 1990s, after the economic reform, China gradually established the basic framework of the modern social security system, including the pension system, medical insurance and unemployment security, etc. (ibid, pp.13-15).

### **2.4.3 *Hukou* (Urban-rural binary system), house ownership inequality, and family resources cause new uneven**

In post-structural discourse, everything is expressed in fluid terms, including self-identify, but in China, '*hukou*' (residential registration) has been used as a tool for immigration control (Sturzaker and Law, 2016, p.35). The *hukou* aspect highlighted the disparity in registration between urban and rural residents (Or, 2018, p.2395). This system requires that all residents must register with the relevant authorities where their permanent residence is located, but only after obtaining approval can they transfer their '*hukou*' from the countryside to the city or between cities, because without this, they cannot access housing, medical care, social care or children's education (Sturzaker and Law, 2016).

The welfare service associated with this particular *hukou* area is heavily reliant on the prosperity and solidarity of the local government where the household's *hukou* is registered, because the *hukou* management is administered locally (Deng *et al.*, 2020, p.4). That is, someone with an urban *hukou* has better welfare provisions than someone with a rural *hukou*, and someone with a *hukou* from an affluent area has better welfare provisions than someone with a *hukou* from an impoverished region (ibid). The resettlement of *hukou* often entails the purchase of a personal residential property (ibid). Those with urban *hukou*, both native-born in cities and existing settlers, were more likely to become homeowners because of the inequality in house prices (Or, 2018, p.2395). Rural migrants of agricultural *hukou*, on the other hand, had to rent and live-in low-quality apartments in the suburbs (ibid). Migrants living in the rental sector typically lack access to administrative and welfare services provided by the municipal government, such as state schools, social security benefits, and pensions (Deng *et al.*, 2020, p.4).

However, the new generation of the middle class is related closely to family resources, which are associated with the previous socialist redistribution system and policy shift (Deng *et al.*, 2020). So, if housing services are not equally distributed, these shifts are likely to intensify and even exacerbate pre-existing disparity (Or, 2018, p.2393). According to research by Huang and Yi (2011), children of high-ranking cadres are more likely to own second homes. Young couples asked for parents' help with their housing can be traced before the reforms. Because of a severe housing crisis, prior to the reform, state redistribution could hardly meet urbanites' rising housing needs (Or, 2018, p.2395). As a result, people turned to their own family for assistance; for example, parents asked their work-unit to pay for an extra flat for their married daughters (ibid). Parents now contribute financial assistance or house transfers to help their

children become homeowners after the house reform (ibid). According to Or (2018, p.2394), ‘three types of people were favoured in the new housing regime at the starting point: those in managerial and professional class position, those of the older generation and those with urban household registration status (*hukou*)’, and they purchased their first self-owned property at a low price.

Or (2018) and Deng *et al.* (2020) both argue that parental assistance with children’s homeownership is a reciprocity mode to secure their later life welfare. As in developed countries with a family-oriented society, families in developing countries often share a household and are the primary sources of welfare and security for individuals (Deng *et al.*, 2020). Individuals should ensure their welfare in old age by alternate forms of life-cycle redistribution such as tax payments to pension plans and private spending on home ownership (ibid). The state healthcare system is funded by a federal fund that is partially funded by taxes (ibid). At the same time, the family as a welfare provider is reliant on individuals who do not receive any cash payments for their services (ibid).

#### **2.4.4 Summary**

To sum up, it has been seen that transformations have been undergone in every aspect of life. This occurred not only in politics, economic reform, and social welfare but also with regard to the individual’s self-identity, which was taken from the classification based on political criteria for the definition of the middle class according to occupation, wealth in the form of property and income. Moreover, this transformation has happened in a short period of 30 years (from 1949 to 1979). Such a rapid transition is bound to have a significant influence on the behaviour of the individual and the performance of family responsibilities.

## **2.5 Impacts of Social changes on individuals' lives**

Rapid transformations of policies and the building up of different economic systems bring dramatic changes in individuals' lives. The disorientation of such a sudden shift affecting not only individuals but also his or her social connections is difficult to imagine (Nathan, 2016). Many people residing in gated communities are in the midst of developing a way of life, partially by consciously imitating trends within Western consumption patterns (ibid).

### **2.5.1 Social class spatialized: *living in a community environment***

According to the specific position within the governance system in China, communities have taken over the role of work units for communication between urban citizens and government. Moreover, communities are the most suitable unit to manage the social network for eldercare, providing assistance to disabled people and organising public services for community residents, which includes taking special care of 'older people, the sick, the disabled, and those in financial difficulties, the unemployed and laid-off workers' (Bray, 2006, pp. 535-540). Also, the community plays an important role in organising local educational and cultural programmes and building up safety networks, with which local cadres keep a close relationship with local police and security in residential areas (ibid, pp. 535-540).

However, the gated community seems to have some power to build up an even smaller management system, which is created by middle-class property owners who hire a private service company to help to manage their community. They set up an 'owners' committee' to decide from whom the management chooses services. This is because communities are not just the places where people live; they also represent personal life experiences and 'material, social and emotional ties, which can only be constructed and maintained through regular, face-to-face interaction' (Gilleard and Higgs, 2005, p.104).

According to Ren (2013), this expresses the middle-class's values and consumption style in contemporary China; more specifically, these are represented by theme parks, themed shopping malls and planned communities. Pow and Kong (2007) argue that the private gated communities in big cities represent the new Chinese middle-class's growing aspirations to pursue the good life. Similarly, the 'spatialization of class' was suggested by Zhang (2010, p.14), who claims that the spatialisation of class is a process of economic and cultural restructuring combined with real estate development, because not only is the urban space fundamentally reorganised into an obvious hierarchical structure, but new social groups are created through this spatial production.



The role of government in this process also cannot be ignored. According to He (2019), three waves of gentrification have been led by local government. He and Wu (2009) argue that in China's post-reform period, a land-(re)development-centered urban growth regime arises, in which local governments are heavily incentivised to begin large-scale gentrification projects in order to reap lucrative tax income, resulting in dramatically altered cityscapes.

### **2.5.2 Social class commoditization: the performance of new middle-class**

During the 1990s, city dwellers were subjected to a market enrichment on many fronts (Davis, 2005). Former luxury goods like refrigerators, Colour TVs, and washing machines were household necessities by the beginning of the millennium, and commercials for cell phones, overseas vacations, and a family saloon car brought in big profit for the state-owned media (ibid). Nowadays, people prefer to refer to these lifestyles as market-led developments communities. 'Which community do you live in?' means 'What group do you belong to?' Living in the same community not only means that people could afford the property, but also that they share the same lifestyle and cultural orientation. For example, in Zhang's (2010) study, a woman who had bought a luxury house said that even though they could afford the house itself, they could not afford to live there at that time. Like her, many other middle-class urban residents also feel that they must engage in proper consumption to validate their status and gain respect from their neighbours (Zhang, 2010, pp.118-125).

The middle-class younger generation has a lifestyle labelled *xiao zi* (petty bourgeois) and prefer to spend money rather than time, which is expressed by their style of consumption, such as brand shopping and hiring people to clean their houses. 'Self-presentation provides an angle to analyse how young, middle-class Chinese urbanites celebrate their unique identity' (Peng, 2019, pp.272). They have a particular taste as a group of people who are well educated and high-quality urbanites (Peng, 2019). 'People like us, friendship, your personal social circle': these discourses can be found in their daily conversations (ibid, pp.277).

Another consumption style has been shown by the purchase of real estate for investment purposes or by owning properties to consolidate their wealth, because of the rising house prices. A substantial number of home transactions are speculative and not for owner occupation (Hou, 2011). For instance, you only have to move around certain areas to identify those properties that are in darkness with no lights on at all (ibid, p.430). This is true of the new built-up communities that are sold off-plan in tier-one cities. Since there are so many investors who see this sort of house as a source of riches to combat inflation, they are required to take a ticket

number in a lottery, which ensures they have a chance to purchase according to the number orders.

Zhu (2018) claims on ‘lifestyle mobility’, which middle-class Chinese are reconceptualising their sense of home and exercising greater lifestyle mobility as they search for better homes and new lifestyles. Complexity comes from the shift from co-residence with parents, which was traditionally practised by the eldest son, to nuclear households where each generation seeks independent living (Bai, 2019). This is very apparent in the only-child generation now in their early thirties, who are income rich but time poor, and seem to prefer to spend money on travel and health-oriented products. Furthermore, education is the most important factor that helps to reshape similar values among the younger generation in middle-class households (Song *et al.*, 2016), such as the ‘show your true self’ topic in primary school lessons in Shanghai and the training of professional salesmen to demonstrate values that are the reverse of the traditional ‘speech is silver, silence is golden’ (Fang and Faure, 2011, p.327). These phenomena have shown that traditional ways of thinking and measuring good conduct and right thinking are being challenged.

### **2.5.3 Reproducing social class: investing in education**

Wu *et al.* (2016) investigate a procedure known as *jiaoyufication*<sup>10</sup>, which entails paying good money for an apartment in the catchment area of a prestigious elementary school. In China, children will enrol in a local public school to obtain a nine-year compulsory education depending on their parents’ hukou enrolment. The availability of educational resources in different regions has been distinguished spatially. By paying a school selection payment, students may enrol in a better school in another district (Wu *et al.*, 2016). ‘This policy has stimulated the formation of *Xuequ* buildings, which are located within the catchment area of key schools’ (Wu *et al.*, 2018, p.3).

*Jiaoyufication*, as ‘an extension of gentrification’—urban transformation fuelled by a demand for high-quality education—is displacing past lower-class residents while simultaneously transforming old blue-collar neighbourhoods into modern middle-class communities (Wu *et al.*, 2018). When social classes dominate spatially limited school catchment areas in an effort to promote social mobility or maintain social status, new middle-class populations emerge,

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<sup>10</sup> Individual families purchase these flats at inflated rates, live in them for a short time, and then resell them at a profit to the following generation of parents without having to make any improvements. Wu *et al.* (2016) coined the term *jiaoyufication*, combining the Chinese word for education, *jiaoyu*, with the tail of the word gentrification. *Jiaoyufication* is a form of gentrification in Chinese cities that is driven by education.

creating conflict between them (ibid). As a result, *jiaoyufication* has limited intergenerational social mobility and increased social polarization, steadily replacing existing social hierarchies with intergenerational capitalist stratification (ibid).

Bridge (2001) points out that gentrification typifies techniques of social and cultural reproduction through the performance of a middle-class habitus in redeveloped neighbourhoods of the inner city, building on theories of differentiation. As a result, these gentrified neighborhoods demarcate and replicate everyday urban patterns that support structuralized norms and resources (Giddens, 1984). They can be seen as ways of cultural replication that often lead to social reproduction by sanctifying these cultures as sites of middle-class remaking that reproduce social space (Lefebvre, 1991; Smith, 1996). That is to say, ‘home-making, design, cultural and consumption-oriented practices reproduce both place and class’ (Wu *et al.*, 2018, p.3).

Individual families are compelled to buy a house as a means of savings and a safety net (Deng *et al.*, 2020). Since demand continues to be in short supply, house prices will usually increase or at least stay constant in the long term, rendering housing a very appealing investment (ibid). Families can pool their money to maximize the benefits of the housing market’s never-ending upward spiral (ibid). This model is more effective for parents and adult children, when the former has investments, and the latter have potential earning power (ibid).

It seems that, unlike other new inner-city immigrants, *jiaoyufiers*<sup>11</sup> are unconcerned about the environmental conditions and property quality because they are only staying for a short time (Wu *et al.*, 2018). *Jiaoyufiers*, are more interested in gaining cultural capital and transmitting it to their children to reinforce class reproduction (Bridge, 2001). They are spending money on high-quality education in the hopes of securing a prosperous future for their children and themselves.

Regarding the logic of transition between various types of capital, such as status, wealth, and power, Bourdieu ([1979]1984) points out that economic capital is superior to cultural capital. As a result, when the urban new rich are accepted by mainstream society through cultural reproduction carried out along the narrowed path of *jiaoyufication*, the social class structure shifts from a Weberian trio of wealth, power, and authority to a neoliberal structure dominated

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<sup>11</sup> Parents who bought property to live for a short period then resell it only for children’s educational aims (Wu *et al.*, 2016).

by wealth and power, resulting in an increase in social polarization and spatial segregation (Wu *et al.*, 2018, p.15).

#### 2.5.4 Age profile of Chinese middle class

An examination of the age profile of the Chinese middle class (see Figure 2-1) reveals that this is dominated by those under 45. The cohorts born from 1980 onwards grew up in an era characterized by ‘materialism and consumerism, information and the Internet, urban culture, and globalization’ (Liu, 2021; Lian, 2014, p.968). They are a cohort who are well-educated, with good jobs whose lifestyle is characterised by consumption (Lilius, 2019, p.6). In this study it is G3 (age between 25-39) who are the middle-incomers.

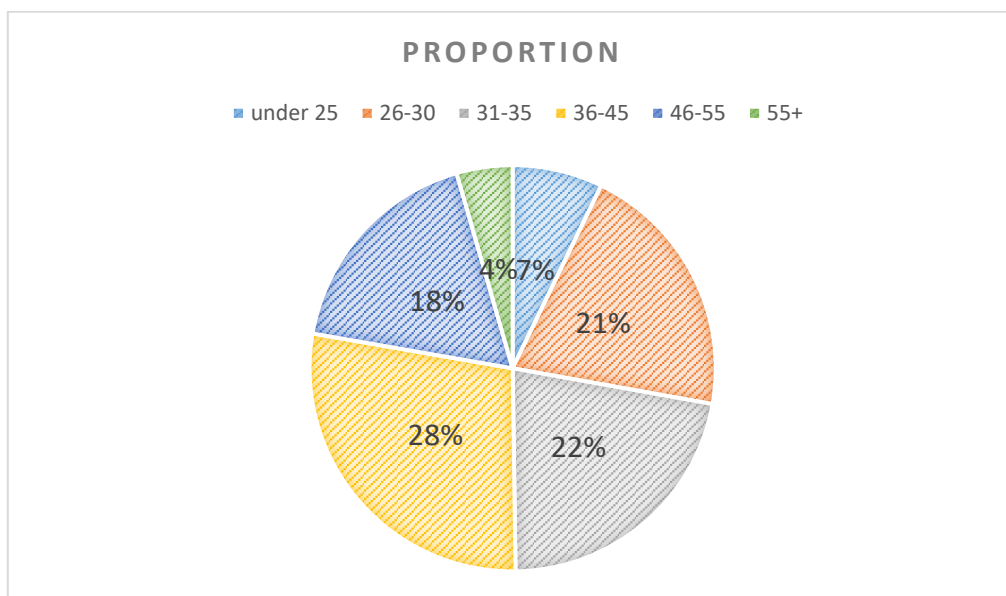


Figure 2-1: The age profile of middle-class in China<sup>12</sup>

However, the emerging Chinese middle class continues to rely on parents for assistance, with some even living off the riches created by the middle generation to earn new money (Izuhara and Forrest, 2013), e.g., using their parents’ money to set up new businesses. Their parents born in the 1950s and 1960s are part of a generation that grew up during a period of intense social upheaval in China (including the Great Leap Forward 1958-1960 and the Cultural Revolution 1966-1976). Moreover, this G2 middle cohort experienced the transformation of the work unit system that led in some cases to redundancy as their work units failed to transition to profitable companies. In the new employment landscape dominated by private companies,

<sup>12</sup> Date from the report of ‘the white paper of family asset allocation for China middle class’ published by Pystandard LTD. In 2020. Available at: <https://max.book118.com/html/2021/1205/8066017143004051.shtml> (Accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022).

inequalities in salary and property ownership have emerged. These wealth differences are carried forward into the next generations cementing their advantage.

In terms of the age profile of the middle class in this research, individuals born around the 1930s are known as the G1 cohort. Unlike many of their peers, they are educated technologists, teachers, or government employees who now enjoy good pensions. In comparison to the majority of retired workers in their cohort, they are substantially more self-sufficient.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter introduces the history of the emergence of the middle class in China and tries to produce a typological definition of the Chinese middle class. Political transformations have occurred in the attitudes and opinions of the middle class in China. From the early planned economy stage, class conflicts were used by some in authority to achieve political inspiration. Until the reform turn, the Chinese middle class becomes particularly significant for the Chinese state, which works closely with governmental and social programs to promote neoliberal citizenship, or self-reliable and self-responsible way of life (Ren, 2013, pp.14).

More obvious and easy to perceive is that living conditions and increases in wealth bring different changes to people's responses to everyday life. In particular, the older middle-class generation, with a decent pension, may have more choices than their parents in later life, while their offspring, as the younger middle class, take in Western culture and are more open minded, eager for self-development rather than taking on duties within the collective concept, which was advocated in the early Mao era. These changes in politics and values must, in turn, bring changes that influence the traditional family practice of eldercare, which will be critically reviewed in the next chapter.



**Chapter 3. Intergenerational relationships and Eldercare  
family practices in China**

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### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to review literature about discourse and the practice involved in Chinese intergenerational relationships. In addition, the chapter reviews debates on the role of families in eldercare. This chapter aims to find a way of understanding the evolving ideas about caring for older family members in middle-class families.

The chapter asks the following research questions.

1. How might we understand the changing discourse of intergenerational relations in China?
2. How do practices differ between generations and the impact of changing policy?
3. Is family still the main source of support for elder generations?

In rural areas of China, welfare systems and policies are very different (Shek, 2006). The focus of this thesis is the city.

### **3.2 Discourse of intergenerational relations in Chinese society**

#### **3.2.1 Cultural norms and parent/family-oriented society**

In terms of the meanings and social patterns around ageing and caring in daily life, one key issue in this chapter is how current Chinese society is engaging with, but also moving beyond, ideas and values of filial piety (Shea, 2020, pp.21-24). As a result, it is essential to start with the cultural and historical context of these ideas (ibid).

As a country with a long cultural history of more than 5,000 years, several cultural values that influence contemporary Chinese family relationships and their practices. They mainly include Confucian ideals, Buddhist and Taoist thought. However, after the rulers of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) ‘dismissed a hundred schools of thought and respected Confucianism’, that is, after Confucianism prevailed, it can be said that the family discipline culture in ancient China is actually the family principal culture of Confucianism (Chen, 2014).

#### **What is filial piety?**

The concept of filial piety is based on a collection of philosophical ideas developed by Confucius (*Kong Fuzi*, 551-479 BCE), a Chinese philosopher who lived in the sixth century BCE (Shea, 2020; Canda, 2013; Chan and Tan, 2004; Yao, 2000). Confucian teachings place a strong emphasis on correct family responsibilities and behaviour, as well as proper ruler behaviour (Shea, 2020).

As Ikels (2004a) explains, the term ‘filial piety’ is represented in Chinese by the character 孝, which is written phonetically as *xiao* in standard Mandarin China. In its most common definition, filial piety is a traditional Confucian value that calls on adult children to fulfil obligations to respect, obey, support, and care for elderly parents, as seen in the character itself. As Ikels (2004a) states: ‘the character *xiao* is composed from two other characters: the top half of the character *lao* [old] and the character *zi* [son or child]’ (pp.2-3). A fusion of the elements of Xiao with the *lao* means that the elders are supported by the young(er) generation, which is preferred in society (Shea, 2020, pp.21-24). The words also refer to the continuation of the family line, as fathers were expected to produce sons as a duty to their parents and ancestors (Shea, 2020, pp.21-24; Ikels 2004a, p.2).

Confucius made the idea of filial piety very clear; indeed, it has been recorded that Confucius understood filiality in the following terms: ‘In serving his parents, a filial son reveres them in daily life; he makes them happy when he nourishes them; he takes anxious care of them in sickness; he shows great sorrow over their death; and he sacrifices to them with solemnity’ (Confucius quoted in Chai and Chai 1965, p.331; also see in Shea, 2020, pp.21-24). Filial piety emphasizes the importance of father-son relationships since it is the son who continues the family line in a patriarchal society (Shea, 2020, pp.21-24). By contrast, daughters serve their natal families before marriage, but subsequently join their husband’s descent line, and so provide his parents with care (ibid).

### **What motivates and underpins filial obligations?**

As early as the pre-Qin era, Mencius proposed that the foundation of the universe rests in the country, the foundation of the country lays in the family, and the foundation of the family lies in the body (Chen, 2014). The book of ‘*Da Xue*’ (大学) went even further and raised family education to the level of the rise and fall of the state (Chen, 2014). According to Confucius, social interactions are simply an extension of family blood relations, and society is nothing more than a family extension (ibid). The most fundamental function of family culture is ethical education, and the goal it seeks to achieve is the self-discipline of family members and children through moral cultivation and family harmony, which serves as the prerequisite and foundation for achieving the goals of ‘ruling the country’ and ‘pacifying the world’ (ibid).

Filial piety is a virtue seen in an individual who is reliable and trustworthy but the fact that a practice is traditional is seldom sufficient to motivate people to follow it (Ikels, 2004a, p.4). In a neighbourhood and people who know about each other well will look down upon unfilial

behaviours that bring shame to a family name (*ibid*). A traditional family-oriented value in Confucianism does not only ask children to show respect and obey their parents but can also play an important role to ensure their older parents' well-being (Whyte, 2004; Zhu, 2018; Peng *et al.*, 2019). Social norms regard filial behaviour as a very high level of personal praise and as a fundamental idea in the governance of the state, including the legal regulation of filial behaviour and the social recognition of the idea of filial piety. Thus, historical stories have referred to tales where criminals would only be spared death if it meant that they were needed to care for their parents and grandparents; blood relatives might take revenge; and thieves do not kill filial sons (Qin, 2018). Although these historical tales cannot be empirically verified, they illustrate how important filial piety was in past times.

However, just because there was a Confucian ideal of filial piety does not mean that everyone in ancient times followed it, as Confucius and his successor Mencius (372-289 BCE) lamented (Legge 1933, pp.16, 725; see also in Shea, 2020, pp.21-24). Failure to carry on the family line was the worst of all unfilial behaviors, according to Mencius, because 'it affects not only one's parents but the entire ancestral line' (Ikels 2004a, p.3). Closer to the bottom of Mencius' list of unfilial behaviors, however, were various ways of failing to help and safeguard one's ageing parents (Shea, 2020, pp.21-24). A variety of unfilial actions related to laziness, avarice, and/or being 'selfishly attached' to one's own spouse and children was also included (*ibid*). Traditionally, the relationship between ageing parents and adult children was seen to be more important than the relationships between married couples or young families (*ibid*).

### **3.2.2 Collectivism overwhelms family-oriented in a short period (1949-78)**

Since the end of World War II, East Asian governments have used constitutional reform, legislation, and other ways to reform the idea of the 'traditional' family with a contemporary less patriarchal model (Ikels, 2004a, pp.12-13). This campaign was most intense in China, under the leadership of Chairman Mao who sought to eliminate the 'feudal patriarchal family' with its age and gender inequities (*ibid*). However, there was not enough time to establish an alternative social system. Changes in Chinese society and family interactions have been substantially affected by Mao's policies. Particularly, the policies of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) both promoted loyalty to the state over family.

At first, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) held values that opposed the family system that it saw as patriarchal and feudal. The first significant change happened in 1949 when the

People's Republic of China was founded; indeed, after the founding of the new republic a series of policies about family relations emerged (Wang, 2019). At this time, officials regularly emphasized that ultimate loyalty should be directed toward the Party, the nation, and Mao as the party chief, rather than toward one's family (Whyte, 1997, p.2). Hence the popular saying '*die qin niang qin bu ji mao zhu xi de en qing shen*' (the closeness of the father and mother is not as deep as the grace and love of Chairman Mao) (Shek, 2006, p.277). Chinese were sometimes compelled to denounce their own parents or relatives in order to show their new loyalty to the regime (ibid). Post-1949 changes considerably threatened family loyalty, even for young people who did not have to choose between the family and the party/state (ibid). Families in the socialist era lost much of their ability to stay together, with substantial numbers forced apart by work assignments, political campaigns, and other tumultuous events (ibid). Due to experiences like these, Chinese parents have significantly less control than their forebears did over the supervision and socialization of their children (ibid).

Although scholars claimed there was no significant change in family duties during the Mao era (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003, pp.209-210), urban women gained some power and had a voice in the family after marriage. The norm for married women in urban areas has profoundly changed since the Maoist regime (1949–1978). Indeed, the norms and values regarding family relations for married women was totally reshaped during the Maoist era (Shek, 2006). The work unit took over child and elder care as well as health care for most employees, which subsequently allowed women to join the full-time labour force (Shek, 2006). The slogan 'women hold up the half of the sky', promoted a culture of urban women actively participating in the workforce with unprecedented enthusiasm. The other influence is the focus on the interests of the state and collective more than one's natal family. The provision of housing through the urban work units laid a new emphasis on the nuclear family unit with housing allocated to a couple and their children. This pushed young generations to focus on conjugal relationships rather than extended family relations. The ideology of the collective took responsibility for older people and minimized the function of family (Chou, 2010). The culture of filial piety was defined as an outdated value that needed to be eliminated during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976 (ibid).

### **3.2.3 The discourse of filial obligation was back to family**

However, after the economic reforms of 1978 responsibilities for supporting older people was returned once again to the family (Chou, 2010). However, this advocacy of cultural and traditional practice did not give older people the same level of power they had before the Maoist

era. To ensure older people would be cared by families, a series of laws was enacted, such as the Chinese constitution (National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 1982), the Marriage Law of 1981 (NPC of the People's Republic of China, 2001), and the NPC of the People's Republic of China launched the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Older Persons in 1996 (Chou, 2010, p.5).

In addition, the new Elderly Rights Law published on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2013, added 'mental' support and regular visits to older parents as part of family duties (Zhang, 2017b). It confirmed that the government had also changed their stance from fully securing the welfare of older people through the state to shifting this responsibility back to family (Nie, 2016). These shifts in policy were financially expedient to the state because the cost to the state for family based elder care is low. However, there are hidden costs borne by families that have societal implications such as people who need to leave their work to become carers or have their health ruined by care duty. Additionally, these laws cannot mandate the frequency of visits and manage older people's mental well-being; thus, cultural filial piety is still the fundamental consensus for policies to support older people (Chou, 2010).

However, the open-door economic reform changed family relations not through politics but by creating new social norms that threaten family obligations and filial sentiments (Whyte, 1997, pp.2-3). According to sociologist William J. Goode, progress toward a more modern society promotes the establishment of more 'conjugal' patterns of family life (ibid). A conjugal emphasis indicates that the husband-wife connection becomes the major focus of family life, and couples make decisions about their own lives and the lives of their young children with little influence or interference from their parents or other extended family members (ibid).

China now is far more industrialized, more educated, and otherwise 'modern' than it was in 1949 (Whyte, 1997, pp.2-3). International research has shown that the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society has a predictable influence on family life patterns (ibid). Firstly, their land, the source of much of their influence on young people, is no longer the only means of obtaining a living (Ikels, 2004a, p.10). Young people have the option of moving to a nearby town or city to work in a factory and lead a financially independent life (ibid).

Additionally, when literacy becomes more common because of the expansion of compulsory schooling, knowledge is no longer a unique attribute of age, and the older generation's agricultural experience becomes less important in solving urban problems (Ikels, 2004a, p.10). Furthermore, young people are exposed to a broad range of views because of urbanization and

no longer have to accept their parents' beliefs and values without question, including ideas about the appropriate connection between the old and the young (ibid). The physical separation of the home, community and the workplace permit young people to avoid their neighbours' inquisitive eyes as well as gossip and other community-level consequences if their behaviour is discovered to be below expectations (ibid). Lastly, as young people become more committed to their marital family of spouse and children at the expense of their natal family of parents and siblings, the nuclear family begins to dominate over the extended family (ibid). As a result, what began as a shift in production mode eventually leads to intergenerational alienation or, at the very least, a shift in relative advantage (Ikels, 2004a, p.10).

### **3.2.4 Divergence of values in the post 1978 period**

There are a few people in China today who grew up at the end of the Qing dynasty, with its rule on Confucius values. Others grew up during the Sino-Soviet alliance during the radical years of hostility toward both the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and the West, and during the post-Mao era, with its capitalist and Western orientation (Whyte, 1997). These abrupt shifts in formative experiences are likely to result in noticeable generational differences in personal orientations and values (ibid).

These factors have also effected family values (Whyte, 1997, pp.2-3). Generational disparities co-exist in an extended family. Grandparents born in the 1930s may hold to patriarchal ideas of family; parents born during the 1950s at a time of collectivism were heavily influenced by Maoist values while adult children who were born after 1980, have been living in an increasingly consumerist society as the only child in a family. Traditional filial piety, however, is not keeping pace with a developing society that demands a modern means of addressing family responsibilities (Jackson and Liu, 2017). Yeh (2003) notes a reciprocal filial piety (RFP) model, which pays attention to the engagement of children with their parents during the family life cycle and emphasises family intimacy and partnership (Bedford and Yeh, 2019). This provides fruitful areas for future research.

Before the one-child policy, the greatest difference compared to Western families was the cohabitation of the extended Chinese family, but it is worth considering whether this was driven by filial piety or housing shortages. Although the one-child policy was substituted by the two-children policy in 2015 (the new three-children policy was introduced in 2021), it has profoundly shaped at least one generation who have no siblings and has created the norm of the '4-2-1' family in urban areas (Tu, 2016a; Xu, 2016; Zhang, 2017b). Along with nuclear

households becoming the common pattern of family, the emphasis on a child-oriented ideology is growing, in which the family resources flow to the younger generation (Croll, 2006, p. 476). Since increased exposure to Western culture and individualistic principles has been a key factor in China's cultural transformation since 1978, one may assume that this impact would enhance young Chinese adults' desire for autonomy from their parents (Whyte, 1997, pp.2-3). Thus, it can be seen that intergenerational differences in perceptions inevitably coexist across the generations of a family.

### **3.3 Parents care practices differ according to circumstances**

Although the value of filial piety has had a large impact on Chinese and East Asian society, practices vary depending on personal and family situations. Filial piety behaviours vary from region to region, and there is even a distinction between rural and urban areas within a metropolis.

#### **3.3.1 The practices varied due to personal and family circumstances**

Although filial piety is a powerful point of common reference, it is also subject to dispute and reinterpretation as the country differs from north to south, and between urban and rural areas (Shea, 2020, pp.21-24). In the past older people have enjoyed respect, authority and power in both society and the family, in the case of China the Confucian concept of filial piety has dominated thought and discourse to the extent that young people have no other model for their relationships with older people (Ikels, 2006, p.388). Yet the actual practice of filial piety depends on the local history, economy, social organization and demography, as well as the wealth, gender and family structure of the individual (Ikels, 2004a, p.2). Thus, family practices conceal a world of complexity in which different people, families, communities, and polities have created distinct versions on filial piety in different times, places, and situations (Shea, 2020, pp.21-24).

To begin with, both regional economic growth and demographic composition have an impact on how aged care is delivered in each region, as seen by the disparities in care practices between the Midwest and south of the country. For example, in Li et al.'s (2004) study in rural Heilongjiang (north China) older people tended to age on their own rather than with their children while in Gansu (Midwest China), which according to Li et al. (2004) is the area with the least developed economy, has the strongest reliance on children. In the very modern city of Guangzhou (southern China), familial care has long shown a strong commercial model. The idea of the paid hourly domestic assistant has evolved into a broader offer of eldercare as a

result of the laid-off millions of urban workers in the 2000s (Ikels, 2004b, p.337). Hourly hired caregivers are particularly appealing to older individuals who do not require continual attention but merely someone to prepare meals or go shopping, which is exactly what co-resident family members would usually do (ibid). Therefore, it is important to note that filial piety is understood and practiced differently when it is impacted by local economic development and the degree of resultant societal change.

Second, there are significant differences between urban and rural care practices, including older people's economic circumstances, caregiver choices, and expectations of how filial responsibility should be fulfilled. A report published by the Institute of Gerontology of Renmin University, drawing on data from the China Longitudinal Ageing Society Survey (2016) revealed that 71.93% of urban seniors receive a pension, compared to 17.22 of rural seniors. Twelve per cent of urban seniors receive financial help from their children, compared to 32% of their rural peers. This largely suggests that rural older people need a model of care that is more oriented towards monetary support. The report also found that rural seniors are more dependent on the care of their sons, with 44.42% of rural seniors being cared for primarily by their son's family, far more than the corresponding proportion of urban seniors (28.09%). The report also explores the difference in the way filial piety is practiced between urban and rural families. The proportion of rural seniors who consider 'their children taking good care of them' to be an important manifestation of filial piety is 10.12% higher than that of urban seniors. While the proportion of urban seniors is higher than that of rural seniors when it comes to 'the willingness of their children to care for them' and 'their children bring honour to the family'. These illustrate that there are significant differences between urban and rural eldercare practices, and their expectations on children.

Lastly, the performance of 'Care practices' is influenced by family situations, such as the number and location of siblings to share parental care, the employment status of the caregiver, and whether the older person is in receipt of a pension (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003, p.224). The long-standing belief that older members of the extended family were to be supported by their own children has been disrupted by the one child policy who cannot offer the support of previous multiple caregivers. Emerging economic opportunities opened up the country to those who wanted to make a better future for their children (Zhan *et al.*, 2008, p.3). Many only-child adults migrated from rural areas to the big cities because of work opportunities, and then settled down for their children's education. Since then, the familial eldercare has had to be considered



differently. Whereas in the age of multiple children, care could be shared across siblings, in an era of the single child, parents may have to modify their expectations.

All patterns of care practices reflect the fluidity with which cultural norms are implemented (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003, p.224). Similarly, when it comes to post-economic transformation, older individuals will win in some areas while losing in others, and some older people may gain (or lose) more than others (Ikels, 2006, p.388). Many laid-off workers with modest pensions, for example, face a disadvantage in retirement. As a result, family continues to serve as a safety net for older adults as they adjust to social changes.

### **3.3.2 Shifting Gender roles influence familial care practices**

Traditional gender ideals are so entrenched that, in the '*qi chu zhi tiao*' (seven situations in which a husband may end his marriage), a man may apply for a divorce from his wife if they have not had a son (Shek, 2006, p.277). A daughter cannot continue the father's surname, and after her marriage, she becomes a member of her husband's family. Sons, however, were essential for handing down the family name, sustaining ancestor worship, and providing physical and financial care for their parents (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003, pp.209-210).

According to an analysis of the role of gender in intergenerational interactions between older parents and their adult children in rural Taiwan and northern China, there was a distinct separation of family labour (Wang, 2010, pp.962-963). The 'family head' (*jiazhang*), who represents the family to the outside world in the areas of society, business, and public ritual, is invariably a man (ibid). The job of 'family manager' (*dangjia*), on the other hand, can be held by either a man or a woman and is responsible for overseeing the family's economic and financial concerns as well as managing daily routines, accounts, and financial resources (ibid). However, the persistent distinction between intra-familial gender roles does not extend beyond generational position (ibid). In other words, an adult man can take the job of family head, while the family manager is either his mother or his wife.

Even throughout the communist era, which lasted from 1949 to the 1970s, the family system remained mostly unaltered, especially in terms of parental care (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003, pp.209-210). Economic reforms and an open-door policy, on the other hand, have brought both economic prosperity and cultural variety since the late 1970s (ibid). One of the dynamics of family life was changed with the one child policy was the rising importance of urban daughters in a family (Cameron *et al.*, 2013). The one-child policy launched in the 1980s has ended in China, but the birth control program has not. In 2015, for the law changed so that a couple

could have 2 children and was further relaxed again in 2021 to allow three children families. This not only influences the Chinese family structure, but also plays an important role in eldercare. An unexpected result of the implementation of the one-child policy has been to improve the social status of urban women (Qi, 2015b), because if a couple had one girl child, then the expectations that would fall on a son have to fall on her or her husband. This is because, unlike other generations, as the only-child generation, daughters have no need to share (or compete for) family resources with siblings; in turn, they would take the whole responsibility of caring for older parents, which was believed to be the duty of the oldest son (ibid).

Previous research in gender ideology has revealed that (Lin *et al.*, 2003; Qi, 2015b), in practice, it is women (daughters and daughters-in-law) who ‘are more likely to provide direct eldercare (i.e., housework and emotional support), while sons are more likely to provide direct financial support’ (Luo and Chui, 2019, pp. 2-3). However, this way of working was challenged, especially during the Maoist era (Qi, 2015a) which encouraged women to join the labour market (Hare, 2016) and promoted their economic independence, which broke the traditional concept of ‘man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker’ (Luo and Chui, 2019, pp. 2-3). Ironically, the impact of economic reform caused many work units to fail and over time, the concept of state provided elder, and childcare delivered through the work unit has disappeared with the consequence that women are now expected to both work and shoulder elder and childcare responsibilities. The state continues to promote women as workers but does not suggest that the care of home, children and elders might be shared. Women’s social economic status has been enhanced so that they do the same work as men outside the family, while family duties are still women’s work. In one-child families where the child is a daughter, then the responsibilities that once would have been expected of the son also fall to the daughter. Therefore, it may be seen that tension focuses on the social expectations of married women, who are presumed to take the responsibilities of looking after children and older parents, whilst also managing their careers. So, expectations on women have increased and this double burden continues to worsen in the only-child generation.

As Shen (2019) argues in her book, the resources of the older generation and the support of the family, (rather than the provisions of the husband) transfer women’s rights and allows them more autonomy to engage in social life. The Chinese tradition values boys, but due to the one-child policy, there is a challenge to conventional gender norms plus the clear desire for all family members to do what they can. Elderly parents are now on the less dominant side of post-patriarchal families. That is, the grandparents or grandparents-in-law share a proportion of the

married women's family duties such as providing grandchild care, doing daily chores, etc to support their married daughters or daughters in law working full-time.

Furthermore, Zhan and Montgomery (2003, p.223) discovered that daughters provided care on an equal level with daughters-in-law. In other words, the married daughter still shares the care of the older parents with her brother. It is revealed in terms of living arrangements, more than 40% of those elders who lived with an adult child did so with a daughter rather than a son (ibid). These illustrate the changing role of gender in the division of labour in the family.

### **3.3.3 Familial care practices need support**

In the elder parents' generation, significant shifts in expectations for adult children (the only child) have been discovered, which affects household activities. Zhang and Goza (2006), and Tu (2016a) found that the higher income parents did not expect their only child to pay them back, while they themselves are independent and willing to continue financial support to their child as well as to invest money into pension or care home schemes. For example, some interviewees who are migrants' parent (only-child being UK Migrants) in Tu's (2016a) research stated that they could not rely on their only child and were reluctant to be a burden; furthermore, some of them suggested that the idea of '*yang er fang lao*' belonged to 'the previous generation' and was 'not necessary or realistic nowadays' (ibid, p.9).

Previous studies demonstrated that people felt shame in seeking support outside the family (Croll, 2006). However, this is changing because of the emerging high-quality private institutions and increasing number of professional care workers (Zhan *et al.*, 2006). It is interesting to discover that older parents ageing in institutions is not a cause for shame but becoming more acceptable or even a prestigious option for middle-income families in Shanghai (Izuhara, 2010, p. 87). The most essential aspect is that in megacities where people are more exposed to Western concepts, there is a growing awareness that filial piety may be practiced in a variety of ways, including living in a care facility. However, in underdeveloped cities or rural regions where traditional customs are expected to predominate, this would almost certainly be undesirable.

However, Yan (2003, pp. 172-173), pointed out that in rural China, the young generation prefer to use '*yang lao*' (support, service and taking care of their older parents) rather than '*xiao*' (filial piety), which means respecting and obeying their elders. One of the main issues in an ageing society is that in today's technologically advanced culture, keeping the elderly and younger generations at the same pace is extremely challenging. The younger generation have

more major and more rapid value shifts than their older generations whose ideas seem outdated, which is why young adults reluctant to follow their elders' advice.

Besides, because of extended life expectancy and a child-centred family, eldercare and grandchild care demands may overlap, resulting in familial caregiver competition (Croll, 2006, p. 483). This situation may give rise to new practices. New forms of reciprocity, exchange, and mutual reliance among family members make connections between generations more frequent (Shen, 2019). Additionally, the partition and transfer of family property through generations offers a unique opportunity to investigate elderly citizens' interactions with their adult offspring (Wang, 2010, pp.962-963). Young couples are willing to live separately from their parents when they are married, but complex situations occur when family members no longer live in the same place in which family resources were easily shared (Izuhara, 2010, p. 77). This trend means that multi-generational households have declined in recent decades (Gruijters, 2017) and an only child in the family adds to the difficulties of physically supporting older parents. In contrast, due to fast-increasing property prices since the mid-2000s, it has become a common phenomenon that a young couple need their parents' financial support to buy an apartment (Zhang, 2017b). This results in further complicating the patterns of intergenerational, family connection because despite regular intergenerational engagement is required, a family is geographically separated.

According to Zelezna (2016), establishing a powerful welfare state does not reduce family solidarity, but it does affect the nature and characteristics of family relationships. Middle-class urban older people enjoy a relatively decent pension after retirement (Zhang, 2017b), which benefits older people and directly or indirectly plays a role in supporting the younger generation. Good and reliable services allow the wealth of older people to be transferred down through the generations (Harper, 2014, p. 284) and according to Zelezna (2016) smooths relationships with family members. Therefore, the old concept of filial piety may not disappear because of significant welfare system assistance; rather, it may become much stronger as a result of direct (or indirect) benefits.

According to Izuhara (2010, p.153), families can both show the resilience of their practices and transform the family reciprocal pattern at the same time. In addition, although they might be under high external pressures, the value of the familial norm is still insisted upon (ibid). Thus, a combination of the emerging new mode of family practices on reciprocity and exchange tends to co-exist with conventional practices which reflects broader cultural norms (Izuhara, 2010, p.

153). Consequently, with family self-adaption, a diverse and comprehended welfare support system is necessary to support older people and their families.

### **3.4 Population ageing impacts on familial care practices**

It is easier to see the family as an interconnected entity, rather than a series of individuals with individual views concerning the duty to provide for older adults. Indeed, family relationships can never be precisely defined by roles and duties only.

#### **3.4.1 Who are the aged?**

Internationally, the definition of older people is not just those above a particular age, but it comes from the important resources of government policy on ageing, particularly employment and pension policies (Brooks, 2011). For example, in most developed countries, the age of 60 or 65, approximately equal to the retirement age, is said to be the beginning of old age (Kowal and Dowd, 2001). The United Nations defines older persons as those aged 60 years or over. On many occasions, they are defined as those 65 and over. For instance, as the share of the dependency ratio is defined as the number between the senior individuals who are retired and drawing pension from the state, and the working-age population (15–64 years) who are supporting them through taxes, the older population is defined as persons aged 65 and over (OECD, 2020).

However, the definition of old age is not only related to chronology and rites of passage<sup>13</sup> but is also associated with different social and cultural contexts. In addition, old age is not a particular age and stage of human life, because we are ageing all the time, marked by rites of passage, life transitions and physical decline; thus, this adds to the life-course and transition perspective on old age. From this perspective, retirement from paid work is also a rite of passage that represents a person entering a different stage of life.

Firstly, defining older age can be considered in different social settings with definitions of old age diverging within different national and cultural backgrounds (Thane, 2003). According to Degnen (2018), older age is a period of life where women and men universally undergo or transcend the boundaries of race, gender, and class. A fixed age is a clear standard at which to create citizens' social rights and responsibilities, such as the pension system<sup>14</sup> and public

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<sup>13</sup> It is often the drawing of state retirement pension that creates the chronological line but in many countries drawing this does not mean someone has retired from paid work. Conversely some people may retire early and draw their occupational pension but are too young to draw their state pension.

<sup>14</sup> There is a standard agreement in the world that there is a mandatory age for drawing state pension (although Norway has a variable age of 62–75 years for earnings-related pensions, whereas the standard age is 67 years),

services (Thane, 2003). There are several perspectives such as social programmes, demographic, and socio-economic influences, cultural environment, and self-identity, and so on, that influence the threshold of old age. Old age is often sub divided into stages that are based on health and transitions such as (60/65-75), the ‘third age’ (Harper, 2014, p. 67), and (85+) the ‘fourth age’ as discussed by Laslett’s (1991) as a time of decline and frailty.

The current pension age in China is 60 years for men and 55 years for women, which was approved by the 5<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress in 1978 (Chinese State Council, 1978). Moreover, the definition of older people in China is those aged 60 years and over, according to the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the protection of the rights and interests of the elderly from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2013 (see Table 3-1). Older people in China are generally understood as those aged 60 and over.

*Table 3-1: Policies related to older people in China*

Name of Policy	Date of issued	Age
Interim measures of the State Council on retirement and retirement of workers (国发【1978】104号)	5 <sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress in 1978	60 years for men and 55 years for women
Law of the People’s Republic of China on the protection of the rights and interests of the elderly	1st July, 2013	60 years and over

Defining old age can be considered in a life-course perspective. Some scholars turn their focus to diversity and differences in later life (Gilleard and Higgs, 2005). Old age has been shifting in its definition from a ‘life-course perspective’ since the 1990s (ibid, p.33). There are two paradigmatic orientations on life-course progress thinking about ageing, which could be termed ‘the biographical and the institutional’<sup>15</sup> (Binstock and George, 2011, p. 4). However, whatever point of view is taken, old age cannot be analysed at a particular stage, since ageing is a lifetime process, and individual decisions rely on their own life history to shape their thinking (Hagestad, 2017, p. 10). Similarly, old age can be understood from transitions and the life-course perspective, as Grenier (2012, p.3) discusses in her exploration of the transitions that are associated with individuals’ socio-cultural contexts. Individuals experience events during their life-course and take their stories into their later life, and then experience the transitions of later

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which is especially useful for statistics (Roebuck, 1979; Bowling and Ebrahim, 2001). However, older people in that age may still work full-time that depends on their occupational requirements and personal choices.

<sup>15</sup> The difference is a biographical perspective which sees the life-course as ‘depicting the trajectories and transitions that characterize individual lives’, while the institutional perspective believes that ‘the set of social institutions, practices, and ideas that defines the life course is itself the central problematic of analysis’, because ‘the life course is a property not of individual human actors but of the social system, manifested in rules, practices, law, policy, and operative aspects of social institutions’ (Binstock and George, 2011, pp. 4-5).

life such as being widowed, giving up driving, etc. According to different social-cultural contexts, expectations and circumstances, they may have various understandings of older age (ibid, p.3). The understandings also will be shifting with their ageing (ibid). As a result, determining age from a particular age or stage is challenging, and the context varies from person to person, and across a person's life.

Furthermore, previous research (Levinson, 1986; Erikson and Erikson, 1998) has shown that the stereotype of later life has been challenged by various self-interpretations that emphasise the importance of personal experiences rather than common concepts (Grenier, 2012, p.11). In short, the concept of individual ageing comprises psychological and biological development alongside the experience of entering and exiting social roles (Harper, 2014, p.71). People grow older at various rates, at different times, and with distinct self-identities (Thane, 2003, p.7).

### **3.4.2 Work, ageing and risks to family life**

Transition can be understood in various ways in different circumstances, and 'the study of transition [provides] a complex site for approaches to ageing and the interpretations of late life' (Grenier, 2012, p. 5). The typical interpretation of life-cycle phases stems from stages<sup>16</sup> in growth, with the predicted stages of infancy, middle and later life and established positions in family, career and society (ibid, p.10). However, Fine and Glendinning (2005) concluded that social policy has not kept up with the more dynamic, multidirectional qualities of caring and dependence that exist in increasingly diverse family types (Biggs et al., 2015).

With increasing lifespans and continually declining fertility, the Chinese government terminated the one-child policy in 2015 and plan to raise the pension age to relieve the financial pressure on the central government. In detail, social commentators advise that by 2045, the retirement age for both men and women would be 65 years. For instance, Jin Weigang, who is a researcher of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, said that the plan is likely to be implemented in 2022 after a five-year transition period. Moreover, the institute of Population and Labour Economics and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published a paper in 2017, in which researchers provided a strategy to increase the retirement age. They suggested gradually raising the retirement age; for women, it should be raised one year every three years, and for men one year every six years (Zhou, 2016).

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<sup>16</sup> that is more than one way of looking at life-cycle phases, such as school/family- work/family formation-retirement. There are many ways of labelling the stages of life.

Although raising the retirement age and lengthening working lives may help to resolve expected productivity losses, they also pose new problems for the family (Biggs *et al.*, 2015). For example, an expansion of working life may leave less time for family-based intergenerational relationships (*ibid*). The majority of middle-aged carers are taking on the position of informal eldercare, and their role is not only vital to those they care for, but also to the general functioning of the whole society (*ibid*). In addition, an increasing number of grandparents are taking on the position of guardian, entirely responsible for their grandchildren's caring; however, they are unpaid caregivers with hidden costs such as to their physical health (*ibid*).

Adult caregivers who care for older family members and/or their spouses are becoming more common. The interests of newly retired people as caregivers with care duties have been incorporated into social and family policies to varying degrees (Biggs *et al.*, 2015). Compared to the support provided for childcare by parents such as maternity leave and flexible working time etc., the attention to those caring for people with disabilities, mental illness, chronic illness, or elders is very scant (*ibid*). Biggs *et al.* (2015) emphasize that researchers are only now beginning to comprehend what these current problems imply, and rather than seeing ageing demographics as a threat, they are beginning to address the policy hazards to seeing old age as a burden or fragile group.

While government reports tend to support older adults' home-based care, policy adoption appears to fall behind social and family complexities (Biggs *et al.*, 2015). Early policy discourses were dominated by productivity and care, with the likes of 'active ageing' and 'successful ageing', but there is some evidence that this view is shifting (*ibid*). There is a shift towards how to embrace diversity, and cooperation between the power sector, social organisations and the market (*ibid*). European evidence shows that family care functions work best when they supplement rather than have to replace the health and aged systems (*ibid*). In response to the ageing population, Chinese public media and promotional posters advocating filial obligations could be seen as signals that there is a shift from depending on government resources to expectations of family support.

### **3.4.3 Current debates on familial care practices**

Unlike developed nations in North America and Western Europe, in most East Asian countries, the family remains the major or exclusive provider of eldercare (Ikels, 2004a, p.9). In Chinese society, it is unclear whether or if cultural advocacy is helpful in addressing age-related issues,



or how much of an impact it has. The more serious issue is that ‘one might not be able to count on one’s children’ (Ikels, 2004b, p.346). In most countries, the growing number of older people is matched by the shrinkage of children so there are fewer children to educate or take care of when ill but also fewer to provide elder care.

What is known is that families are now expected to provide care for much longer periods than was previously the norm (Ikels, 2004a, p.9). Even if an older person is in relatively healthy condition, he or she may require years of financial assistance (however low level), perhaps causing conflict among descendants (ibid). Adult children and children-in-law, who are ageing themselves, can quickly get fatigued when seniors demand not just financial support but also physical care, such as assistance with washing, feeding, and toileting.

The issue cannot be avoided that there is competition for family resources between the frail oldest generation and the younger generation, which makes the generation between them a ‘sandwich group’ who need to balance the resource flows, such as money, time and people. Raising the younger generation is more costly because of the increasing cost of education, housing and marriage while for the oldest family members; the cost of medical care is continually rising, as are those of care homes. These are not just financial costs but also of time particularly in providing emotional support to elders (Croll, 2006, p. 477). Moreover, costly emergencies such as sudden health reversals for older people may easily pull a middle-class family down the social status ladder. Some research shows that the family resources that flow to younger generations include not only material resources but also care and attention, which adds difficulties to the middle generations in trying to support their elderly parents (Croll, 2006, p.477). They also show that although the economic situation has changed, elderly parents still expect their children to offer support (ibid, p.478).

Furthermore, the families place greater expectation on the older generation (sandwich group) to share early-stage childcare. As mentioned in the previous section, before the market reform, the work unit offered a series of types of support to their employees and included childcare for early years. Following the transformation of the work unit, such welfare could not be delivered, and the substituted system of childcare was not well established (Zhang and Maclean, 2012). Given that children may not enter kindergarten until they are three, the care of the very young falls to families. Grandparents have emerged as the main childcare resource because in urban areas, both parents are normally working full-time (Tu, 2016b, p. 97). When the one-child generation had children, for example, the grandparents were willing to participate in the rearing

of their grandchildren (Tu, 2016b, p. 98). Because of the poor quality of children's nurseries, the norm has increased in popularity.

The family relationships between parents and children are worth considering. For those growing up as only children in a changing China, there is research that suggests such children of urban families were 'little emperors' (Cameron *et al.*, 2013; Xu, 2016), because they had no siblings to compete with and share their parents' attention and increasing material wealth. There is no doubt that parents and even grandparents concentrated their resources more on the only child in the family than the last generation (Xu, 2016). Cameron *et al.* (2013, p. 953), argue that the only-child generation is 'less trusting, less trustworthy, more risk-averse, less competitive, more pessimistic, and less conscientious individuals'. However, family relationships are becoming closer (Xu, 2016). There are statistics to demonstrate that increasing numbers of children believe their parents to be more like friends rather than authority figures, and about 50% of children aged 6–14 expressed this feeling in 2005, an increase of more than 10% from 1999 (*ibid*).

The middle class invests a considerable percentage of their family's resources in their children's education. The parents put children's academic achievement as the family priority (Xu, 2016; Liu, 2021). Investments include, but are not limited to, buying an apartment in a good school district, enrolling their child in after school classes and, increasingly, study abroad including summer school, workshops, and school trips (Sun and Rao, 2017). With increased economic status, parents are questioning the conventional expectation of monetary assistance from their children; instead, they are preparing to support their offspring for long durations and hope for their descendants to 'have a good life' (Tu, 2016b, p.127). However, the only child in a family enjoys the whole of the family's resources but also must take on all the responsibility and expectations (Xu, 2016). This has narrowed gender bias in family practice in urban areas. The only child, whether a daughter or a son, is the only hope and future for a family.

#### **3.4.4 Theories of Family relations to explain eldercare practices**

The interdependent links between parents and children are ingrained across a lifetime in the Chinese cultural setting (Liu, 2021). In spite of a rising sense of individuality among younger generations, there is still an engrained commitment to and need for family support. A new understanding of family is required, as is a shift in focus to non-western cultures that lack a liberal sense of self and individuality (Liu, 2021). This is because Western modernisation theory presupposes an individualised and disembodied subject, which differs from this

interdependence of Chinese family members (ibid). In the face of economic and welfare concerns in the twenty-first century, China has seen a strengthening of bonds between marital family and extended kin (ibid).

In light of Pierre Bourdieu's theory and a number of related family theories, this section tries to introduce concepts that may explain the phenomena of the Chinese family. Following the ideas of Bourdieu (1996, p. 22), family is built on the continuous material or non-material exchanges by members and give it a 'family feeling' of solidarity. Those resources exchanged with and transformed by family members could include three types of capital. To be more exact, the first, economic capital mainly refers to the income and inheritance of the household; social capital<sup>17</sup> includes knowledge and specific identities of individuals; the last is the expressions of family culture, which include family practice, behaviours and preferences that are based on past experiences (Izuhara, 2010, p. 30).

Another perspective is to understand family is by using family as a verb not a noun so 'doing' family, 'performing' family, 'practising' family and 'displaying' family (Finch, 2007). Family behaviour in Morgan's (1996, p.190) opinion is focused on our realisation of 'family' in daily life through routine, in which people behave and interact in 'family' activities. According to Bourdieu's (1984) work on class, the family is a key social unit in which resources are reproduced, exchanged, and circulated. The family has the capacity to self-develop by integrating and redistributing resources within the family within certain social and historical circumstances throughout its life cycle. For example, parents, even grandparents, spend money on their children's education in the hopes of receiving cultural and social capital in the future (Zhang, 2017b).

The life-course perspective on ageing refers to linked lives, social and historical contexts, and important transitions in making choices (Katz *et al.*, 2012, pp. 9-11). According to Frankel (1976), the family is 'the most immediate and ineluctable of human settings', which connects their generations through involvement in caregiving of their offspring and older family members (Minguez, 2012, p. 10). It is the most important source of the individual's identity and the institution of that shapes one's personal life (ibid).

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<sup>17</sup> In the context of family social capital surely means know how and who you know so you can obtain resources for your family or for example be in a position to recommend your son or daughter etc. for a position because you are friends with the boss.

There are three theories about family that can be addressed to understand how these types of capital flow within family. Firstly, the family systems theory (Minguez, 2012, p. 17) that allows readers to think about the family like a system; how resources such as people, money, time and information flow within the family system. A network of family relationships shares values and normative expectations that distinguish one family from other families and groups. These networks of association, which differ with social status and culture, will usually continue until participants dispute the underlying principles and standards of the system and intervene, or until they are broken (Minguez, 2012). One must acknowledge that the way the family performs tasks will change over time and with the family's life cycle, which involves the age and gender of the family members, the family's own cultural preferences and socioeconomic background (ibid).

Secondly, the exchange and choices theory (Minguez, 2012, p. 22) that seeks to understand the motivation of people who circulate the resources. This is because family members try their best to improve family happiness by paying the lowest cost for choices and behaviours to purchase the maximum rewards, which means they will change family tasks' actions, if there is another lower cost choice available (Minguez, 2012). The costs can be defined as uncomfortable relationships, interactions, and situations; at the same time, costs can be regarded as giving up rewards, such as students or adults who move back to their parents' home to save money (ibid). In fact, to balance the reward and cost ratio in a family intergenerational reciprocity is a useful concept; because reciprocity means that, other people will be considered when making choices and that family members are interdependent.

Thirdly, the family development framework that understands the family through a developing lens and sees the family system as a dynamic organisation. The theory tries to think about the changes in family patterns in the context of time and history (Klein and White, 1996), from a developing process perspective that is an inevitable and essential point to understand the family. A similar point of view also can be found in Minguez (2012, p. 29), who mentions family coping strategies that facilitate family adjustments and adaptations to their situation.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In a short period, significant policy and social changes have posed a challenge to family eldercare practices. This can be summarised in three key shifts of the *xiao* (filial piety) cultural norm's discourse. This chapter also discussed how family practices fluctuate depending on personal and family situations. It can be pointed out that gender roles in the family have evolved

and several generational values coexist in multigenerational families and households. These alterations remain a threat to family eldercare practices, leading to requests for assistance in the performance of care.

The last portion of this chapter describes old age and family in order to understand how population ageing affects familial eldercare. In addition, this part discusses the hidden hazards and ongoing debates. The author outlined plausible and related theories in the final section for future investigation. The following chapter addresses the design of field study to investigate family elder care practices in middle-class households in order to explore the ideology behind the transfer of eldercare.



## **Chapter 4. Methodology**

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## 4.1 Introduction

In this past two chapters, the cultural contexts of Chinese middle-class family values have been introduced. This chapter constructs a conceptual framework (section 4.2) according to the research questions that allow an opportunity to understand eldercare practices in Chinese middle-class families. To answer those questions, the next section (4.3) addresses the rationale of the case study approach, including the choices of methods used in the fieldwork and analysis.

The whole planning, pilot study and processing of how the research was undertaken in the field is portrayed in section 4.4. Although the researcher had prepared a research design based on reading, some problems were still encountered during participant recruitment. The section describes how Plan B proceeded after several rejections by target participants. The last sections of this chapter discuss the way in which the data was analysed and will discuss further issues relating to methodology evaluation and reflection (section 4.5). The data collection is summarized in the final appendix (F), which gives the reader a clear view of the data resources.

## 4.2 The conceptual framework of this study

This study ‘emphasizes the processes underpinning social activity through detailed descriptions of the participants’ behaviours, beliefs, and the contexts within which they occur’ (Green and Thorogood, 2018, p. 21). More specifically, it is focused on the research questions below.

### Research questions:

- The economic reform and policy transitions have resulted in the rise of a new middle-class. What do they and their lifestyles look like?
- What are the middle-class family practices on eldercare? How do they manage and balance their family resources to negotiate family duties?
- How are expectations and responses shifting between generations? Are they still following filial piety?
- How could the government, market and planners come together to deliver support to middle-class families’ strategies?

This research focuses on Tianjin’s middle-class families and investigates how they manage and balance their family resources to negotiate family duties within three or four generations. The contribution of this research is to consider, from a whole family perspective, the competing needs and resources brought to bear on elder care within a rapidly shifting societal landscape that has radically changed the shape of families. The research brings together three themes (see

Figure 4-1): firstly, the investigation examines the values of rising middle-class families; secondly, the research investigates the theme of traditional Chinese culture—and values relating to *Xiao* or filial piety. The final line of investigation in this project focuses on shifting values within the generations of middle-class families and specifically, this project asks how values transform within middle-class families over time, combining some key points and turning points (Rubin and Rubin, 2011, pp. 50-51).

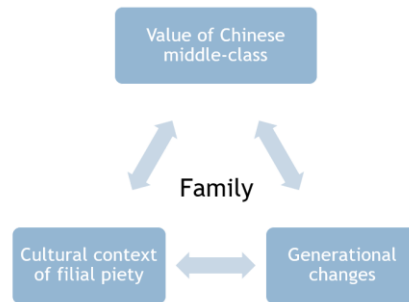


Figure 4-1: Schematic diagram of the three themes of the research

These three themes are in Chinese families, where they interrelate and influence each other, but there is little understanding of how they impact on eldercare practice. ‘Through enquiry into daily life, it is possible to explore private issues that are rooted in public and structural change.’ (Gilroy, 2013, p. 431). ‘The concept of everyday life has not only a communality of concern, but also a fundamental recognition of diversity’ (Gilroy and Booth, 1999, p. 322). Therefore, ‘the framework provides older people with a common-sense way of articulating their experiences. It also provides a means to demonstrate the relationship between the microlevel practices or beings and doings of men and women in their neighbourhoods and patterns and forces operating at global, national, and institutional levels’ (Gilroy, 2013, p. 431).

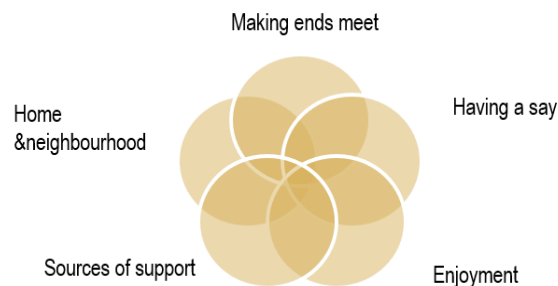


Figure 4-2: The everyday life model (resource from Gilroy, 2012, p.76)

Gilroy (2012, p. 76) has referred to Healey, that ‘the concept of everyday life is an understanding of life as a web of social relations through which we accomplish human existence in daily, weekly, yearly, lifespan and inter-generational time’. It ‘explores the task of

acquiring the means of financial competence; of social support which may be emotional, spiritual, and practical; the necessity of pleasure and play in our live; the validation of an individual by having arenas for citizenship namely the opportunity to speak and be heard’ (Gilroy, 2012, p. 76).

In order to investigate and comprehend this complex discourse, this study suggests designing the research and interpreting eldercare’s family stories by using a case study and grounded theory combined methodology (see Figure 4-3 below).

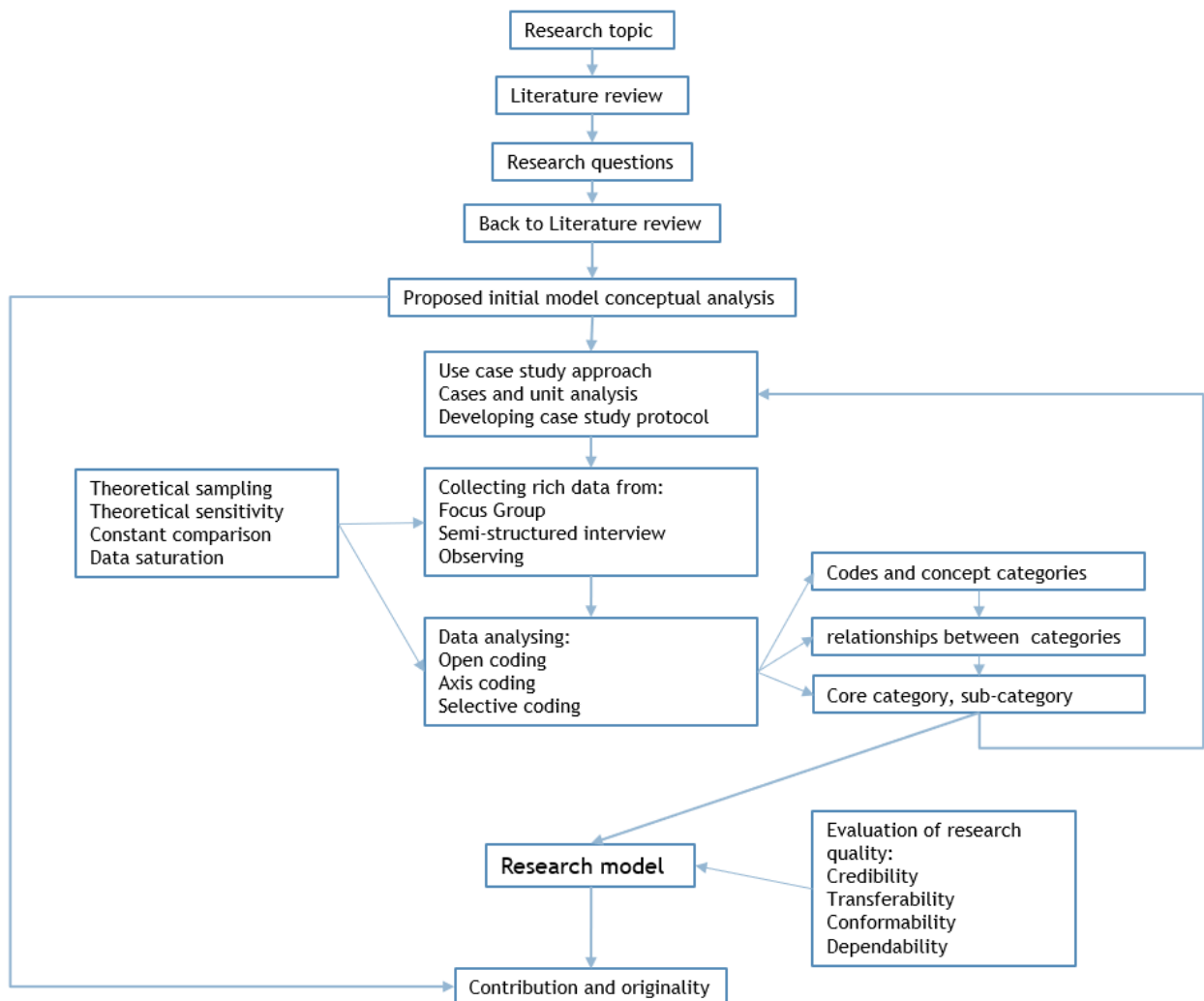


Figure 4-3: Case study: Grounded theory methodology (Halaweh, 2012).

### **4.3 Rationale of case study: grounded theory methodology**

#### **4.3.1 Justification of a case study methodology**

The case study approach provides a route for researchers who want to enquire into complex phenomena within specific contexts (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Case study researchers hold the view that all research objects have the same and different features. They investigate those common points and differences, which may not be noticed by large-scale quantitative methods, but these features could play an essential role in the development process (Bell, 2014). In other words, this in-depth information of the participants can be brought out by using a case study, which is designed to use multiple resources (Tellis, 1997). Case study ‘seeks a range of different kinds of evidence and the use of multiple sources of evidence is a key characteristic’ (Gillham, 2000, pp. 1-2), which is also a strategy to enhance data credibility (Baxter and Jack, 2008). For example, Yin (2018) suggests the use of at least six data sources--‘documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observation, and participant observation’ (Tellis, 1997; Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 554) -- but are not limited to these.

One of these resources is that of place- housing, services, etc, so being grounded in a place allows the researcher to explore how these resources are used or not (Gilroy, 2008). This approach provides a route for participants to tell their stories, and through these stories, researchers can understand participants’ behaviours (Baxter and Jack, 2008). It is a methodology that may create a close relationship between researchers and research objects (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). The researcher took several months to consider the research site, how to access the middle-class families and what topics should be explored. A single city’s choice to investigate was because the researcher was focused on doing depth work with families and was not concerned with a large quantitative survey. Also, there was a practical reason in that it is my familiar city so I can start with a knowledge of how the city is patterned e.g., where are the middle-class districts and possibly also with a means of making connection with people e.g., how to recruit.

During the process of participant selection three points were considered: firstly, those families had at least one generation identified as middle class. Secondly, the participant was willing to share their family stories with the researcher and was interested in this topic. Lastly, the participants had a three-generation family. Those participants who met the three conditions were considered for the study.

### **4.3.2 Integrated Grounded theory method**

The main aim of grounded theory is to formulate knowledge based on evidence in order to better explain the social context (Halaweh, 2012, p. 32). It is believed that grounded theory is aligned with case studies analysing social and organizational contexts (Hughes and Jones, 2003). The combination of both as an approach implies seeking a mutual foundation on which to assess the methodology, and both case study and grounded theory are combined underneath the context of interpretive qualitative research (Halaweh, 2012).

The ability to research a micro problem within a larger reality within a specific environment is one of the benefits of grounded theory (Laws and McLeod, 2004). In a grounded theory analysis, gaining thorough knowledge of the environment and day-to-day activities in each context are essential dimensions (ibid). It offers ‘a logically consistent set of data collection and analysis procedures aimed to develop theory’ quoted in (Fernández, 2004, p. 43) (see also in Charmaz, 2001, p. 245): Firstly, it is used to uncover social relationships and behaviours which makes it a fitting choice here (Laws and McLeod, 2004). Essentially it is a method that does not rely on predetermined hypothesis but seeks to build theory from the data (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2007). It is a research method which uses strict procedures for data analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 2017, p. 1) and will enable me to search for and conceptualise the hidden social and collective patterns and constructions in the area of interest.

The grounded theory is the combined work of Strauss and Glaser, but ‘their separated paths led to what now is known as the Straussian and Glaserian versions of the grounded theory method’ (Fernández, 2004, p. 45). My study followed the Strauss approach because ‘the form and nature of the theoretical outcome is full-description rather than Glasterian abstract-conceptualisation’ (ibid, p.46). It ‘appears to be more useful for studies of individuals’ and concerns with people and time, especially in the use of Strauss and Corbin’s coding procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). By using those coding methods to interpret data and this also justifies the need for rigorous protocols to evaluate the data obtained from case studies (Halaweh, 2012). Thus, in this study, grounded theory is used concerning data analysis methods to assist case study approach (ibid).

### 4.3.3 Choosing methods

The research methods were chosen in the light of the research questions because the methods you choose should ‘depend on what you are trying to find out’ (Silverman, 2015, p. 7). Why qualitative methods? This research is interested in motivation, experience and life stories all of which are best investigated by qualitative methods. As Green and Thorogood (2018, p. 53) state, ‘if you want to understand the perspectives of participants, explore the meanings they give to phenomena, or observe a process in depth, then a qualitative approach is probably appropriate’. A focus group method was chosen, firstly to scope the issues and deepen the researcher’s understanding of the possible pinch points of people’s family situations. A focus group is an effective way of hearing from a range of people and allows participants to contribute or sit out as they wish and listen to the stories of others. Secondly, it was a recruiting tool for the in-depth family investigation that demanded in-depth semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, it was an ambitious and pilot method through which the author tried to understand the tensions between generations. Focus groups were usually organized by the researcher, bringing groups of people together, to answer or discuss prepared questions in a limited time (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). In addition, it also helped the researcher to find diverse interpretations of terms such as ‘a perfect later life’, ‘well-being in later life’, which may allow further investigation in follow-up interviews (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Following the ideas of Shek (2006) and Silverman (2015, p. 17), although questionnaires<sup>18</sup> may be of use to ‘warm up’ a focus group, they cannot be relied upon to study key questions such as ‘why’ and ‘how’, which may involve complex layers of meaning. Researchers who focus on quantitative methods claim that their data is analysed by using value-free measuring and counting tools, though the questionnaire development itself may be far from value free. Qualitative researchers emphasize interpretation of data through the lenses of time and history, which is dependent on individuals’ subjective experiences (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). The advantage of qualitative methods is that they ‘can use naturally occurring data to find the sequences (“how”) in which participants’ meanings (“what”) are deployed’ (Silverman, 2015, p. 17). According to Silverman (2015, p. 17), ‘having established the character of some phenomenon, [they] can then (but only then) move on to answer “why” questions by examining the wider contexts in which the phenomenon arises’. It has been seen that qualitative methods are the appropriate approach to investigate this study.

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<sup>18</sup> Here, the author had resorted to a short questionnaire to gather basic data, such as participants’ names and mobile numbers, and also used to warm up the interviews (see appendix C).

In line with Rubin and Rubin's (2011, p. 4) viewpoints, an in-depth interviewing method 'allows the researcher to explore complex, contradictory, or counterintuitive matters'. Rubin and Rubin also discuss the role of culture understood as a norm and values that 'define expected behaviours within a given group, organization, or society' (ibid, p.33). Within a whole society or community, norms and beliefs are exchanged and carried down from one generation to the next, and qualitative interviewing research can make older adults more understandable to the younger (ibid, p.33). For example, in oral history, the older generation who experienced World War II explained the traumas that shaped their generation, making the history real for younger generations and filling the gaps in written histories (ibid, p.4).

What should be paid attention to during the process of collecting data? Rubin and Rubin (2011, p. 5) state that 'the essence of responsive interviewing is picking people to talk to who are knowledgeable, listening to what they have to say, and asking new questions based on the answers they provide'. In-depth interviewing usually occurs between relative strangers, and the conversations need to be recorded; thus, trust of researchers and interviewees is necessarily required (ibid, p.7). To build up trust with interviewees, the researcher needs to build what feels like a conversational exchange with the interviewee, who also plays an active role in what is called 'conversational partnership' (ibid). For example, this study may ask questions like: When you experience multiple transitions in later life such as retirement from paid work, the illness of your spouse or the birth of a grandchild, how did you go about managing those demands? If you become frail in the future, how do you want this managed, where would you choose to live? When you have an emergency who do you turn to as your first point of contact and why? These questions involve asking for private and personal information and disclosure is reliant on how much trust exists between the researcher and the participants.

Interviews, direct observation and focus groups were used to collect data in this research. Several possible personal values were involved in this research process. For example, when designing the research questions, some bias may have arisen in the questions themselves. Then, in the fieldwork stage, collecting data from the participants' stories representing what the researcher wants to hear cannot easily be avoided (Tellis, 1997).

#### **4.3.4 Theories to interpret in-depth data**

The life-course, biographical and critical gerontology approaches make up the foundation of understanding families' stories (Hadley, 2019). According to Putney and Bengtson (2005, p. 93), the 'life-course perspective is expanding our knowledge of the complexities of

multigenerational family life', because it offers interpretations of ageing in a lifelong process and makes it easy to interact with multiple generations in a family. More importantly, in the life-course perspective, great importance is attached to the impact of social and historical background on personal life.

The biographical method has become an adaptive tool that can be used to interpret oral data, trying to resonate with readers, as if 'when we write about other people's lives, we also write or rewrite our own lives' (Hadley, 2019, p. 7). As a member of the one child generation, I foresee a time in the future when I too will be supporting my own parents and contending with the same issues. In this respect, the investigation into older lives holds a mirror up to our own choices and provides possible pathways for our future caregiving. According to Wengraf (2001), the biographical approach 'provides a method of understanding the individual and social context of the participants' experience' (Hadley, 2019, p. 7). The context of biographical history complements history, using the main concepts of human activity, historical time and place, social contexts of transitions, timing, and related or separate lives, by the contextualization of events surrounding the past, present and future (ibid).

This study aims to interview people in different generations (2 or 3 generations) in families. There are several interactions involved in multiple generational families, such as linked lives, family ties, reciprocity, and filial piety, which are also impacted by place, history and timing (Putney and Bengtson, 2005). Can we understand their family strategy from a complex context of how those three or four generations within families negotiate their family duties? Are family practices shifting from generation to generation? Is filial piety (*Xiao*) still important as a family value and is it interpreted and valued in the same way across the generations? Critical gerontology supports the perspective that older people contribute to society in equal but different ways from their younger counterparts and should be valued rather than discriminated against or marginalized (Baars et al., 2005).

This study draws on the literature but tries not to be overly influenced by it and instead this thesis is based firmly on the data (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). This is because collecting and interpreting qualitative data gives the researcher an opportunity to bring that literature to the field and learn how people value their experiences and their strategies to solve real problems, which may develop original theories (ibid). The development of theory depends on whether a workable theory exists or not. If there already exists an obviously workable theory applicable to one's proposed analysis, the logical way forward is to test its usefulness (Robson and



McCartan, 2016, p. 66). If the research is seeking around for a possible theory, then development of theory is suggested (ibid).

#### 4.4 Engaging in the real-world

The main aim of this study is to investigate possible shifting values and expectations of eldercare between generations within families. According to Rubin and Rubin (2011), this calls for topical interviews that are ‘more narrowly focused on a particular event or process and are concerned with what happened and why’ (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 110). From the collection of in-depth data, the author tries to discover how the one-child generation in China could care for their older parents and build up their care package for the future. Thus, this research is a complex topic that considers research approaches including focus group discussion and in-depth interviews around this topic.

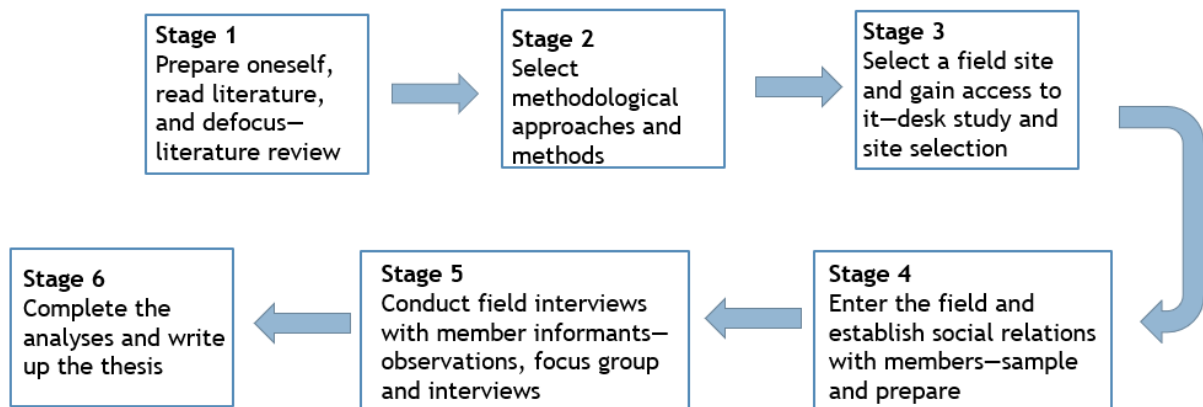


Figure 4-4: How to design the fieldwork

The overall process of this fieldwork can be divided into five parts: ‘preparation, field site selection and access, field strategies, data gathering, and exit’ (Neuman, 2014, p. 426). Effective methods to collect data include ‘observation; analysis text and documents; interviews and focus group; audio and video recordings’ (Silverman, 2015).

##### 4.4.1 Selection of the site

The city of Tianjin was selected for three reasons: the concentration of middle-class people, an ageing population, and a lack of research on eldercare in this part of China. For example, Tianjin’s ageing rate ranked third in China (Han and Zhou, 2016). Up to the end of 2018, the number of Tianjin residential population aged 60 and exceeded 2.46 million, accounting for 23.4% of the total residential population, which is an ageing rate far higher than the national average, ranking only after Beijing and Shanghai (Duan and Xu, 2018).

The population of Tianjin has already reached more than 10 million, which makes it one of the biggest cities in China (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Its GDP was fifth among the provincial capital cities, and the average income of working people in Tianjin ranked third, only after Beijing and Shanghai (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2016). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2018), the annual average income for an employee in Tianjin in 2018 was 103,931 CNY (£11,810). This compares to the average income (82,413 CNY, about £9,365) of employees in urban areas of China (Statista, 2020). Tianjin is a place, where new middle-class households are highly concentrated.

There is a significant body of research that has focused on the major cities of Beijing and Shanghai, but cities such as Tianjin have been paid scant attention. For example, Wu *et al.* (2005) have investigated long-term caregiver issues in Shanghai. Chen and Han (2016) and Wu, Carter, Goins and Cheng (2005) have explored community-based eldercare in Shanghai. The ODESSA program on ageing was undertaken in Beijing. Neighbourhood determinants of life satisfaction for older people have been researched by Yan *et al.* (2014) in Beijing. Intergenerational social support and the psychological well-being of older parents has been looked at by Chen and Silverstein (2000) in Beijing. Research assessing needs among elders in Beijing and Shanghai has been carried out by Chen and Levkoff (2017).

Table 4-1: Reasons for site selection (organized by author)

Research review	<p><b>Shanghai:</b>  Wu <i>et al.</i> (2005) – Caregiver issues.  Chen and Han (2016) and Wu <i>et al.</i> (2005) – Community-based eldercare.  Chen and Levkoff (2017) – Assessing needs among elders.</p> <p><b>Beijing:</b>  ODESSA programme.  Yan <i>et al.</i> (2014) – Neighbourhood determinants for life satisfaction of older people.  Chen and Silverstein (2000) – Intergenerational social support and the psychological well-being of older parents; Chen and Levkoff (2017) – Assessing needs among elders.</p> <p><b>Tianjin: little known about eldercare</b>  Some research on urbanization  Liu and Cao (2017) have discussed urban social landscape transformation in Tianjin.  Zhou <i>et al.</i> (2018) address the rural in situ urbanization (RISU) in the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei region.  Emerging scholars focus on lost only-child parents:  Jiao and Pei (2019) published a conference paper in Chinese;</p>
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Tianjin is the city where the author’s parents live, so it is familiar to the researcher and provides easy entry into the field. The author studied in Tianjin for three years of high school and her resulting social network provided a route to access participants. The fieldwork was calculated

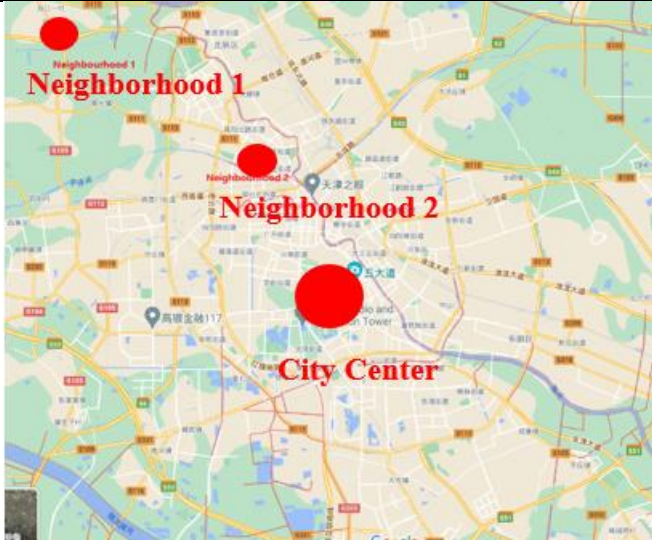
to be completed in six months to take account of expenses and the need for family support over this period. This fieldwork journey was also a cherished experience for a researcher to explore and experience the difficulties and joys of doing research in the real world.

#### 4.4.2 Detailed plans to reach middle-class families in Tianjin

The competing definitions of ‘middle class’ have been discussed in Chapter 2. In selecting families for the research, a range of factors were considered, including housing and neighbourhood type, income, education level, and occupation. Drawing on these factors, ten families were selected for the research.

At first, the researcher planned to recruit participants from only two communities (see Table 4-2); one is like work unit apartments, which were only sold to their own employees; the other one is a recent commercial community that was sold in 2013 at what was an average price for the city centre. They represent two different types of middle-class communities in Tianjin, which would be easy to compare. The first is characterised by close social networks but the location is far away from the city centre; the other community is made up of relative strangers but has a good location, school district and local amenities.

Table 4-2: Two communities (locations of communities)

Name	Teachers' community of Hebei University of Technology (Neighbourhood 1)	Yi Cheng Tang Ting Commercial community (Neighbourhood 2)
Residents	University teachers	1,870 households
House price	Not available	32,365 CNY per m <sup>2</sup>
Construction date	2009	2013
Management fee	0.5 CNY per month per m <sup>2</sup>	2.8–3.5 CNY per month per m <sup>2</sup>
Neighbourhood location		

However, this research strategy proved challenging to implement. After two focus groups in each planned community, the author realised it was very difficult to build the necessary trust

with interviewees in a short period. As a result, the researcher turned to her classmates and friends for help. A first step was finding friends to help access their gated communities and introduce their neighbours; secondly, the researcher drew on websites like Airbnb in China (Tujia) through which people rent their home for a short period. Their communities attract visitors because they are near to famous tourist spots or convenient transportation, and either of these would influence apartment prices that would make them higher than average. Thus, the researcher thought that this was a way to contact more interviewees.

This process was also tricky. The researcher found that building up relationships when starting from zero is not an effective method to interview three generations in families. Moreover, for the sake of each family, the author had to catch up with a gatekeeper with whom she might be friends or be familiar. This is because, no matter with whom you are friends, they need to be familiar enough with your family to be willing to talk with you about their families' situations. The questions prepared to be asked in focus groups and interviews were in a very different style from what the author had planned. Those differences included the order of questions, locations of organizing interviews and even conversation skills to gather family members' opinions of each family. Few participants were recruited in the first month of fieldwork because the researcher underestimated the time and emotional cost needed to build up trust; in particular, the researcher had to keep in touch with their family members.

#### **4.4.3 The process of recruiting interviewees**

In the first stage of the fieldwork, the author wanted to recruit middle-class families through focus groups and understood general ideas about later-life plans in China. Moreover, the fieldwork preparation took about two to three months, due to finalizing methods and research tools. Thus, the first two focus groups were organized immediately when the researcher arrived in China.

The participants of the first group were eight in total, aged from 56 to 75 years of age, who were friends of my parents. They were retired teachers at the university who had had a high level of education themselves and were perhaps more aware of the possibilities in ageing than other groups. The first focus group ran in this way. Firstly, I introduced myself and the project and asked if everyone was comfortable with the group discussion being recorded, which they were. I emphasized that recording helped my analysis, and the material would be used only for the research, and a pseudonym would hide their identity. Then, to get everyone warmed up, I introduced the topic of home: how long they had lived in their community, why did they choose

it, and did they plan to move and if so, where? We then moved onto issues of lifestyle, savings and, thinking forward to a time of possible frailty, how their care needs might be met and by whom. What were their expectations of their children? Finally, I asked everyone to write down their mobile number for further contact.

Having concluded the first focus group in the teachers' community of Hebei University of Technology, I reflected on my learning about running it, to make further planned sessions more effective. Most people cannot easily understand my research aim and potential outcome very well, even the retired professors asked me to make a questionnaire first and felt that their everyday life was routine and unremarkable. To make the discussion livelier, I designed a survey (see Appendix C) that was handed out with an explanation of the research (see Appendices A and B) together and asked some baseline questions for participants to complete at the start of the focus group. The second focus group was organized for the following day, but the participants (six people) were much younger than in the first focus group. They were around 33 to 50 years old, however most of them were just starting to think about their later-life plan.

After completing these two focus groups, I considered getting in touch with new groups to draw in more participants, with a range of occupations and education levels that might enrich this research data set. Therefore, I found some volunteer groups in Tianjin online, whose team members were older adults. However, this produced few results. There were two reasons that I was considering. The first was that there was not enough time to develop the requisite confidence to ensure that people felt interested enough to welcome me to their home and introduce their parents or children. The second is that I was not acting on behalf of any Chinese government or academic institution, so I have not been taken seriously by informants who are approached on the internet.

Therefore, after that month of exploration, the third and fourth focus groups were conducted with a singing group and Tai Chi group with whom the researcher had been interacting for quite a while. For familiarity with these groups, I took photos for the singing group every Tuesday, and learnt Tai Chi every morning. The singing class was held by retired staff of the university for which my parents worked. Through my volunteering to take photos for their members, I was introduced to the singing group and became familiar with them. The Tai Chi group was reorganized by a professor who was willing to exercise by himself every morning at first, but an increasing number of retired teachers came and learnt from him. As a result, he

decided to teach Tai Chi for free. Because my mother was one of his students, I went to practice Tai Chi every day and made casual conversation with the group. The two additional focus groups ultimately provided more information for further research interviews, but it was a pity that there were no family members involved.

### *Selecting interviewees*

For the first stage of fieldwork, the author believed that participants could easily be found from focus groups. However, this did not work out as planned for several reasons. Firstly, when I arrived back in Tianjin, the weather was freezing, and I did not encounter any older people in the community. Secondly, many salespersons or people with fraudulent intent sought out older people on the street, which made older people hesitate to talk with strangers. Thirdly, for this research, I needed to get in touch with families, and in the Chinese social context, this would only happen after trust has been built up over quite a long time so that they could invite you to visit their homes. Finally, the Chinese middle class are so busy that they almost have no time to sit down and have a conversation with someone, especially when repeated contact is needed. For example, one of my friends who worked for a real estate company, rejected an interview with me twice. She must work six days a week from 9 am to midnight, and on her only day of the week off, she wants to have a good sleep.

After the first month of the pilot study was completed, two interviewees agreed to participate, and their families were invited because of them. To efficiently find more participants, I turned to the social network of family and friends. Moreover, snowball samples were developed through core informants to make up the number of interviewees. Finally, ten families of participants were found from focus groups and their friends who were recommended by my parents' friends and my classmates (Table 4-3: has shown these ten families below).

*Table 4-3: Interviewee families*

Family	Name	Comments
1	Mrs Ye Hua & Mr Zhang	Parents' friends
2	Mrs Hao & Mr Liu	Parents' friends
3	Mr Li and Mrs Li Jing	Parents' friends
4	Mrs Xing	My classmate
5	Mr Wang & Mrs Dai	Parents' friends (focus group participants)
6	Mrs Zhao & Mr Jia	Parents' friends (focus group participants)
7	Mr Huo & Mrs Xu	Parents' friends
8	Mrs Kong Song	My classmate
9	Mrs Fu & Mr Wang	Used to be neighbours
10	Mrs Dong	My classmate

Families 4, 8 and 10 are those of my classmates. We had a close relationship during 2000–2003, when we all studied in the No. 5 middle school in Hongqiao District, Tianjin, but we had met only once since we all studied at different universities. Then, we had been out of regular contact because we live in different areas. Therefore, I decided to interview the sample group, starting from the only-child generation, who were my classmates, and then contacted their family members. It was chosen because of the grounding in generational shifts and linked lives.

Ideally, the expected investigation of family practices suggested a longitudinal piece of work where participants could be revisited. However, considering the distance between the UK and China, and the time parameters around a doctoral study, this was not feasible. The researcher, however, added WeChat<sup>19</sup> friends to follow their family situations beyond the field work period. This study is planned to conduct cross-generational research, speaking to the oldest generation (typically now in their 80s, and labelled here G1); their child or children, usually in their late 50s or early 60s, labelled G2, who were the primary informants. Except for the three families for whom the gatekeepers were my previous classmates, namely, the only-child generation in their 30s, referred to as G3. No attempt was made to speak to their child or children (G4), who were very young.

### *Criteria for recruitment*

Tsang (2013) summarized some criteria for middle-class sample collection that I utilized in this study. Compared with Tsang's focus in the south of China, this study was in Tianjin, a northern tier-two city. Recently, due to the unbalanced development, a new category of new tier one has been added in the city classifications. There are tier-one, new tier-one, tier-two, tier-three, tier-four and tier-five cities ranked by criteria such as GDP, population, and the area. For example, tier-one cities are the most important economic, political, and cultural centres in China, including Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. New tier-one cities are evaluated by the city's economic activity and further potential in the province or region. They include ten cities in the south such as Chengdu, Hangzhou, Chongqing, and Wuhan, and five cities in the north such as Xi'an, Tianjin, Shenyang, etc. However, it does not set clear standards of a middle-class household in these new tier-one cities. Thus, the income is defined still according to the standards of tier-two city.

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<sup>19</sup> WeChat is a Chinese multi-purpose social communicate app. It has over 1 billion monthly active users.

Table 4-4: the criteria for recruitment

Criterion	Requirements
Annual income	Minimum 100K CNY per year (about £11,401)
Occupation	Specialist or skilled job, or work at a managerial or comparable level, either in the state or private sectors
Education	Above a bachelor's degree or Junior college diploma
Hukou	Urban household registration
House/car, other financial investments	Own a house and/or car either by a mortgage or outright ownership; Live in a gated community with high-end flats/townhouse; There are some kinds of financial investment/products.
Self-identity	Seeking a lifestyle, self-exploration, self-cultivation
<b>Consumption structure</b>	<b>Engel coefficient is 0.3-0.365;</b>

Resources from (Li, 2019, p. 333).

Considering that Tianjin is a tier-two city, the income level associated with the middle class is lower than that for a tier-one city, but other elements are the same, such as property, having a professional or managerial occupation and being well educated. According to *Hurun Report* (2018), the total annual income of a middle-class household in a tier-two city like Tianjin should be between 200,000 and 1,500,000 CNY (about £22,899 to £171,748). There is no uniform measure of Chinese middle-class income levels, but it comes mainly from several resources (see Table 4-5).

Table 4-5: Annual income of Chinese middle-class household

Resource	Date	Definition	Population
<b>McKinsey &amp; Company projects</b>	2013	Middle-class urban household earnings at US\$9,000 to US\$34,000 a year (about 60,000–210,000 CNY)	76% of China's urban population will enter the middle-income bracket by 2022
<b>The Economist (Intelligence Unit)</b>	2016	Per capita disposable income \$2,100 to \$32,100 a year (about 14,000–210,000 CNY)	About 60% of total population, 0.83 billion people
<b>World Bank</b>	2017	\$14,600 to \$146,000 a year (about 100,000–960,000 CNY)	About 22% of total population, 7.5 million households (4 persons/ household)
<b>China's national statistics bureau chief (Ning Jizhe)</b>	2019	Family of three, earning an annual income of 100,000 to 500,000 CNY	140 million strong middle-class households

Resources from (Hurun Report, 2018; Cyrill, 2019).

To be clear, the researcher decided to set a middle-class household income as being 100,000 CNY per year (see Table 4-6 below). The pension of G1 particularly if they are living alone does not usually reach this level therefore the test is applied to G2 or G3, to determine eligibility.



*Table 4-6: Interviewed families in general introduction*

<b>Sample families</b>	<b>Participants and gatekeeper</b>	<b>Neighbourhood or Gated Community</b>	<b>Occupation of three generations</b>	<b>Income of household<sup>20</sup> (per year) and properties they have</b>
<b>Ye family</b>	G1, G2, G3, Helper. Mrs. Ye(G2)	G2-Teachers' community	G1-Retired professor. G2-Retired professional technician, retired professor. G3-Both assistant professors in university.	G1: 100,000 CNY (about £11,000), 1 apartment; G2: 180,000 CNY (about £19,760); 2 apartments; G3: 80,000USD (about £61,171); 1 house in USA
<b>Li family</b>	G1, G2, G3; Mrs. Li (G2)	G2-Teachers' community	G1-Retired teacher. G2-Retired doctor, retired professor. G3-Professional technician, manager.	G1: 100,000 CNY (about £11,000), 1 apartment; G2: 250,000 CNY (about £27,445); 2 apartments; G3: 300,000 CNY (about £32,934)
<b>Hao family</b>	G1, G2, G3; Mrs. Hao (G2)	G2-Private-sector development community	G1-Retired Teacher. G2-Retired teacher, professor. G3-Financial assistant, financial manager.	G1: 80,000 CNY (about £8,782), 1 apartment; G2: 400,000 CNY (about £43,912), 3 apartments; G3: 650,000 CNY (about £71,358), 1 apartment;
<b>Zhao family</b>	G1, G2, G3; Mrs. Zhao (G2)	G2-Teachers' community	G1-Retired Teacher. G2-Retired doctor, professor. G3-Both sales supervisors.	G1: 70,000CNY (about £7,684), 1 apartment; G2: 250,000CNY (about £27,445); 2 apartments; G3: 250,000CNY (about £27,445)
<b>Xing family</b>	G1, G2, G3; Mrs. Xing (G3)	G3-Private-sector development community	G1-Retired civil servant. G2-Retired workers. G3-Civil servant, editor.	G1: 60,000CNY (about £6,586), 2 apartments; G2: 80,000CNY (about £8,782), live in G2-S1 parents' apartment; G3: 150,000CNY (about £16,467) live with mother-in-law
<b>Huo family</b>	G1, G2, G3; Mr. Huo (G2)	G2-Teachers' community	G2-Accounting manager, nurse. G3-Financial assistant.	G1: 70,000CNY (about £7,684), 1 apartment; G2: 220,000CNY (about £24,152); 2 apartments; G3: 130,000CNY (about £14,271), 1 apartment
<b>Fu family</b>	G2, G3; Mrs. Fu (G2)	G2-Private-sector development community	G2-Retired doctor, retired professor. G3-Both designers.	G2: 220,000CNY (about £24,152); 2 apartments; G3: 800,000CNY (about £87,825), 2 apartments
<b>Wang family</b>	G1, G2, G3; The helper; Mr. Wang (G2)	G2-Teachers' community	G1-Retired professional technician. G2-Professor, editor. G3-Designer	G1: 80,000CNY (about £8,782), 1 apartment; G2: 250,000CNY (about £27,445); 2 apartments; G3: 200,000CNY (about £21,956), 1 apartment
<b>Han family</b>	G2, G3; Mrs. Dong (G3)	G3-Private-sector development community	G2-Private business. G3-Design manager, professional technician.	G2: 80,000CNY (about £8,782); 2 apartments; G3:700,000CNY (about £76,847), 1 apartment; preparing to buy an apartment in a good school district
<b>Kong family</b>	G2, G3; Mrs. Kong (G3)	G3-Private-sector development community	G2-Retired worker, salesman. G3-Housewife, design manager.	G2: 80,000CNY (about £8,782); G3: 400,000CNY (about £43,912), 2 apartments

<sup>20</sup> According to recent research, middle-class household income of new tier-one cities ranges from 200K–1,500K CNY per year (£21,827-£163,705) (Hoogewerf, 2018);100K–960K CNY per year (£10,913-£104,771) according to World Bank (2017).

As Table 4-6 shows, the participants own more than one apartment per household. Their households have a decent income, and they are in well-respected occupations as a result of their high education level (all at least have graduated from university, and some have even studied abroad). These ten participant families include seven families of three generations and three families of two generations.

In this study, the pension of retired people in Tianjin is made up generally of two pillars: the first from the workplace and the second from the central government, which is only eligible to urban retirees. Also, various private pension schemes have emerged, which allow the middle-class G3 to plan for their later life financially. In this study, the pension is the two-pillar (state, occupational and without commercial insurance) model, which includes money from both the state and their occupation.

#### **4.4.4 The process of semi-structured interviews**

In order to warm my participants up and gather baseline data, the researcher developed a questionnaire to assist (see Appendix C). It helped to open the topic smoothly and explained the topic as a steppingstone. In particular, the participants usually began by talking about friends' family problems instead of themselves, which is also a way of speaking about their interests. The interview conversations were mainly informal communication (see appendix D), such as leading them to talk about participants' preferences for their later life.

Before observing the day-to-day activities of middle-class families, I explained to each family what I was investigating and why this was the way to gather data. Since they carried out various practices without reflecting much about them, they saw no need to explore these everyday routines. However, Gilroy (2005) has pointed out that an interview is held in the participants' home not only because they feel in control, but also that it is important to see how these middle-class families organize their homes and care problems. Participants can not readily comprehend what my strategy is, and why I carry out regular visits and have an interest in their daily practices, which they believe is not necessary for a foreign PhD student. Although my interviewees were mainly senior intellectuals, they still had little knowledge of qualitative research methods. They asked me repeatedly, 'what exactly is your subject? Why are you involved in these routine observations rather than, as most planners do, planning ageing communities?' I think the qualitative approach has a long way to go in making itself understood in China.

## **4.5 Analysis and evaluation**

### **4.5.1 Rich data and analysis**

The author is a well-trained, professional researcher who works to avoid bias and makes accurate and timely notes. For example, to eliminate my own shortcomings in data interpretation and as an internal audit process, interview results and the next-stage strategy were sent to each of my supervisors monthly via email to validate how much agreement there was on outcomes and analysis (Roberts and Priest, 2006). To make sure of the accuracy of transcription, I took notes during the conversation and observed everyday life during visits to the participants' homes. During the focus groups, I recorded the discussion, but in people's homes with more private talk, they were reluctant to be recorded. Although I explained that the record would not be used except for this research topic, they still refused. Then, I found a way to cope with this: as well as notes and observations, and I made voice memos describing conversations and kept a written research diary.

Silverman (2015) suggested that researchers should analyse a small set of qualitative data at the initial stage, aiming to build up a grounded theory by coding and interpreting data. After the grounded theory is discovered, the research should keep the analysis and examine other data, aiming to develop the grounded theory until there is no new information emerging, which is called 'theoretical saturation' (Silverman, 2015, p. 72). According to Yin (2018), his sequential interview suggested that every interview could help us a little bit to build up our research. However, until the end of the research, we may not know exactly how many interviewees are really needed to reach empirical saturation. As a result, we will use the outcomes to improve the theories we use and enforce, as well as debate about the theories. In my fieldwork, I realized that there was a repeated theme when I visited the four families with four generations, who depended on themselves to look after their older family members. Thus, finding more types of practices on eldercare in families was built up in my mind throughout the whole fieldwork period.

Data analysis has resulted in very diverse understandings, as various members of the family have different viewpoints. What is the nature of their relationship--meaning the behaviours and attitudes of two people toward each other? For this, the important point is not only asking whether the meaning is understood – what I understood is what they said to me, but also, I believe 'what they want to tell the researcher and why?' (Vogel, 2013, p. 272). Moreover, the analysis of qualitative longitudinal data does not have a normative structure; studies differ according to scope, are

context-specific and have research objectives, queries and conceptual frameworks (Croucher *et al.*, 2020). In this piece of research, NVIVO 11 was used to help store and classify the data, which aims to understand ‘how care might shift across generations as well as whether it differed from family to family’ (Powell, 2018, p. 108). To increase reliability, coding key words and repeated themes in focus group discussions and interviews were used (Powell, 2018). The family cases were collected in the software and were organized as case node files. At this stage, it should be noted that the repeated words and themes may not indicate the saturation level of information, meaning that maybe my study is too large and needs more detailed analysis (Silverman, 2015). Therefore, the key words used in NVIVO were updated and changed during the process of analysis.

In detailed, this process follows the criteria of Straussian grounded theory. For example, an interview, conducted with a family, was transcribed by the researcher. The analysis of this interview started with transcribing the recording and then converting the voice into Chinese text. The researcher asked interviewees to read the text for accuracy. Then it was translated into the English version. Following that, the researcher began the actual analysis by reading the text line by line and labelling important words or key points (Halaweh, 2012). For example, when I asked one of my interviewees ‘how do you think about filial piety? Do you feel the challenge to fulfil its disciplines?’ the participant replied:

*It is impossible for me to be a filial child in the traditional lens, I think.  
Because I am the only child in my family, and I already settle down in the  
USA.*

This small extract indicates how underlining was used to highlight important codes. The author reviewed those keywords ‘traditional lens’ ‘only child’ ‘settle down in the USA’ and re-thought what filial piety is asking people to do is; the challenge for an only child to care for older parents; and the difficulties for internal or external immigrants. The initial understanding was that geographic proximity is an essential consideration. ‘The only child generation’ was also a critical code that could identify the interviewees. Until all possible concepts and categories were identified, the investigator continued this process, resulting in the completion of open coding (Halaweh, 2012).

In the axial coding stage, the relationships between categories are identified (Halaweh, 2012). More than one person described the same concept, such as the distances between their home and the seniors’ home mentioned by the care workers and older parents. Thus, coding and nodes were

compared and sorted, then found whether they have relations. The researcher selected themes at the final stage, which themes are related to other categories and represent the key area of this study (Halaweh, 2012).

#### **4.5.2 Evaluation of the proposed methodology**

Guba and Lincoln (1989) guidelines were used to test the research process, see also in (Halaweh, 2012, pp. 39,45): firstly, it is credible. The study topics and analytical units were established. Values and perspectives of middle-class families were identified and examined across three generations. A short questionnaire was useful and acted as a warm-up for a discussion or interview. Participant selection was planned to meet the research aim and objectives. The research kept the questionnaires, notes, and sketches, and participants were invited to verify the transcription of each family.

Secondly, its transferability. The generalization of interpreted research is made by concepts and theories rather than statistical generalization. Although findings and new concepts were raised particularly in a small sample of middle-class families, the author explains the methodology practice in detailed, from identifying the research objectives, selecting the research framework, including the methods and skills, to findings, so that other researchers might gain some experiences or references to their own studies.

Thirdly, its dependability. The process of research has been accurately outlined. The mix, reasoning and use of the case study and grounded theory approach for capture and interpretation of data were clearly implemented. Therefore, future researchers may depend on the technique and follow it.

Fourthly, its conformability. In the former section, an example has been taken on how to code and concepts were derived from the transcribed text, and these were arranged to form categories. Thus, several steps were taken to ensure that the data determined the findings, and the developing concepts were based on the participants' interpretations. Through continuous comparative analysis of the data, it can also be considered that these concepts are related to each other systematically and reasonably.

### 4.5.3 Ethical response to the study

The researcher was qualified to conduct research in an ethically responsible manner prior to the fieldwork. I undertook research in accordance with established social science ethical practice, which include informed consent, protecting data and doing the participant no harm (Attuyer et al., 2020); for example, making sure the participants' information was confidential; creating a mosaic of photos<sup>21</sup> of bedridden older adults and older people living with dementia; asking participants' consent to record their voices; respecting their right not to be recorded, etc. Sometimes, participants were reluctant to revisit painful issues and memories of eldercare, which needed to be respected. Overall, the author tried to make casual conversation with participants to obtain more information about their daily practice on eldercare. The daily routine can be shared through relationships of trust, but some issues may not be discussed outside the family circle.

I had a variety of experiences when asking for permission to record. At the very first stage of fieldwork, I organized the focus group and followed the usual procedure of introducing myself, the aim and questions, and at that point asked that if participants minded if there was a recording of the discussion with an emphasis that this would only be used for doctoral research. There were different responses in the two focus groups. The first group said they preferred not to be recorded; but in the second group, the participants accepted to be recorded because I waited until the discussion session to ask. Additionally, I stated it was quite difficult to take notes when many people were speaking at the same time in a lively fashion. This resulted that the participants expressed their agreement to recording this discussion.

In the in-depth interviews, some of the participants gave consent to be recorded at the start of the interviews but in the case of G1 and G2 changed their mind. For example, in the Ye Family, G2-Mrs.Ye consented to be recorded, but after only one question, she asked the researcher 'well, is that enough?', pointing to the researcher's voice recorder, and asked for it to be turned off. That was a new occurrence during my interviews. After my experience of that interview, I would check the interviewees' feeling several times if they would like to continue allow voice recording; if they refused, I would take notes instead. I made a voice recording of myself talking about the findings

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<sup>21</sup> Considering they were unconscious, I finally deleted the mosaic photos and only kept one photo--see figure (6.19), but no facial be shown under the main caregiver's consent.

as soon as possible when the conversation finished and organized my notes and photos to capture an accurate record.

I did not carry out my in-depth interviews from a zero-base, but from a position of some familiarity. It is often taken for granted in Chinese society that if people have invited you to visit their home, in return, you need to prepare some small gifts to show your sincere thanks. Otherwise, people will think your parents have not well educated you, and they will look down on you and your family. For example, a few prepared beforehand gifts (e.g., Bodyshop cream; lipstick; chocolate, etc.) were sent to informants. However, when the researcher visited the interviewees' homes with some fresh fruit, snacks, or vegetables, they seemed happier than those exotic products. They preferred to invite the researcher to have lunch with their family members. This may be reflected that participant had easy access to foreign goods; thus, they were not interested in these gifts very much. Although some of the participants were friends of my parents, I was not very well known to them, nor they to me. They treated me like a stranger, but I established trust after visiting them several times and I tried to do them favours when I visited their home. For example, in Family 1, I helped with haircutting for G1; in Family 2, I helped G2 take groceries to G1's home and other practical chores. The degree of trust that the author inspired in some families resulted in them talking about deeply personal issues, and in some cases that they revealed difficulties arising from the behaviours of some family members.

Lastly, the participants, especially G2 in the focus group, wanted to know further information about the research work; thus, they left details such as their mobile phone number and WeChat account for further contact.

#### **4.5.4 Self-reflection and limitations**

The noted researcher Sherry (2013, p. 278) writes:

*Whilst re-reading my notes during the analysis phase, as I waded my way through years of interview transcripts, observations, and journal entries, I was struck by the intense nature of these interactions, and their impact on me as both a researcher and a person.*

In this quote, Sherry expresses realisation due to the emotional impact of the stories she heard. For such researcher, 'this is not only a journey that we map with the participant but one that we inevitably explore in the context of our own lives' (Attuyer et al., 2020, p. 3). I am an only child

in my family who could not imagine my own later life, especially when parents were frail, but it as if was happening vividly by listening to others' stories. This fieldwork did not proceed in accordance with the research design that was planned, but I found that it was helpful to be open and a good listener.

Several times, I could not find suitable participants, or I was refused interviews by parents after contacting their children. First, there was difficulty having obtained a promise to enter someone's home and revisit informants' homes. To solve this problem, the researcher asked participants through WeChat or their mobile phones first and kept sending messages to ask if the researcher could visit their home. When they agreed, the researcher wanted to prepare some general information; in this, she was guided by her parents, who knew more about these families. For example, I tried to be sensitive to the feelings of the participant by avoiding uncomfortable topic. In Family 4 (G2-Mrs.Zhao's family), G3-Mrs. Jia had married recently, but they did not like to talk about their new in-law. Thus, the researcher tried to avoid questions about that and kept the conversation going smoothly.

Second, there were difficulties in interviewing people's family members. During the fieldwork, I noticed that a person who wanted to be interviewed was struggling due to some care problem, and at that point, they desperately wanted some guidance or were looking for a solution. Conversely, when the investigator discussed with G3 how they would plan to care for their parents in future, the conversation was difficult to initiate. Besides, I often encountered the problem that second generation family members did not want me to approach third generation family members (for example, in Families 3, 4 and 6). When the interview began, G2 always told me that 'the younger generation are all so busy that we even have no time to see him/her'. Or 'we would not like to disturb him/her, and she/he is far too busy'. Thus, I could only leave the questionnaire with their parents when G3 had time to complete it. Moreover, in Family 2, when I interviewed G3, G2 always listened and responded first, rather than letting their daughter reply. This means that in some circumstances, G3 was not necessarily free to speak as they might wish. Thus, observation had to be relied on to draw out complex relationships.

Lastly, there were difficulties in recording people's voices. As this author has written before, it was tough to persuade people to be recorded. After self-reflection, several reasons emerged. First, G1 may be fearful of being recorded because of memories and possibly trauma relating to the



Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), when it was vital to not be seen as a rightist. It might well instil fear in them due to leaving a traceable record of their views. Second, G2 might want to show the family's good energy to others but might be reluctant to be drawn into disclosing issues that reflect poorly on their families. More trust was needed for this to happen. Third, G3 was relatively open-minded in consenting to be recorded but was reluctant to be photographed, which was the reverse situation of their parents and grandparents.

The focus group data was not discussed in this study since its main function was to recruit participants and inform their families about the research. Only three generations volunteered to be interviewed as part of this study and given the difficulty in finding informants among strangers it was determined that this recruitment method might be more likely to succeed.

Some constraints of semi-structured interviews, such as researcher bias, may arise during fieldwork. It is unavoidable that the author will involve herself in some situations, such as overhearing stories about unfaithful behaviour, or learning about G1's problems, and so on. Although emotional sentiments cannot be avoided, the researcher's professional expertise has enabled her to think in a relatively distanced way. A yearlong course in HASS (Human and Social Science, Newcastle University), improved my critical thinking and reflection skills in research. In addition, the stringent interpretation process aids the researcher in reflecting on fieldwork practice and making appropriate adjustments to my interpretations and methods.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed the process of this research design and how this was carried out in the field. In this real-world engagement, some unplanned problems were encountered, such as the difficulty in establishing trust with participants, their attitudes to recording, and problems in hearing from all generations. It was a delight to me that, with the aid of my parents and drawing on existing acquaintance, ten willing families were recruited. In total, ten families were visited during this fieldwork, including seven families with three generations, and three families with two generations. They will be introduced in the next chapter and the city where the case study was located (Tianjin).



## **Chapter 5. Background of the city and the families**

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## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter acts as a preface to the next three field chapters that set out the narratives of the ten families. This chapter's first section allows readers to identify the history, location, and the standard of living in the city of Tianjin. The second section addresses the background and family relationships of the interviewees.

## **5.2 City of Tianjin**

### **5.2.1 History and development**

Tianjin is a port and coastal city that opened to the outside world during the Qing dynasty (1636–1912), from which time it has maintained its position as the economic centre of northern China. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, together with Beijing and Shanghai, it was identified as one of the first batch of cities to become a municipality (the city under the jurisdiction of the central government). Until 2006, the State Council reviewed and approved the *Tianjin City Master Plan (2005-2020)*, which clearly positions Tianjin as an international port city, a northern economic centre and an ecological city. However, Tianjin's economic performance has deteriorated in recent years, resulting in its downgrading to a tier-two city. Only nine years later, the Central Leader Group adopted and launched a new plan to integrate the resources of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei and coordinate development, which meant that a new plan was developed which would focus on regional cooperation and reallocation of resources (Liu and Cao, 2017). Tianjin is the second-largest megacity after Beijing in the Jing (Beijing)-Jin (Tianjin)-Ji (Hebei) region (Xin Hua News, 2019); the city is adjacent to Bohai Bay (see Figure 5-1 below).



Figure 5-1: Jing (Beijing)-Jin (Tianjin)-Ji (Hebei) region and location of Tianjin

Tianjin has been well known as a major port since the Sui dynasty (581–618 CE) and the development of the Grand Canal in China. The urban plan is influenced by the direction of the *Haihe* river. Urban construction was influenced by Western-style types of building with the signing of the Treaties of Tianjin which opened the city to foreign trade from 1858. Due to the importance of its location, Tianjin became a vital port that connected the northern and southern parts of China and was an important node of communication between neighbouring countries. As a result, Tianjin has become a world-famous port city with a throughput of more than 100 million tons, dozens of routes, and trade connections with 168 countries in 2004 (Tianjin Local History Compilation Committee Office, 2005).

Tianjin has a total population of 15.59 million (Tianjin Statistical Bureau, 2019). The non-resident population of 4.99 million migrant workers accounts for 32% of the permanent population, (Tianjin Statistical Bureau, 2019; HKTDC Research, 2020). The older adults (age 60 and over) reached a total of 2.59 million, which accounts for 23.97% of the total population (Tianjin Civil Affairs Bureau, 2019). Tianjin focuses on secondary and tertiary industries, accounting for more than 99% of the total industrial production of the city (Tianjin Statistical Bureau, 2019). For instance, Tianjin was one of China’s earliest pilot bases for the circular economy, a national-level

neo-industrialization base for electronics, automotive and petrochemicals, and a national-level innovation and entrepreneurship base for senior talent returning from overseas (Deloitte Global, 2017).



Figure 5-2: Tianjin city's industry plans (resource from Deloitte Global 2017)

By virtue of its proximity to the capital, Tianjin is a popular choice for industries wanting to relocate from Beijing, offering a lower level of required investment in land or buildings, a pleasanter environment and easier transport. Since 2014, Beijing has planned to further develop its focus on political and cultural functions, which is an increasing trend (Liu and Cao, 2017). The high-speed railway development of 2008 means that travel time between Beijing and Tianjin has been cut from two hours to around 30 minutes (Liu and Cao, 2017). Also, the (Tianjin) Pilot Free Trade Zone (TJFTZ) project was officially launched in April 2015. As the first free trade zone in northern China, Tianjin's strategic position will be linked to the coordinated development of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei (Tianjin Local History Revision Committee, 2015). This plan may be traced back to 1980, when the economic reform policies of Deng Xiaoping took shape. Indeed, during these early years, it was understood that Tianjin would become a free trade zone like Hong Kong.

Tianjin has a continental climate, which means that it is cold but has sunny winters, and hot, sultry and rainy summers. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's rating, Tianjin has been described as being a 'liveable'<sup>22</sup> city, ranking third in mainland China (77th in the world), following behind Suzhou (ranking first) and Beijing (ranking second) (Feng, 2018). The list of global liveable cities was assessed using five aspects: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure. After all, Tianjin is a comfortable coastal city, which has a

<sup>22</sup> The concept of livability is simple: it assesses which locations around the world provide the best or the worst living conditions. (Resource from <https://www.eiu.com/topic/liveability> ).

concentration of middle-class families and whose population of older people is nearly one-quarter of the total.

### 5.2.2 Life in Tianjin

Compared with tier-one cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen) a higher standard of living, Tianjin is a less economically stressful city. However, among other tier-two cities, it has the highest ratio of housing prices to income in that it is higher than 60% [up to 63.3%] (Mu, 2020). Thus, the stress on people of dealing with affordability or pressure in housing markets to deliver more is still dramatically high.

There are mainly four types of property in the urban area, including *lao-po-xiao* (old-poor-small) communities, ungated communities (work unit properties), commercial communities (like gated communities) and luxury villas.

Table 5-1: Community types in Tianjin

<b>Community type</b>	<b>Mode of governance</b>	<b>Residents</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b><i>Lao-po-xiao</i> community, old community built before 2000.</b>	Administered by lowest governmental organisation, such as street committee	Working class, lower-middle class	Ready to be demolished in three years; located in the inner-city area; low quality of facilities
<b>Ungated community (work unit)</b>	Welfare-style governance	Lower-middle class	Normally built in the 1980s–90s
<b>Gated community (private-sector development)</b>	Ownership-based governance	New or middle-middle class	More green spaces, better facilities and parking places, etc.
<b>Luxury villa</b>	Collective-based governance	Upper-middle class	Normally a holiday house located on the edge of the urban area

Source: (Breitung, 2012).

Interviewees in this study were mainly concentrated in the ungated and gated (private-sector development) community. The teachers' community is a kind of work unit apartment that is only sold to teachers. It is easy to draw comparisons of gated and ungated (former work unit) communities, as the latter has a close social network, while the new commercial community is developed by real-estate companies, where the residents are living with people unfamiliar to them; but each has similar social status, a good school district and convenient service resources.

Location is an important factor that influences the price of housing (see Figure 5-3). Higher-priced properties are closer to the city centre, and the highest prices are in Heping district because of the best education resources. According to the prices in six districts in Tianjin, a three-room apartment



(about 100 m<sup>2</sup>) costs around 2.4 million CNY<sup>23</sup> (about £275,068) to 5 million CNY (about £573,057). Considering the price of properties is continually increasing; it is understandable that middle-class households take their investment in the real-estate market seriously.

**Beijing city**



Figure 5-3: House prices in different districts in Tianjin ([www.LianJia.com](http://www.LianJia.com))

During the interviews, it was evident that people’s material life, for example their income and living conditions, had changed dramatically over three generations. Following the economic

<sup>23</sup> CNY: Chinese Yuan

reforms post-1978, the real-estate market experienced high-speed development, and Tianjin, as a tier-two city, was no exception. Co-residence and extended families, once a normative situation, is no longer common or seen as valued by multiple generations, which results in more complex situations in caring for older people and children.

### 5.2.3 Increasing number of older people and responses

Tianjin has 2.59 million older adults, which accounts for 23.97% of its total population (Civil Affairs Bureau, 2019). In the end of 2014, the local government of Tianjin launched a policy on ageing. This policy, named ‘Accelerating the construction of elderly services in Tianjin’ (*Tianjin shi yanglao fuwu cujin tiaoli*), set out to integrate community-based and institution-based services (Tianjin Civil Affairs Bureau, 2018). In 2016, the Tianjin government also reported on the pension situation of the city, which already covered more than 80% of older people (Tianjin Municipal People's Government, 2016). At the end of 2018, there was a total of 1301 day care centres serving older people and 10,000 beds in care homes (Tianjin Statistical Bureau, 2019). According to the standard of 30 beds per thousand older people in care homes, there is a shortfall of 11,000 care beds for frail older people, and the provision only covers 24% of communities (Tianjin Civil Affairs Bureau, 2019). The rising number of older people has prompted the local government to act, but arguably more reforms are needed. The Table 5-2 below provides information on private institutions in the Jing-Jin-Ji area. It has been shown that beds for the seniors are already in short supply though, private aged care institutions have a relatively low occupancy rate.

Table 5-2: General information of private seniors’ homes in the Jing-Jin-Ji region

Area	Project	Location	Management mode	Up-to-date sale situation
Beijing	Taishen xianghe (太申祥和)	Beiqing Road, Changping District, Beijing	Operating on a business (membership fee: 200–500,000 CNY; first three years free from monthly fee; catering and medical fee not included)	Started in 2002, a total of more than 1000 members, more than 500 permanent members. First membership care home in China.
	Yaoyang guoji (曜阳国际)	Xi Tian Ge Zhuang Town, Miyun County, Beijing	Apartments for sale and rent. For sale: 14,000 CNY/m <sup>2</sup> ; for rent: 58,000 CNY/year (catering fee not included)	Started on site in October 2010 and sold out in April 2011.
	Dongfang taiyangcheng (东方太阳城)	Chao Bai river bridge, Shunyi District, Beijing	Apartments for sale (16,000 CNY/m <sup>2</sup> )	Between 2008 and 2012, first and second parts were sold out; third part on sale includes: 2000 apartments at 16,000 CNY/m <sup>2</sup> , 125 villas at 30,000 CNY/m <sup>2</sup> , but they have not sold well.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Management mode</b>	<b>Up-to-date sale situation</b>
<b>Tianjin</b>	Binhai yunshanzhen (滨海云杉镇)	Niu Kou Dao Town, Baodi District, Tianjin	For sale and rent. For sale: around 1,000,000 CNY for one apartment; for rent: 30,000 CNY/year (not including catering and medical fees)	Started in 2012; signed-up membership only 50, considering that there is space for about 300 persons.
	Yongtai hongkan (永泰红磡)	Li Shuang Road, Jinnan District, Tianjin	Holding business (annual fee: 60,000 CNY)	Have not sold well.
<b>Hebei</b>	Taida guoji jiankangcheng (燕达国际健康城)	Yanjiao high tech industrial development zone	For sale and rent. For sale: 1,680,000 CNY/ apartment; for rent: from 8,000 CNY/month	Started in 2010; residential rate was 50%, until 2014, fallen to around 10%. Tenant moved out.

*Source: (Liu et al., 2018).*

The high vacancy rate is partly because the prices are too high for middle incomers or pensioners in Tianjin, and they misjudged the demand that the offer of these homes, e.g., private space, food, care is what people want. More importantly, these locations are far away from the city centre or old district where older people concentrate.

The average pension in Tianjin is 3032 CNY (about £340) per month and an older person with this pension cannot afford to live in these developments, demonstrating that they are geared to higher-income groups. However, even middle-class retirees, with higher pensions of perhaps more than £1000 a month, would find it difficult to afford to live in these private institutions. They prefer to see it as an investment to own another property, which means that they gather family members' savings to buy that apartment, not to live in, but aiming to sell it for a better price or give it to their children.

### 5.3 Interviewing the families

In this study, ten families were recruited to the research to discuss their care practices. Details of these are presented and analysed in the three fieldwork chapters that follow. Here, each family is presented as a cast of characters who later tell their stories. Family names have been altered to preserve confidentiality.

The first group, in Chapter 6, are four families who take the traditional path of *relying on themselves*. These are the Li, Hao, Xing and Huo families. The second group, in Chapter 7, presents three families, Ye, Zhao and Wang, who choose to use *additional help*. This illustrates the situation of those families that cannot meet older members' needs by themselves. There is a trend of market-based support being blended with family care. The third group, in Chapter 8, presents three families *whose G1 is no longer alive*, which means that those in G2 are the oldest members in their family. These families, the Kong, Han, and Fu families, are considering their future plans for ageing.

Each family is now presented in more detail, providing a statistical profile with an emphasis on education, income, and property. A family structure figure shows the relationships between family members. The blue line in each figure shows who have been interviewed in this study, and the red line shows the gatekeeper (the person in each family who was first approached and introduced me to the family). The generations are expressed as G1 (grandparents: mainly in their 80s), G2 (older parents: usually in their 50s–60s), G3 (adult children: around 30). D and S denote sons and daughters. In families with more than one child, each is given a numerical identifier according to their birth order. For example, the oldest daughter in the Li family in generation two is described as G2-D1, and her younger brother as G2-S2, and so on.

G2 can be described as being to the third age – early retirees in good health – in this study and G1 is of the fourth age, who is, in some extent, experiencing frailty and needs varying levels of support. This is a major discourse and symbolic indicator of the late-life boundaries between health and disability, and by implication, what is anticipated in relation to such a late-life agency (Baars and Dohmen, 2013, p. 57).

### 5.3.1 Changes in the historical texture

Although lifestyle changes continually occur because of technological advances, historical events over the last century have impacted dramatically on people’s lives, creating great generational differences. The Figure 5-4 shows the historical experiences in the early years of G1, G2 and G3’s life stories.

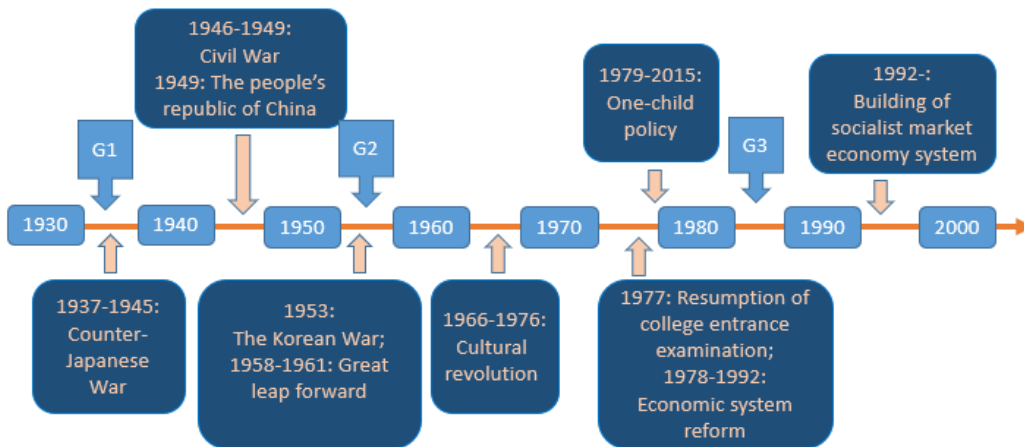


Figure 5-4: Timeline of historical events in China

The three generations belong to different historical cohorts, with very different memories and life stories. These three generations have experienced totally different social welfare policies, which result in totally different social norms, values, and family structures (Xie, 2013). Until now, G1 has struggled with survival and making a living throughout most of their lifetime. G2 endured widespread hunger, insecurity, and a lack of schooling during their early years. To earn a better standard of living than their parents, G2 had to rely on themselves. G3 was born in a comparatively harmonious, increasingly stable, and neo-liberal country, but they are the one-child generation, and potentially the only one-child generation, who, soon, will face the dilemma of taking care of their older parents, (see age range of G1/G2/G3, Table 5-3).

Table 5-3: Generation age range in this study (interviewees)

Age range in the study	G1	G2	G3
Year-old	79-87	47-69	25-41
Born-year	1940-1932	1972-1950	1994-1978

The Confucian principle of filial piety is a strong link binding these three generations together, but in the Maoist era much of the care for older people and children was taken over by government and delivered through state-run work units. However, this was also a time when all three generations lived together, delivering inter-generational support. Another dramatic change occurred after the economic reforms (after 1979), when many state-run enterprises were failing and closed along with the clinics, nurseries, and community support that they ran. Since then, several policies have been launched that place the responsibility of caring for older people (and young children) on families, reinvigorating the idea of filial piety. However, a lasting change is that gender equality in the labour market has become firmly rooted in China from the Maoist era onwards. Women's social economic status may be enhanced but they are assumed to take on double duty, with work outside the home and care of the home and those within it.

Moreover, due to the one-child policy, the normal family size shrank. In November 2015, the government abolished the one-child policy, enabling women to have a second child without seeking permission; however, the fertility rate has not increased as expected (BBC News, 2018). The government is facing challenges that is exemplified by its weak reaction to a historic policy reform (Kiprop, 2020). The Chinese 7<sup>th</sup> census, which was issued this month (May 2021), revealed that about 12 million infants were born last year, down from 18 million in 2016 and the lowest number of births since the 1960s (BBC News, 2021). The policy of one-child was suspended but the cohort of the only-child will position between their parents, with their potential care needs, and their children, and they will need support in the future when they grow up and have a family of their own. Lately, a policy has implemented to allow a couple to have a third child in June 2021 (BBC News, 2021), which has been shown the low fertility causing worries by the authority, but who will have the third baby and whose family can afford three children, which urban citizens doubt (The Economist, 2021).

### 5.3.2 Families who *depend on themselves*

There are four families in this group: the Li, Hao, Xing and Huo families. They take the traditional path by relying on themselves.

#### 5.3.2.1 *The Li family*

The Li family is made up of four generations: the G1 couple; three daughters in G2 and their husbands; three only children in G3; and two little girls in G4.

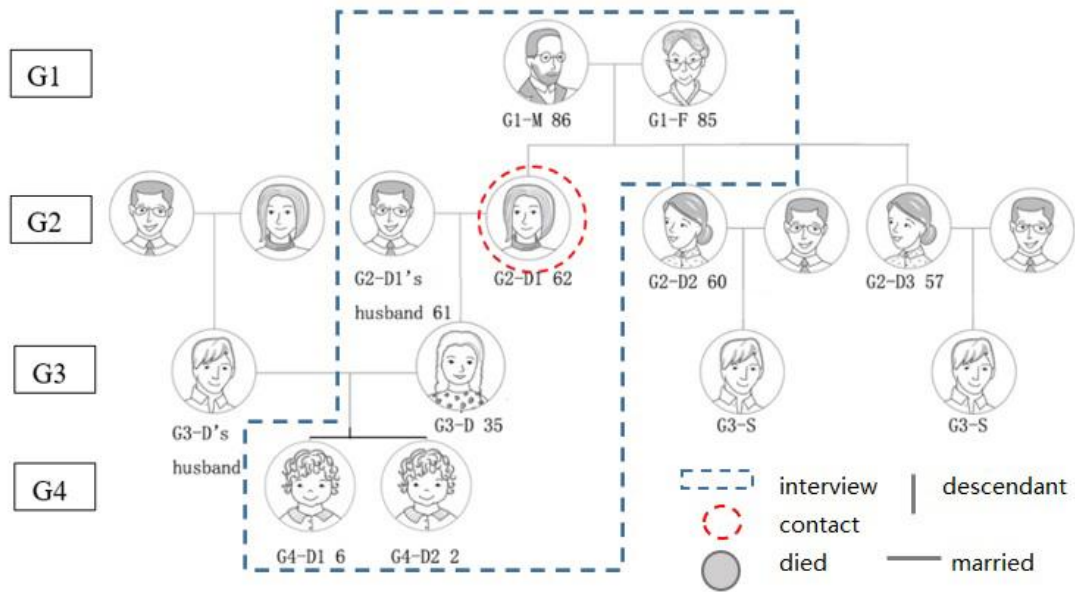


Figure 5-5: *The Li family*

The interviews with the Li family focused primarily on the G2-D1 family, including the G1 couple, G2-D1 and her husband, as well as their daughter. G2-D2 sometimes also took part in our discussions. Their family tradition is that every Wednesday, G2-D1 and G2-D2 visit their parents; sometimes G2-D1's husband comes with her to help, sometimes G3 (her daughter) takes her little daughters to visit G1 together.

The G1 couple are very healthy. Mr. G1 encountered difficult times both before and after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Though retired, he is still reading and writing, and he has written countless articles. He also contributed, as he said, to university administration, such as the School of Electrical Engineering, Humanities and Law. His writings show that he is a hard-working scholar. Mrs. G1, when she was a teenager, came to Tianjin from a south-eastern city with her older sister and brother. In her marriage, Mrs. G1 takes on all the responsibilities of

the household. Up until now, she has been taking care of her husband and giving her granddaughter money.

G2 consists of three daughters. They all have an undergraduate degree, which for the people of their generation is rare. G3 consists of one female and two males. All the boys in G3 have worked overseas and now live in the United States. Except for them, all the Li family members live close by. This geographical proximity is also seen in other families in this category who depend on each other to take care of older family members.



### 5.3.2.2 The Hao family

The Hao family is made up of four generations: Mr. G1 (82 years old), two daughters and two sons in G2, and four only children in G3, with only one girl in G4.

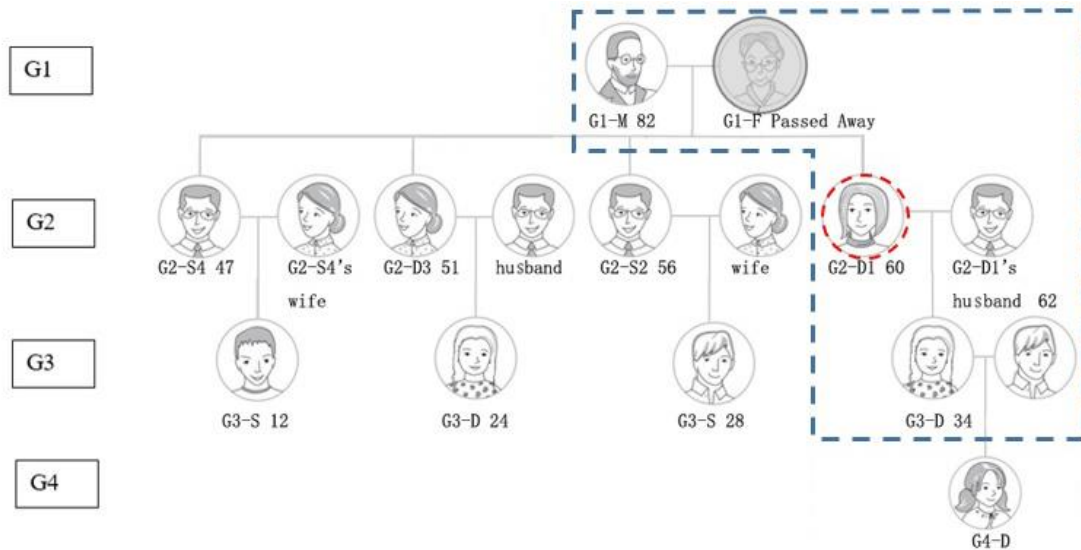


Figure 5-6: The Hao family

The contact person in the Hao family is G2-D1, who was introduced by another participant. She hospitably invited the researcher to visit her home and actively participated in interviews. However, when the researcher asked to contact her husband and daughter, she politely refused. After several visits, G1, G2-D3 and G2-S4 were successfully interviewed, but G2-D1's husband and daughter briefly filled in questionnaires.

Mrs. G1 passed away several years ago, and now Mr. G1 lives alone but he is in good health and seems younger than his age. He looks after himself, and his youngest son (G2-S4) visits him regularly. In the Hao family, most of G2 are working in the same university except for G2-S2, including G2-D1 and her husband, G2-D3, G2-S4 and his wife. G2-D3's husband also works in an American university where he had obtained a doctorate. Only G2-S2 is the manager of a local factory, and he is a specially appointed government experts and obtain bonuses because he has contributed to countless technical breakthroughs.

Two of the G3 (children of G2-S2 and G2-D3) work in the United States and are thinking about staying there. The daughter of G2-D1 already holds a master's degree from a university in the United States and has returned to Tianjin.

### 5.3.2.3 The Xing family

The Xing family is made up of four generations: Mrs. Xing (83) in G1; three sons in G2; three only children in G3; and three girls in G4.

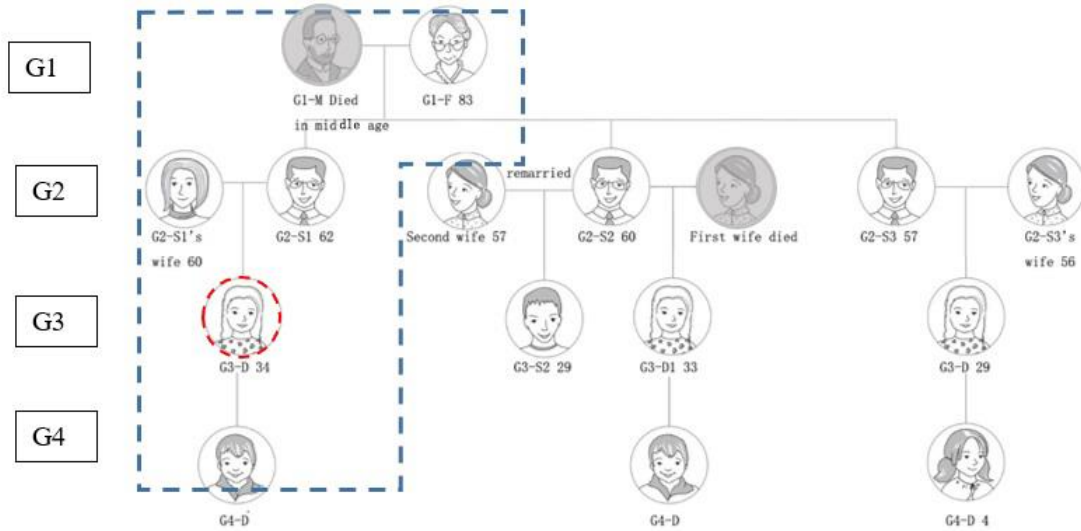


Figure 5-7: The Xing family

The gatekeeper of the Xing family is one of the G3, who is the daughter of G2-S1. The conversations took place between the researcher and G2-S1, his wife and their daughter (G3) separately. Mrs. G1 has been suffering from dementia for more than five years. The researcher paid particular attention to the observation and interpretation of the care practices because of her health condition.

In the Xing family, the G1 couple were middle class, because Mr. G1 used to be the head of a school and owned two apartments, but he died when he was 50. Mrs. G1 (83) used to be a civil servant who worked in the street office (the lowest level of government in China) and she has a decent pension after she retired. However, most of G2 seemed to lose their middle-class status. Two sons in G2 were laid off and only G2-S2 kept his job and status as a prosecutor. G2-S2 is divorced from his first wife, who subsequently committed suicide. Afterwards he remarried and could have a second child.

Their frail mother (Mrs. G1) is looked after by her three sons in turn, but most practical support is arranged by the eldest son (G2-S1). In G3, only the daughter of G2-S1 graduated with a master's

degree and works in the education department as a civil servant. The other two girls (G3) are self-employed with high-school diplomas.

#### 5.3.2.4 The Huo family

The Huo family is made up of three generations: the G1 couple, two sons and one daughter in G2, and three only children in G3.

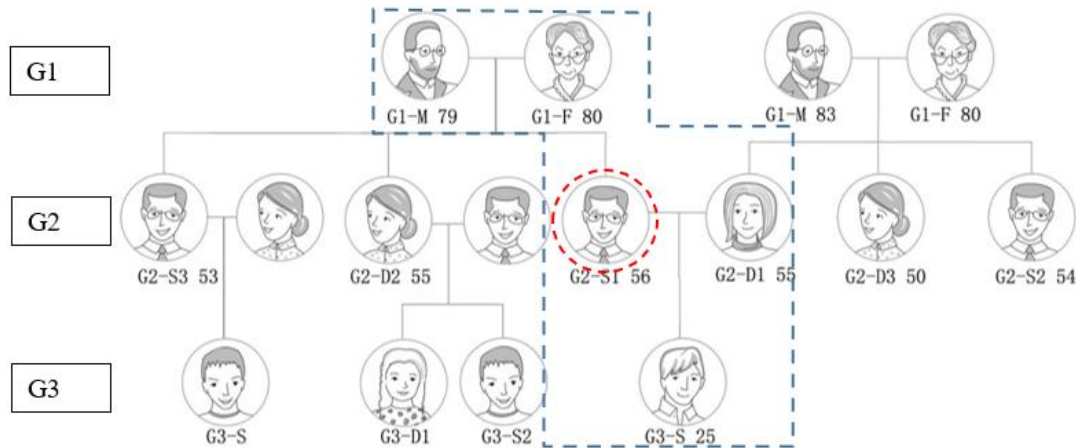


Figure 5-8: The Huo family

G2-S1 was a participant in a focus group who was interested in taking further part in this study. In addition, his wife was also interested and helped the researcher to interview her parents by using a WeChat (a popular Chinese social app like WhatsApp) video call.

The Huo family is relatively younger because G2-S1 (56) still had four years left to reach the required retirement age of 60 in 2019. He has a hobby that already occupies all his spare time. His wife (55) found a part-time job for after her retirement, which would be in September 2019. She also has her activities, such as playing tennis and badminton.

The G1 couple in the Huo family are in good health. But they have no pension, because of Mr. G1's investment losses some decades before. The daughter (G2-D2) married a man in the Tanggu district of Tianjin, but unfortunately, their child has a serious disease. Since then, the G1 couple has moved to help their daughter. They (the G1) live in another apartment that was bought by G2-S3, which is located close to G2-D2's home. Now, it is also convenient for G2-D2 to visit her parents.

G2-S1's wife also has two other siblings; they live in the same city, Xingtai (in Hebei province), as their parents (G1) do. These parents are obviously in a better financial situation than the G1 in

the Huo family. Her father used to be a leader in the town, and he receives a pension of more than 8000 CNY (about £907) monthly.

To sum up, it seems that those families who wish to be self-dependent must meet some or all the following conditions. First, G1 must be in good general health, able to look after themselves, or are married and can take care of each other. Second, at least one child in G2 lives nearby, who can deliver support regularly. Third, their family relationships are good or the financial situation of G1 is relatively comfortable. However, if one of G1 is frail or bedridden, their family resources may be strained, and this may result in asking for additional help. The next section introduces three families who hire domestic helpers to take care of their older parents.

### 5.3.3 Families who ask for additional help

#### 5.3.3.1 The Ye family

The Ye family consists of three generations: a G1 couple, three G2 daughters and three G3 grandchildren.

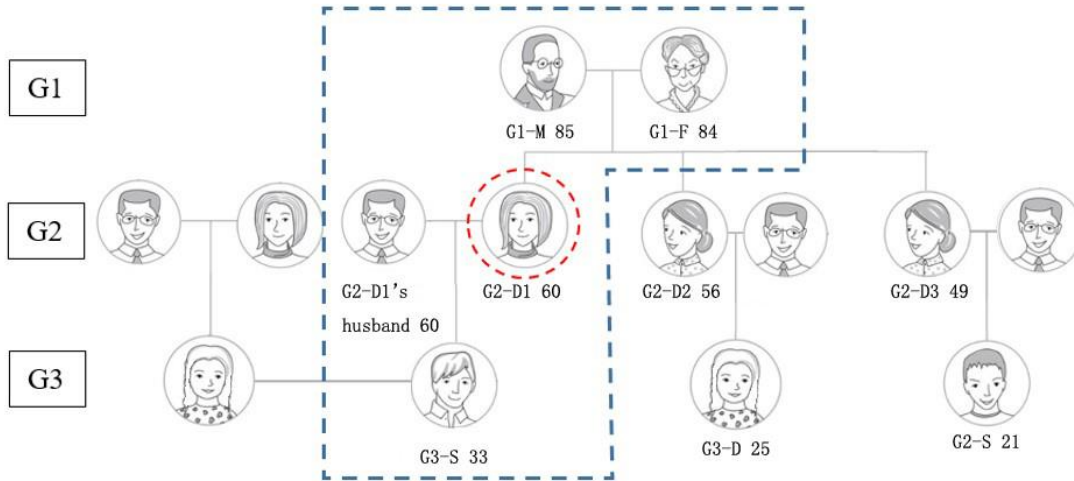


Figure 5-9: The Ye family

The three sisters (G2) have lived in Tianjin since they were born and feel deeply rooted in the city. G2-D3's husband and her son (G3) are working and studying in another city. The son (G3) of G2-D1 and his wife have settled down in the United States. Interview conversations were mostly with Mr. G1, G2-D1 and her husband, and their son (G3) who was interviewed by video call. In addition, G2-D2, G2-D3 and the helper were interviewed separately.

Although there are three daughters in G2, G2-D2 is disabled and cannot deliver physical support to their parents. Mrs. G1 is living with dementia and has been bedridden for five years, with her three daughters' providing care. After Mr. G1 fell recently and suffered a fracture, they (G2) cannot manage any more. They decided to hire a domestic helper even though their father strongly rejected this idea.

The relationships between G2 and G1 are close, because G2 make decisions together and share information by using their WeChat conversation group. For example, G2-D1 took the responsibility to search for a helper and communicates with the nursing home that has supplied

helpers. She takes responsibility for the bank cards of their parents' account and photographs every receipt of what is spent, sharing this on the family WeChat group.

The three sisters (G2) tried to protect their father's feelings about hiring a helper and told him that the helper is a distant relative, knowing that their father would feel more comfortable in asking for her help.

### 5.3.3.2 The Zhao family

The Zhao family is made up of three generations: Mrs. G1, three daughters in G2, and three only children in G3. Their family gatekeeper (who the researcher first caught up with) was G2-D1's husband, who was one of the participants in the focus group. After this conversation, G2-D1 showed much more interest in this study and actively contacted the author.

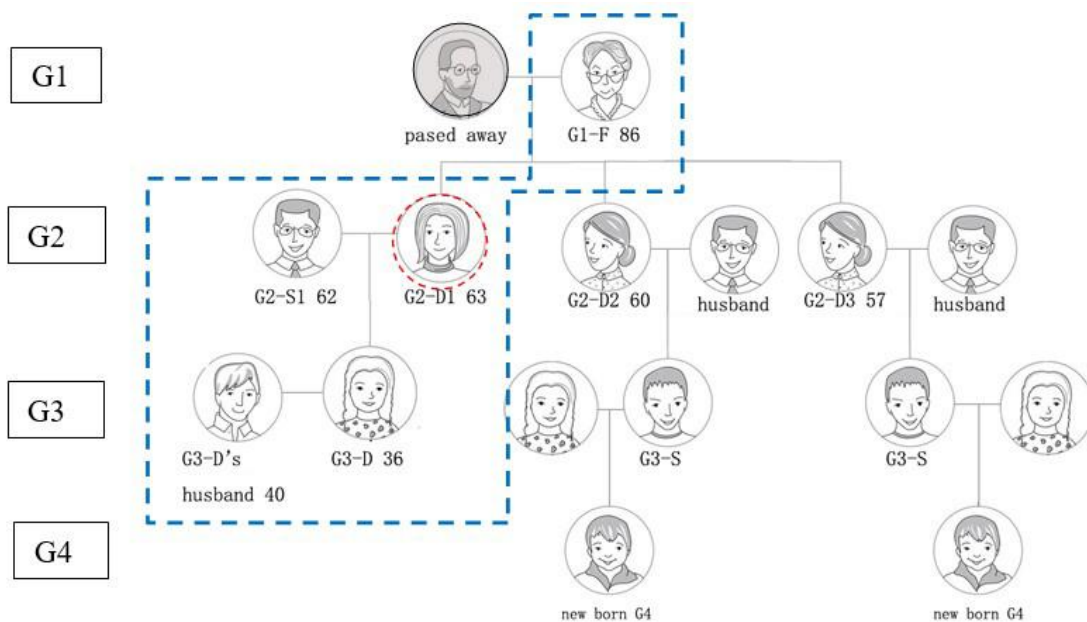


Figure 5-10: The Zhao family

As a result, follow-up talks were held at the home of the Zhao family with G2-D1. Interviews with G2 and G3 were performed face to face, while a video call was made to speak with G1. Mrs. G1 is already 84 years old and has a live-in care worker now, but she is in generally good health.

There are three daughters in G2, but two of them have moved and settled down in Tianjin. In their family, G2-D3 used to take the responsibility of looking after their mother because they lived close to each other in the city of Qiqihar. However, the situation changed when G2-D3 tried to extend her business to Yunnan province in the southeast area of China. G2-D1 persuaded her mother (G1) to come and live with her to overcome this, which she did, but after a year, Mrs. G1 refused to stay, demanding that she return to her own home.



### 5.3.3.3 The Wang family

The Wang family is made up of four generations: the G1 couple, two sons and two daughters in G2, four only children in G3, and a two-year-old girl in G4 who is G2-D3's granddaughter. The interviews with the Wang family concentrated on the G1 couple via video phone call, while G2-S1, his wife and his daughter (G3) were interviewed face to face.

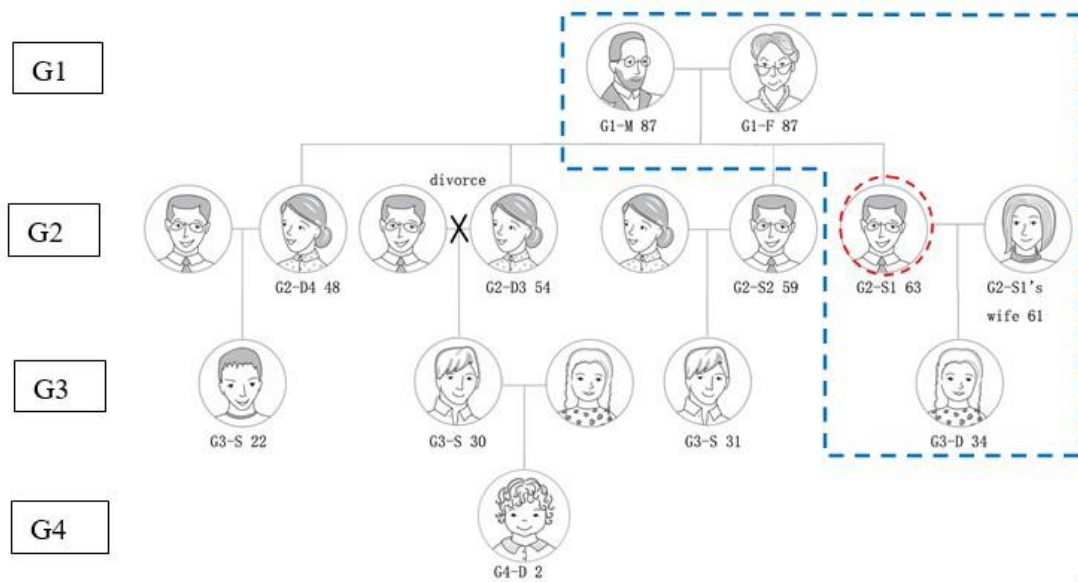


Figure 5-11: The Wang family

Three of G3 live in Shenyang (in Liaoning province in the northeast of China), while their grandparents (G1) and G2-S1 live in Tianjin. G1 live in a relatively new commercial apartment that was bought by G2-D3. In turn, G1 asked G2-S2 to sell their old apartment to fund their later-life expenses.

The G1 couple needed help during this interview period. Mrs. G1 was so frail that she had gone to the hospital emergency room twice during 2019. Thus, the children (G2) tried to hire a helper who could live with the G1 couple to meet their daily needs and deliver timely notification of problems. However, they changed helpers frequently within the year, and it has been a real headache to find a long-term live-in maid.

### 5.3.4 Families who have no G1

This group of three families, unlike the other two groups, have simple family arrangements: they have lost G1, leaving G2 as the oldest generation in their families and are potentially reliant on only one child.

#### 5.3.4.1 The Kong family

The Kong family is made up of three generations: the G2 couple, the G3 couple (the only-child generation), and two children in G4 (see Figure 5-12 below). They (except G3-husband's father), G3-D and her husband, G3-D's parents and her children are co-resident in G3's three-room apartment now. G3 are a new middle-class household in this family.

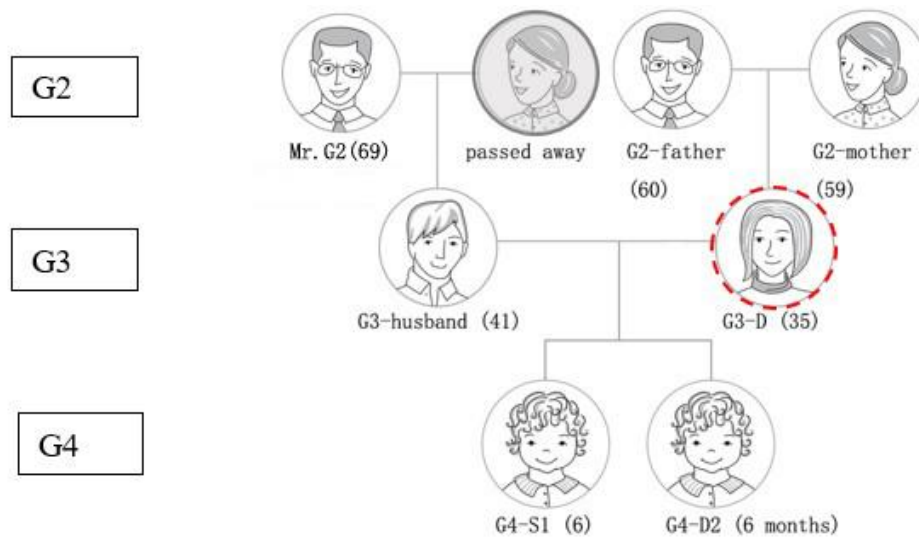


Figure 5-12: The Kong family

Here it may be seen that the family structure is not the typical structure of a '4-2-1' family. Their family structure is a '3-2-2' type. G3 are the backbone generation in this family. G2 (G3-D's parents) in this family belong to the working class: their jobs are worker and salesperson, and their education level is no higher than the high-school diploma. They (G3-D's parents) sold their only property when G3-D asked them to live together.

G3-D's husband has only a father (G2) who lives alone in the countryside in Shanxi province. His mother passed away more than ten years ago. His father is a farmer and plants date palms for a living. The G3 couple takes the G4 children to visit the father once a year.

The G3 couple were classmates during their postgraduate degree. They supported each other when G3-D's husband lost his mother in that period. One may easily believe it when G3-D says that she and her husband have a solid foundation to their relationship. Her husband (G3-S) is an engineer for the national railway company and must travel for his projects, but she has never worried about their relationship even though they may only meet once a month.

There are many lifestyle differences between G2 and G3, and co-residence makes the tensions between them apparent. It is mostly seen in that G2 asks for G3's support directly, and in G3's expectations of caregiving from her parents to their children.

### 5.3.4.2 The Han family

The Han family is made up of three generations, including a G2 couple, a G3 couple and a son in G4. The three generations (G3-husband's parents, G3-husband and G3-wife, and their son G4-S) are co-resident in G3's two-room apartment in Tianjin.

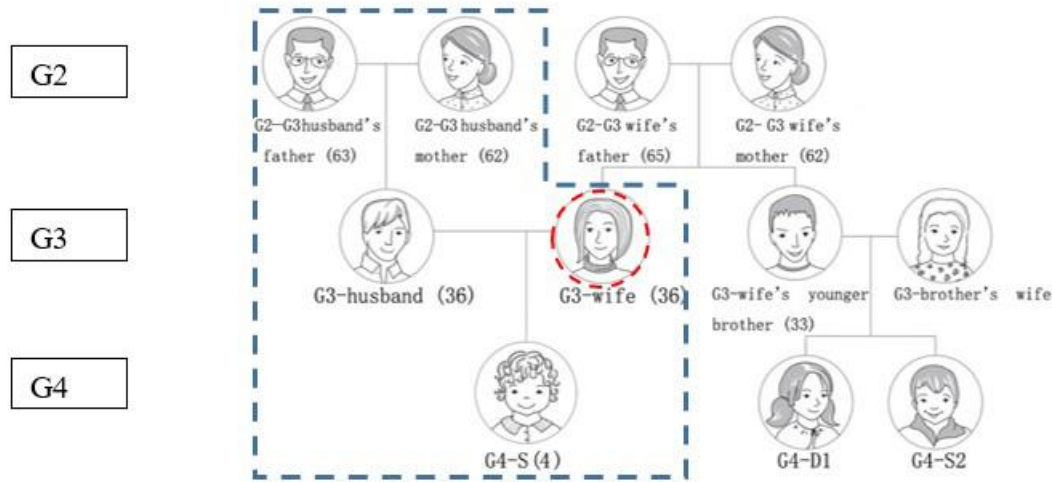


Figure 5-13: The Han family

In the Han family, G3-husband's parents were civil servants in Anshan city (a tier-three city in the northeast of China), Liaoning province. They are believed to be of middle-class status in their hometown; such is their pension, occupation and education level. They (the G2 couple) live together with G3 in G3's apartment in Tianjin because G4 needs to be looked after since G3-D1 went back to work. G2 still keep their apartment in Anshan city for more choices in later life.

Here, some differences have to be addressed. It can be seen from this table that in G3-wife's family, there are (unusually) two children in their family, which means that G3-wife has a younger brother who shares the duty of caring for their parents (G2). Their parents depend on their son (G3-younger brother). Their parents (G2) were farmers at first, who could have a second child if the first child were a girl, but it is difficult to earn a living through farming whilst supporting two children going to college. Then, the G2-couple (G3-wife's parents) started their own business of selling fruit. After a car accident, G3-wife's mother became disabled, and caregiving is provided by her husband. Her parents (G2) now live-in another apartment near their son (G3-younger brother), which were exchanged from their original house and courtyard due to urbanisation.

### 5.3.4.3 The Fu family

The Fu family is made up of three-generation: a G2 couple, a G3 couple and a girl in G4. The G2 couple (G3-S's parents) moved to Qingdao to help G3 take care of G4 since their retirement. The interviews focus on G3-husband's parents and the G3 couple in their family.

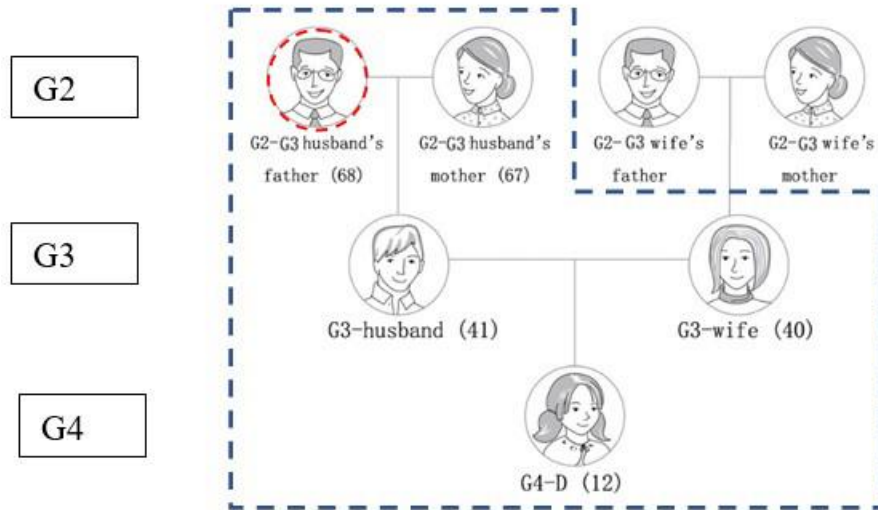


Figure 5-14: The Fu family

There is a typical '4-2-1' family structure in the Fu family. Their G2, namely G3-S's parents, are in the middle social status layer, evidenced by their occupations and pension; also, they own two properties in Tianjin. After they moved to Qingdao city, they sold one of their apartments in Tianjin to purchase a good school district apartment that benefits their granddaughter (G4). Now, they keep one apartment in Tianjin in hand and live in the school district apartment to look after G4.

The G3 couple are classmates from the Architecture School of Qingdao University. They settled down there after graduation and earn sufficient money to have a middle-class lifestyle. They bought an apartment, but it is outside the school district. Their busy working life occupies their time, leaving them without the energy to take care of G4. Therefore, G3-S's parents (G2) decided to provide support after they retired.

## **5.4 Summary**

This chapter aims to situate the fieldwork chapters in context. It has given a simple illustration of the history and living standards of Tianjin. The chapter has also introduced each of the families that will be discussed next. It introduced these families in terms of their backgrounds and their relationships. To symbolize the family members of the interviewee, their family tree has been illustrated by cartoon drawings. I have adopted this approach because it allows the reader to become familiar with these families first before we jump into their family stories more specifically.

**Chapter 6. Families who are dependent on themselves**

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## **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, four families will be introduced: the Li, Hao, Xing and Huo families. These families' first contact person is the G2 generation, that looks after their parents (G1) and delivers support to their adult children (G3) who are now parents themselves to G4. Fortunately, G2 have siblings to divide their responsibility of caring for older parents.

In these four families in the study, the G2 generation delivers intergenerational support to both their adult children (G3) and their older parents (G1). Though guided by filial piety, to understand their family practices, the care practices of each family are dependent on family resources. For example, income and wealth resources; the number of people able to invest time in caring and the number needing care; proximity between family members; the quality and reliability of additional resources.

In the final part of this chapter, a widespread phenomenon will be discussed. The role of the sandwich generation with care demands from their older parents and their grandchildren.

## 6.2 Family stories

### 6.2.1 Li family

The Li family comprises four generations: the G1 couple, three daughters in G2 and their husbands, three only children in G3 and two little girls in G4.

*Table 6-1: Resources of Li family*

Resources		Participants	Occupation	Education	Money
People	G1	Male (86), female (85).	Retired professor. Retired technician in the lab.	Bachelor's degree	Pension: 7000 CNY (about £809); 6000 CNY (about £693) (per month). Own a property in which to live in Tianjin
	G2	D1 (62), her husband, Mr Li (61).	Retired doctor. Retired professor but rehired by a private college.	Bachelor's degree, PhD degree.	Pension: 8000+ CNY (about £925); 8000 CNY (about £925) and 4500 CNY (about £520) salary (per month). Own two properties in Tianjin: one for G2 to live in, one for G3 to live in
		D2 (60)	Retired civil servant	Bachelor's degree	Pension: 8000+ CNY (about £925) (per month). Own two properties in Tianjin: one for G2 to live in, one for investment
		D3 (57)	Self-employed	Bachelor's degree	Own two properties in Beijing. One for G2 to live in, one for investment. Her son is in the U.S.
	G3	G2-D1's daughter (34), her husband (35).	Housewife. Researcher in a medical company.	Bachelor's degree	Previously a manager in a private company, with a salary of 200K CNY (about £23,125) per year. More than 250K (about £28,907) per year.
G4	D1 (6) D2 (2)				
Social circle		Neighbours, clinic, market	Mrs. G1's younger sister lives in the same community as the G1 couple. They meet each other very often.		

G1's two eldest daughters live in Tianjin, and their youngest daughter lives in Beijing. They (G1) moved to a commercial community (a developer-led gated community) in 2003, and their oldest son-in-law (G2-Mr. Li, 61) helped them to renovate.

It can be seen from the maps that G3 (G2-D1's daughter)'s home is close to G1. That apartment is G2-D1's property in which G3 grew up. The G2-D1 couple and their daughter moved to a semi-detached house in 2009, when G3 got married; the G2 couple and G3 couple were co-resident under the same roof for more than five years. Recently, the G3 household moved to G2's old apartment when their older daughter (G4) began primary school located near the old apartment.



Figure 6-1: Locations between G1, G2-D1 and G3 (G2-D1's daughter)

G2-D1 (62, the oldest daughter in Li family) visits her parents' home weekly, which takes her about 45 minutes by bus. Her second sister (G2-D2) lives in the Hexi district of Tianjin, which usually takes her one hour to reach her parents' home, but she has bought another apartment near G1's home. Their youngest sister (G2-D3) lives with her husband in Beijing and visits her parents occasionally or during the spring festival.



Figure 6-2: G1 couple's community and living room (they moved to this apartment in 2003)

### ***Family practice***

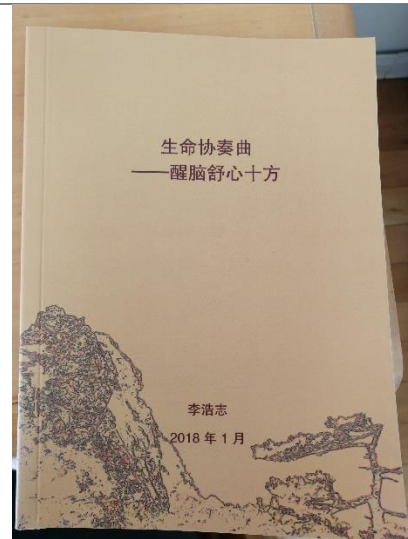
Mrs G1 (86 years old) migrated from southern China to Tianjin with her siblings when they were all teenagers. She is in good health now, except for poor hearing. She was a typical Chinese woman who, in her adulthood, worked hard without any complaints. Using G2-D1's words here, 'my mother has taken care of my father in their entire married life, and she takes charge of all the things in the family. I hope that my mother could have a rest and enjoy her life'. The daughters (G2),

especially the second daughter (G2-D2), visit G1's home on a weekly basis and try to help their mother do the housework and prepare their parents' weekly meals. Mrs. G1 told the researcher that while she was delighted with her children's visits, she was unable to wait for her daughter to do whatever she could.

The condition of her husband is somewhat different. Mr. G1 is fragile and has not left the apartment (see Figure 6-3) for almost two years after a fall to the ground. He spends much of the day reading books and newspapers. He used to read eight kinds of newspapers, but this year he reduced these to three. He has written many papers in his retirement and has just published a handbook (see Figure 6-4) of his thoughts on later life. He said that he always suggests that their daughters travel and have fun in their early retirement.



*Figure 6-3: Mr G1's bedroom*



*Figure 6-4: Mr G1's published handbook*

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In the Li family, Mrs. G1 takes on housework duties and takes care of her husband. Every Wednesday, G2-D1 and G2-D2 go to G1's home to help their parents. They (G2) always prepare and store some homemade instant food in the fridge for the coming week, and buy fresh fruit and vegetables, snacks and necessary goods for G1. Sometimes, G3 (G2-D1's daughter) takes G4 to visit G1, and G2-D1's husband delivers support as well, such as cutting his father-in-law's hair and helping to do some simple repair work.

G2-D1's husband is keen on managing their garden and decorating their house because he is familiar with planting and farming. His hometown is in a small village, and his father plants date

trees to earn money. G2-D1 told the researcher that ‘That is his hobby. In the harvest season, we could eat our fresh vegetables and fruit directly from the garden, which is quite healthy for our children’.



*Figure 6-5: Decoration for the spring festival*



*Figure 6-6: The small garden*

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G2-D1 has taken over the duties of looking after her daughter’s babies (G4). As a former paediatrician, she cannot trust others to look after her grandchildren. Now she spends her time caring for G1 and G4. She retired early in her 50s because her work left her with poor eyesight.

### ***Life stories***

A few studies have investigated the agency of Chinese seniors in the development of meaning-making life throughout the next generation and their value turning from ‘self-sacrifice’ to ‘self-care’ (Liang and Luo, 2017). More specifically, those studies focus on how their work is influenced by the historical background and social shifts during their lives (ibid), because today’s retirees had limited space to make personal choices in their early life stages.

Mr. G1 has experienced many significant changes in his life, such as the civil war of his childhood and the turbulent time of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). His primary school was bombed in the civil war, and half of his schoolmates died. Then, the Chinese Communist Party took the remaining pupils to Yanan, where the revolutionary origins of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) lie and let them decide where to go. He chose to go back to Tianjin and continue to study. In his adulthood, he was reported as a rightist, since his articles were critical of Mao’s leadership. Mr. G1 did not want to talk too much about those difficult days.

*That period is no longer discussed any more in recent books or T.V. shows, but I was punished by [having to] clean public toilets for five years because I was labelled a rightist at that time. (Mr. G1 [sighing])*

He was permitted to work in a factory after that. At the same time, Mrs. G1 had raised three daughters by herself. Mr. G1 told the researcher that

*You could not say anything about your thoughts during those dark days, but I had so many papers published, it was easy to find flaws at that time. It has been almost 20 years since I was allowed to modify my profile, and after that, I always worked hard and enjoyed the harmonious life I have never had before.*

Moreover, he told me that, ‘although this period of the Cultural Revolution is not mentioned now, some T.V. series and articles touch on that period lightly. Indeed, he told me that there is a journal named ‘*Yan Huang Chun Qiu*’ (炎黄春秋) that is still publishing articles about that time...’. He was happy, I think, to tell those narratives that the young generation wanted to hear or need to hear.

Higher education brings their family benefits, so G2 keep putting their resources into G3’s education. The three G2 daughters all graduated from university. At that time, this was excellent news for the family, because university entrance exams had only restarted a few years beforehand. G2 received the benefit of higher-level education, such as decent occupations, good salaries, and properties, etc. Thus, they spend more resources on their offspring’s education. G3, except for G3-D (G2-D1’s daughter), her two cousins (G2-D2’s son and G2-D3’s son) both studied abroad after high school. After their postgraduate studies, they (G3-S1 and G3-S2) went to live in the United States, and G3-S2 married last year and has settled down there.

### **Tensions in the family: *Residence arrangements***

G2 stated that they (G2) wished to purchase an apartment in the neighbourhood of G2-D1, suitable for visiting and supporting their parents (G1). However, this idea was not achieved, as the G1 couple were hesitant to relocate because not only was their old neighbourhood close to the market, but Mrs. G1’s sister lived there as well.



Regarding the failure to move, the family members have their own opinions. Mr. G1 told the researcher that

*My three daughters are all very family oriented. They all try to persuade us to move to their new homes or somewhere near their homes. For example, G2-D1 wanted us to move into their community; G2-D2 has bought a house, and she wanted us to live with her; G2-D3 has purchased a flat in Qinhuangdao which is a city famous for a health resort. We are still staying here because my wife did not want to move. After all, she does not like transition.*

G2-D1 and G2-D2 told the researcher:

*It is not like what he (G1-M) said. My father is the person who does not want to move. He always stops us from any kind of change. For example, he cannot allow even a small change, like when we tried to paint the wall together with our mother, but he just stopped us for no reason.*

After all, it was not only the G1 couple who did not reach a relocation agreement, but the processing of the transaction itself also had problems. G2-D1's husband told the researcher that he was the one who arranged this deal, so no one knew the details better than he did. He collected the money from each G2 household (G2-D1, G2-D2 and G2-D3) – 200,000 CNY (about £22,957) each – and he added an extra 200,000 CNY (about £22,957) to this pot. The money was ready on the day, but the owner who was selling the apartment changed his mind and wanted to raise the price at the last moment. Then, he cancelled the deal. Thus, he felt the truth of G1's living arrangements were more complicated than his wife's recollection.

G2-D2 also shared her experiences of the living arrangements:

*I used to live in the south of the city, which is near my workplace. Then, I bought a second apartment in 2000; the first apartment I bought is located in Nankai district, where the top schools are concentrated because I was more focused on my son's (G3) education at that time. But when I neared retirement, and my son was planning to live in the U.S. at that time. Later, I found I could not stop worrying about my parents' (G1) health. I also*

*wanted to pay attention to my own needs, so I chose to buy a flat in 'Shui mu tian cheng' (a private-sector community), which is close to here (G1's home), you know, on the ground floor with a small garden outside ... I thought maybe my parents could come and live with me ...*

This is the reality of responses to living arrangements for a middle-class family at different life stages. The focus was dynamically driven by the current most crucial thing that was expressed in their living format and locations.

### ***G2-D1 wanted her family duties to be shared***

G2-D1 was the first person of her family who I interviewed, so I kept in touch with her during the fieldwork. She always mentioned that

*It is so tiring to look after the little children, and you know, it is an exhausting task, you need to think about everything. My former occupation forces me to do so, because I was a paediatrician and saw many wrong ways of caring for children due to their irresponsible parents. I hoped to get more involved and foster healthy habits in my granddaughters. I am a professional, and they have so much confidence in me, which makes me so important to the family.*

G2-D1 asked her son-in-law's parents to share the duties of looking after G4 but now she does not trust them at all.

*I think it is essential to develop healthy habits in early childhood, but they (the son-in-law and his mother) still do whatever they can to make the children happy. No matter how hard I try to teach them, such as not eating sweets and watching T.V., these sorts of helpful behaviours could be easily disrupted if others do not agree on what is the best.*

G2-D1 takes on the lion's share of looking after G4 and she also regularly visits G1 and is an example of the sandwich generation. However, she has retired and receives a decent pension. Thus, she has no worries about work and family balance, but she still struggles between her caring roles as a grandmother and daughter. G3 (Mrs. Li), who has resigned from her job to look after G4, aims



to share the duties of her mother, but she still struggles between her self-development and her family roles of being a mother and filial daughter.

***G3-D wants to balance her family duty and career***

G3-D (G2-D1's daughter) was born in a relatively stable society and is the only child of her nuclear family. Her husband has two older sisters in his family because of the different rural-urban family planning policy in his hometown. That has resulted in various family resources flowing from each family. For example, the G3 couple lived with the G2 couple (the wife's parents) for five years when they got married, until their older daughter (G4) reached primary school age; they (the G3 couple) then moved to G3-wife's parents' old apartment, which was close to the primary school. The G3 couple still take their daughters (G4) back to G2's home every weekend. When the researcher asked about filial piety and the arrangements concerning their apartment, G3-Mrs. Li said

*My mother gives all her heart to me and even to my daughters, as opposed to my mother-in-law who declined to take care of her granddaughter by making a lot of excuses. So, you know, I left my job because I just do not want to trouble my mother too much. I might find a job later, but if my mom's health gets worse, I cannot even imagine it. You know, I'm the only child in my family, and my parents provide us with everything, so for me, the first place in my heart is always my parents, not my in-laws.*

If we are saying that G2-D1 could manage to look after G4 and visit G1 regularly at the same time, it is because she has siblings who could share the duties of taking care of G1. On the other hand, G3 tried to balance her work and family, which resulted in her giving up her career and only focusing on family duties. It may provide evidence that raising children in a middle-class family requires more resources than before. In the future, as the only child of her nuclear family, G3-D said she could not imagine a situation where both her parents needed to be looked after.

## 6.2.2 Hao family

The Hao family is made up of four generations: the G1-M (82-year-old), two daughters and two sons in G2, and four only children in G3, with only one child in G4.

Table 6-2: Resources of the Hao family

Resources		Participants	Occupation	Education	Money
People	G1	Male (82); female (deceased)	Retired professor	Bachelor's degree	Pension: about 8000 CNY (about £925) per month. Owns one property to live in
	G2	D1(60); her husband Mr. Liu (62)	Previously an administrative assistant. A professor.	Bachelor's degree. PhD degree.	Pension: about 8000 CNY (about £925) per month; more than 200K CNY (about £23,125) per year. Four properties: one for G2 to live; one for their daughter; the other two for investment
		S2 (56)	Leader in factory	Bachelor's degree	More than 200K CNY (about £23,125) per year. Three properties: one for G2 to live in; two for investment
		D3 (51); her husband	Research assistant. Professor in the USA	Bachelor's degree. PhD degree in the USA	About 8000 CNY (about £925) per month; more than 100K USD (about £77,214) per year. Three properties: one for G2 to live in; two for investment
		S4 (47)	Was a doctor, now a professor	Bachelor's degree	More than 100K CNY (about £11,562) per year. Two properties: one for G2 to live in; one for investment
	G3	D (34); her husband (34)	Both work in the financial sector	Master's degree	Couple earn more than 700K CNY (about £80,940) per year
	G4	D (6)	In kindergarten		

In the Hao family, Mr. G1 is self-sufficient, though his youngest son (G2-S4) visits him regularly. He appeared to be in a healthy state of later life during this research, but later interviews have found that most of his family members were in a state of anxiety. The Hao family resources demonstrate that their income and education resources are at a middle or higher level as measured by Tianjin's standards, but G1's health is also vitally important to their family's well-being. As Mr. G1 said below,

*When my wife was weak and required 24-hour attention, I felt that while we had four children who gave support, it was all drained (all family members were exhausted). Since then, I realized that wealth is nothing compared to health.*

Mr. G1 was a lecturer at the university. His children (G2), except G2-S2, all work in the university, which include G2-D1 and her husband, G2-D3, G2-S4 and his wife. A woman who works in a university was expected to balance her career and family well and educate their child very well. Parents, typically mothers, are also likely, at the same time as navigating safety scandals surrounding milk, day-care, and vaccinating, to track homework, after-school tutoring, and extracurricular events (Qin, 2019). Those women who work in schools are familiar with that and have vacations like students. Thus, they are assumed to be performing better parental roles. In the Hao family, all their female members work at the university and support each other. They appear to have a stable family network.

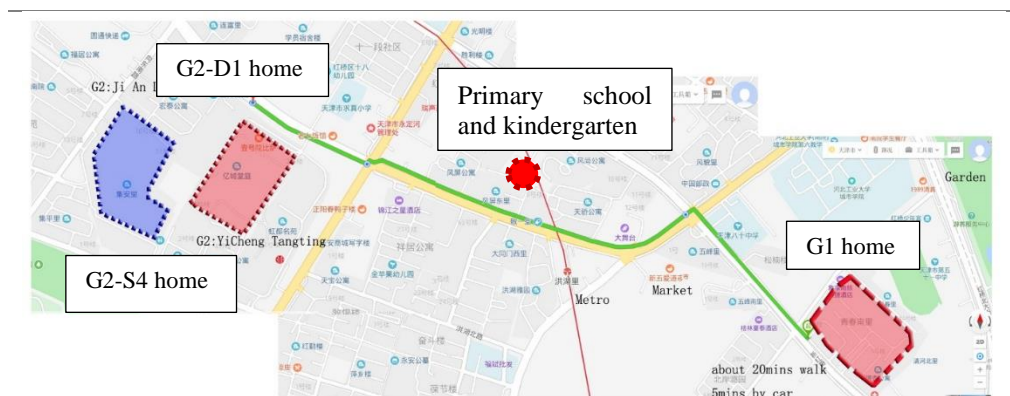


Figure 6-7: Locations of G1, G2-D1 and G2-S4

It can be seen from the Figure 6-7 that G2-D1 and G2-S4 live very close to G1. The distance is about 20 minutes' walk or five minutes by car. The primary school and kindergarten look towards G2's community, so it is convenient for G2-S4 to pick up his son and visit G1 on the way. G2-D1 also sends his granddaughter to this kindergarten.

G2-D1 and G2-S4 used to be resident in the same community as G1. Their family was the only family who directly stated that they have talked about how to look after G1. They accept that G2-S4 should shoulder the greater responsibility for caring for his father (G1). This has been mentioned by G2-D1, Mr. G1 and G2-S4 themselves.

G2-S4 told the researcher that

*I was a doctor before, but now I am working at the university. Compared to my siblings, I have some doctor friends who may allow me access to*

*medical resources conveniently. I also live close to my father. Thus, I often visit him, like one day or two [per week], after getting off work.*

Mr. G1 told the researcher that

*We (the G1 couple) bought an apartment upstairs on the 4th floor for my youngest son (G2-S4). At that time, we hoped he could take care of us in our later life. He actually does; thanks to his careful care, his mother (Mrs G1) could live a little longer and did not suffer so much pain. Now, he always comes to visit me. This year, I accept that he has moved to his new apartment, which is not far away from me but bigger than the old one. Because his mother-in-law is frail and lives with her daughters in turn, I think it would be convenient to let him move to the bigger apartment. He (G2-S4) bought the new apartment several years ago, but he did not move because of his duty to look after us (the G1 couple). Since his mother passed away, and my body is good, you see ... and my grandson's (G4) school is just opposite his new home ... so I suggested he should better move to his new home...'*



*Figure 6-8: G1's community (free car parking)*



*Figure 6-9: Older people sit and chat around the public space in the community*



*Figure 6-10: G1's bedroom (looking through the living room)*



*Figure 6-11: G1's living room*

Interestingly, the historical transitions could be easily seen from their decorations and furniture in their living room. For example, the covers of the heaters and the hardwood flooring in G1's living room show the styles of decoration most popular in the late 1980s in China.





*Figure 6-12: G2-D1's living room 1*



*Figure 6-13: G2-D1's living room 2*

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*Figure 6-14: G2-D1's community*



*Figure 6-15: Grocery shop in the community*

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As seen in the images, this is a gated community developed by the private sector. This developer aimed to establish an integrated service sector and convenient living conditions, such as a primary school and neighbouring kindergarten and a grocery store located in the community.

G2-D1 seems to have paid more focus to G4; she also said that they had bought another apartment in the district of *Heping*, where school districts of the highest standard are situated. So that G4 (granddaughter of G2-D1) may go to that school in future, they have already registered her *hukou* (residence permit) at that new apartment. In addition, the G2-D1 couple has a third apartment available to rent.

G3-wife (G2-D1's daughter) told me that she still wants to buy another apartment by using their (the G3 couple) own money. Because her mother-in-law, who lives only 20 minutes journey by bus, is unwilling to visit G3's home, and she (G3-wife) thought the place is not her son's property, which made her mother-in-law unhappy to stay. This situation means that her daughter (G4) is only looked after by G3-wife's mother (G2). She (G3-wife) hoped this duty might be balanced between two families.

### *Considerations of Mr. G1*

Mr. G1 (82 years old) is relatively healthy and looks as if he is only in his 60s. He has a pension of about 7000 CNY (about £806) per month that, according to him, 'is enough for my needs'. However, he was worried that hiring a 24-hour helper at home will cost more than 5000 CNY (about £576) monthly. This means that if, in that situation, his pension would be enough only for a paid care worker and food, which would eat into his savings for any extra consumption. That situation would be outside his comfort zone because the savings are planned to be used for emergencies or serious illnesses. Although his health is good now, he was always thinking about his plan for later life, which aims to reduce his children's concern.

Mr. G1 also mentioned a little of his experience during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976),

*Society was so disordered at that time. You might not know at all who would be next to be labelled a rightist. We could see suicide very often, and giant banners with writing like – strike down this person or strike down that person. You had to watch every single word you said every day ...*

G1 told me that G3 have earned so much money but they still feel that it is not enough and are under pressure all the time. G3-D1(34) took a postgraduate degree from a U.S. university and worked in Beijing for several years with an annual salary of 400K CNY (about £46,059). Last year, she came back to Tianjin, because she needs her mother's help to look after her child. Since then, her income has declined to about 300K CNY (about £34,544) a year. Her husband, who was her classmate who she met in the U.S., came back to Tianjin with her. He has a similar income.

In the Hao family, family members' income, occupations, and education are above that of Tianjin's average level. Despite this, all generations from G1 to G3 are worried and stressed about their lives.

### 6.2.3 Xing family

The Xing family is made up of four generations: Mrs. G1; three sons in G2 and their wives (G2-S2 has been married twice with a child by each wife) – there are therefore four children in G3; and three little girls in G4.

Table 6-3: Resources of Xing family

Resources		Participants	Occupation	Education	Money
People	G1	Male (deceased). Female (83).	Retired civil servant	High school	Pension: about 5000 CNY (about £578) per month. Two properties: one for G1 to live in, one for G2-S1 to live in
	G2	S1(62). His wife (60).	Part-time job. Bus driver	High school	Pension: 4000 CNY (about £462) per month. Pension: 6000 CNY (about £693), plus income 4000 CNY (about £462). Lives in G1's apartment
		S2 (60)	Prosecutor	Bachelor's degree	Income: 250K CNY (about £28,907) per year. Two apartments: one for G2 to live in, one for investment
		S3 (57)	Self-employed		Income: 100K CNY (about £11,562) per year. Owns one apartment to live in
	G3	D (34); her husband (36)	A civil servant in the education department. Art editor.	Master's degree	Income: 100K CNY (about £11,562) per year. Income: 100K CNY (about £11,562) per year. Share apartment with mother-in-law. Own a car.

G1 and G2-S1 reside in the same community, which was developed around 1990. From the images below (Figure 6-16 and Figure 6-17), the neighbourhood was full of three- to five-storey residential buildings with no lifts. This makes it inconvenient for older people to leave their apartments, particularly the vulnerable seniors like Mrs. G1 in the Xing family.





*Figure 6-16: Mrs. G1 and G2-S1 live in the same community*



*Figure 6-17: The community 2*

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Mrs. G1 stays in her bedroom (only about 13 m<sup>2</sup>), and G2-S1 visits her regularly (see Figure 6-18 and Figure 6-19 below). Mrs. G1's speech could not be understood too well, but G2-S1 explained it to the researcher.

*My mother has always said that she is so lonely. She does not want to live anymore!*



*Figure 6-18: Mrs. G1's bedroom*



*Figure 6-19: Her son talking to her*

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G3 (G2-S1's daughter) moved to another community that is in the south of Tianjin city, and lives with her mother-in-law once she married; this is about 40 minutes by car from her parents' home. The community is comprised of several high-rise residential buildings with organized parking spaces (see Figure 6-20 below). Her mother-in-law owns this property.



*Figure 6-20: The community*



*Figure 6-21: The living room*

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### ***Family practices***

Mrs. G1 was a public servant serving on the community committee and thus, according to G2-S1, she earned a reasonably decent pension of around 5,000 CNY per month (about £568). For three years, she was bedridden and was mainly cared for by G2-S1. Mr. G1 died in his sixties but held the position as a dean of the university and was provided with two two-bedroom apartments because of his situation at that time, each around 50 m<sup>2</sup>. The four rooms were split into four families (Mrs. G1 and G2). Mrs. G1 stays in an apartment with G2-S3. G2-S1 and G2-S2 lived in a neighbouring apartment. That situation continued until G2-S2 and G2-S3 bought other apartments and moved out.

G2-S1 (62 years old) is the oldest son and takes on most of the duties of caring for their mother. He looks after their mother for four days every week (from Thursday to Sunday including daytime and night-time). G2-S3 (57) and his wife (56) take over from Monday to Wednesday. G2-S1 was laid off from a national company in his 40s, and then he found a job in a company as a security guard. Now, he has been retired for two years with a pension of about 4000 CNY (including some part-time job income). His wife (60) was previously a bus driver, but she found another driving job for a private company after she retired. She told me that she got a fair payment of 6000 CNY (about £690), which added to her pension of about 4000 CNY (about £460), which means that she gets 10,000 CNY (about £1,151) monthly. They still live in G1's apartment.

Due to G2-S1 still living in their parent's apartment, and as the oldest son, he takes on the most duties of caring for their mother. G2-S1's wife complained that 'the youngest brother (G2-S3) receives money when he visits, because my husband needs their help, so we decided to give them

money monthly, about 2,000 CNY' (about £230). G2-S2 is a prosecutor, and he is relatively affluent in this family, but he rarely visits their mother. Instead, he sent his wife to fulfil his obligations.

### ***Tensions in family***

The worst conflict in the Xing family could be the bitter experiences that happened in G2-S2's family. Mrs. G1 supported G2-S2 desire to divorce, which culminated in G2-S2's ex-wife committing suicide. G2-S2 left the daughter (G3), the child of his first marriage with his mother, then married his lover and had a son (G3) with his second wife. Mrs. G1 looked after her granddaughter until she earned a salary. In contrast, the daughter (G3-D2) left home when she got married and did not take care of her grandmother at all. A stable family plays an essential role for children. G3-D2 went to find a factory job and did not finish her college's degree.

G2-S1 shoulders the duty of looking after Mrs. G1 and supporting this daughter to achieve a master's degree. G3-D1 was a teacher in a private training organization, and she earned about 150K CNY (about £17,272) per year. When she married, she resigned from a busy job that included a lot of travel. After that, she tried her best to gain a position in the Education Bureau's civil service department. Because of the better social status in the society for a woman, this kind of government job offers even more flexible advantages, such as year-long maternity leave and a less stressful workload with an income equal to her previous one. Those are uncommon for women who work in the private sector. She lives with her husband and his mother in her mother-in-law's apartment (about 120 m<sup>2</sup>). This young couple recently purchased a car costing approximately 300,000 CNY (about £34,545).

### ***Tensions: Taking care of G4***

G3-D1 will deliver her baby in August, and she wishes her mother could quit her job and help her. But her mother refused, 'I will quit in December because my license to drive a public bus driver will expire at the end of this year [2019], then I will go to look after Xiaojing' [her daughter, G3]. G3-D1 told me that 'my mother should look after me when I am pregnant or when I am near my delivery date, but she still works ... I feel she is not reliable ...' Talking about co-residence with her mother-in-law, she told me that

*It does not bother me too much living with my mother-in-law because my husband lost his father when he was a child. So, he must take care of his mother and I understand that. But I need someone to help me to look after my baby. I thought it is a suitable arrangement for me if my mother could... so I cannot depend on my parents very much actually ...*

As addressed in Fingerman *et al.* (2010), if middle-aged adults aid frail parents, they may also provide less care for each new child. Here the situation is that G3-D1 experienced a challenging period in her early pregnancy until she gave birth to the baby, she found little relief. She told me that she had hoped her parents could look after her at that time. There is still a problem about who will look after G4 when G3-D1 returns to work.

It seems that grandparents have the duty of caring for new babies, which is becoming common practice, while G3 should focus on their career development. Otherwise, it is not only G2 will worry about G3's future, but also G3 might have suspicions regarding their parents' love.

#### ***An opportunity to talk about the plan of ageing***

When the researcher interviewed G2-S1's family and asked G2 about planning for their later life, G2-S1's wife said frankly, 'I will swallow 200 sleeping pills to die! I could not let Xiaojing (G3-D) worry about me!' She then expressed that it would not burden her daughter if long-term care was requested, which is the last thing she wanted to do. G3-D stopped her mother at that time and said, 'Do not joke!'

After that conversation, the researcher explained how other families were coping with intense caregiving tasks and hiring a helper to let family members have a rest. G2-S1's wife responded, 'We could use the money on other things rather than hiring a helper!'

However, G2-S1 talking about her mother changed her ideas regarding ageing in a care home. G2 also had considered about paid care workers and institutions, because when Mrs. G1 was in her 70s, she said she would be ageing in an institution or ageing with her friends. On the contrary, when she was really in poor health, she asked her children to take care of her and never mentioned the idea of going into an institution again. Therefore, G2-S1 felt that the plan for old-age care changes with one's circumstances.

#### 6.2.4 Huo family

The Huo family is made up of three generations. There are the G1 couple and two sons and a daughter in G2. Because the first child of G2-D2 had severe disease, they were exempted from the one-child policy and allowed to have a second child. Thus, there are four children in G3, none of whom have children.

Table 6-4: Resources of the Huo family

	Participants	Occupation	Education	Money
G1	Male (79). Female (80).	Self-employed	High school	Live with G2-D2; the property was bought by G2-S3
G2	S1(56). His wife (60)	Accountant. Retired nurse.	Bachelor's degree	Income: 8000 CNY (about £908) per month. Pension: 8000 CNY (about £908) and part-time job, income 4500 CNY (about £511) per month. Two properties (one for living in, the other was bought for their son)
	D2 (55)	Self-employed	Unknown	Lives with parents
	S3 (53)	Senior manager	Master's degree	More than 300K CNY (about £34K) per year
G3	S (25)	Just found a job in a bank	Master's degree	Income: more than 150K CNY (about £17K) per year

Mr. G1 was previously a private manager, but after the failure of his investments in the 1990s, he gave up his job with no pension. Mr. G1 and his wife live in an apartment close to G2-D2 in Tanggu district, Tianjin. G2-S3 bought the apartment for them.

G2-S1's wife, who is a nurse in the university hospital, is 55 years old now, and she will retire in August 2019 (with a pension of about 8000 CNY) and continue to work in a private dental clinic (with an income of about 4500 CNY monthly). G2-S1 (56) still has four years to work before retiring from his accounting position, where he earns about 8000 CNY (about £925) monthly. They live in an apartment of around 170 m<sup>2</sup> in the university teachers' community. Recently, they bought an apartment costing more than 2 million CNY (about £231,259) for their son. They have a car for daily use, and they are preparing to buy another one for their son.

G3-S (G2-S1's son, 25 years old) has just graduated with his master's degree and found a job in a national bank with a starting salary of 150,000 CNY (about £17,344) per year. When G3-S was seeking a job, his uncle (G2-S3) suggested he come to Beijing and he would give him a position in his office (G2-S3) but he (G3-S) refused the idea. After studying away from home for almost seven years, he (G3-S) wants to come back and work in Tianjin.



### *Living arrangements and lifestyle*

Mr. G1 and his wife (Mrs. G1) are living together with their daughter (G2-D2) because she has a disabled child (G3). They (G1) hope to help their daughter (G2) with looking after her child (G3). They (G1 couple) tried to persuade G3-S (G2-S1's son, 25 years old) to settle down in Tanggu district, so he can visit them more often.



*Figure 6-22: Locations of G2-S1 and his son (G3)*



*Figure 6-23: Distance between G2-S1 and G1*

The G2-S1 couple has bought a new apartment in Xiqing district for their son (G3-S). The new apartment is close to G2's home and close to G3-S's future workplace. From Figure 6-22 and Figure 6-23, the distance between G1 and G2-S1's home is longer than driving from G2-S1's home to G3's new apartment.



*Figure 6-24: Green decoration between the dining room and living room*



*Figure 6-25: G2-S1's living room*

G2-S1 loves to write poetry, and he is a director of the Tianjin Poetry Association (an honorary position with no income). He likes classic furniture (see Figure 6-24 and Figure 6-25) and is keen on calligraphy. He said to the researcher,

*I have no time to worry about things. I am so busy reciting and writing poems. I have already published a book of poems that I wrote last year. I must visit my parents when festivals happen. While my son has a job, I thought it was time to chase my dream.*

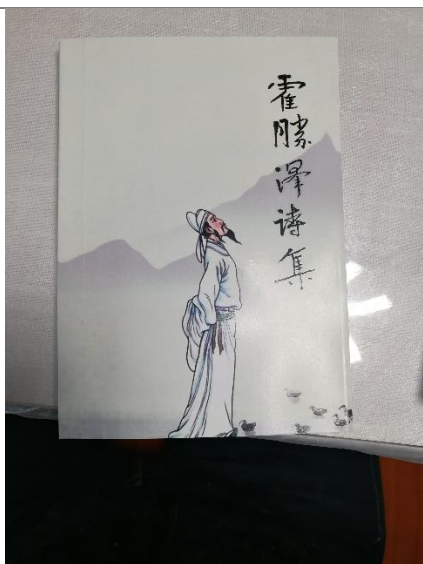


Figure 6-26: G2-S1's original poetry collection

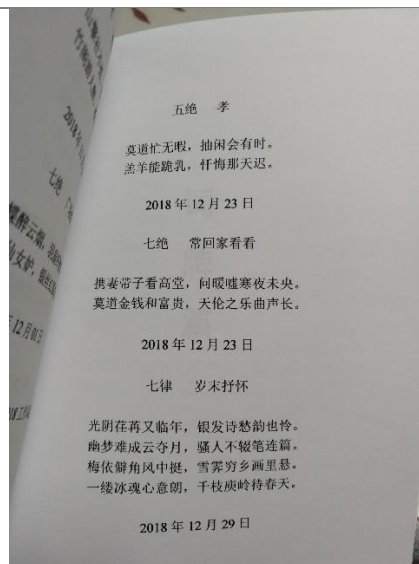


Figure 6-27: His poem about filial piety

When the researcher asked G2-S1's view about their family practice on eldercare, he asked to read his poem about filial piety. The poem is named 'Go home more often', and its content expresses the happiness of family reunion when the writer visits his older parents with his wife and their children. This poem has a high degree of recognition of reunion of the generations of family and believes that the joy of the family is unmatched by money and wealth.

G2-S1's wife (55 years old) often goes back to Xingtai city to help her sister look after their mother (G1), because her mother has suffered pain in her leg for a year. She (G2-S1's wife) usually plays tennis to keep fit. G3-S (G2-S1's son) has a girlfriend who works in Tianjin, but her family lives in Dalian. His girlfriend was considering giving up her job to study for a postgraduate degree in Hong Kong.

### *Some tensions*

In the Huo family, G1 and G2-S1 share the same values that family members need to live close to each other. For example, G1 couple supports their daughter all the time by living together. The G2-S1 couple also has a similar expectation, to make it come true; they (G2) directly bought an apartment for G3 in the area where G2-S1's home is located.

Moreover, the Huo family was shown that they have a value of family solidarity between generations. The G1 couple chose to help G2-D2 raise children because of financial difficulties at an awkward time. In turn, G2-D2 has taken on the duty of caring for her parents. G2-S3 has the most financial resources in the family; thus, he has offered money to help their parents buy an apartment where G2-D2's family also live, which was payment for the caregiver's role. G2-S1's time is occupied by his hobbies, such as writing poetry and learning calligraphy. Still, he also takes on the duty of bringing joy to older parents and visits his parents regularly with G3. However, the G2-S1 couple has complained a little to the researcher:

*Like last spring, my father used to toss and turn he asked me to take him back to his hometown. He wanted to see his relatives, but when we got there, he was ill and we took him to the hospital, which was so scary. I am so terrified by that experience and will no longer listen to him about travelling back to his hometown again! (G2-S1 in the Huo family).*

*My father-in-law is a stubborn old man who cannot listen to others' advice. An old idiom says that '70 bu guo xiu, 80 bu guo fan' (it means that you had better not sleep somewhere that is not your home when you are more than 70 years old; you had better not eat meals somewhere other than your home when you are more than 80 years old)! He does not understand our worries! (G2-S1's wife).*

In this family, the three siblings in G2 take on different eldercare roles separately, making family resources balanced and organized. It can be imagined that those roles, including physical support, giving time-consuming company, and bringing joy, and financial support, will all be pushed onto the only child's shoulders, which will become impossible tasks unless G2 would reduce their expectation of G3.



### 6.3 How do family practices work?

Based on the fieldwork results, each family has its caring method for older members, but they typically have multiple siblings in G2 whose home is situated in the same city as G1.

*We lived next to each other, and I am still living in the same neighbourhood with my mother, but my two younger brothers have moved away. I realize I have a responsibility to look after her, and not only am I the only one who lives nearby, but I am the oldest son in the family. (G2-S1 in the Xing family)*

Here, he mentioned that geographical proximity is one of the vital factors. Traditional family practice is about co-residence. It seems to work for both G1/G2 (such as in the Huo family) and G2/G3/G4 (like the Li family). In the other families, for example in the Xing family, G1 and G2 live in the same community (see Figure 6-28), and when G3 has her baby, they will live together as G2 (mother-in-law)/G3 (Mrs. Xing and her husband)/G4 (new-born baby). In the Hao family, G1, G2-S4 and the daughter of G2-D1 live in the same community, which is close to G2-D1's community (see Figure 6-7). This living arrangement relies on financial resources; there appears to be a smooth relationship and enough space to allow the family to remain durable.



Figure 6-28: Distances between G1, G2-S1 and his daughter (G3) in the Xing family

In this chapter, the families are then reliant on themselves, which is the most comparable method to conventional eldercare. There are two preconditions for the traditional family care method for older adults: one is a large family and the other is that children live with their parents (Du, 2013,

p. 44). It is difficult to achieve in urban society, but certain large middle-class families, such as the Hao and Li families, reside separately but live-in close proximity to each other.

In addition, the traditional duty of the oldest son can be changed in the obligation of taking care of parents. Increased distances between family members contribute to the time needed to complete care tasks in the other three households, but the idea that the eldest son should take on the most significant obligation of eldercare is not always the case. For instance, in the Li family, except for G2-D3 who lives in another area, the other two daughters have the responsibility of visiting their parents on a weekly basis. Similarly, the G2-D2 couple of the Huo family is co-resident with G1 and look after their parents. Thus, the principle of G2-S1, the idea that the oldest son should take the responsibility of eldercare, is more likely to apply when appropriate rather than have a shared meaning in today's culture.

According to Chen and Jordan (2018), and Falkingham *et al.* (2020), since G2 are in the generational sandwich role, they play the role of a competitive resource in a family. It was found that the duties of looking after G1 and G3/G4 tend to rely on G2 at the same time, which is defined in this study as the sandwich generation who provides support to both G1 and G3 (Zelezna, 2018; Falkingham *et al.*, 2020). However, there is an argument that those in the sandwich generation who offer support to their older parents have a higher possibility of helping other generations of the family (Zelezna, 2018), and aim to preserve family solidarity and regard the family from a lifetime viewpoint rather than as people competing for family resources at the same time. This was found in the fieldwork:

*It (family care practices) cannot be told very precisely. It is just that kind of work, and we [my siblings] all think this is a common way to do it. My parents supported my little sister (G2-D2) in a tough period so that she would like to help [them] in their old age. I do not even think enough about that, and my little brother (G2-S3) and I (G2-S1) also do whatever we can. (G2-S1 in the Huo family).*

*My oldest sister (G2-D1) and I (G2-S4) live close to our father. We support each other, because my sister has her granddaughter to look after, so I pay more attention to our father. My sister is going to come when she has time. You know, I have a dependent boy, only 12 years old, since I was married*

*too late, but I think that family means loving each other, which is a normal way to show love rather than say it aloud. (G2-S4 in the Hao family).*

In the traditional Chinese background, this can be clarified by the fact that both the responsibilities and the duties of family members in Confucian culture are associated with reciprocal interdependence over the life cycle (Goh *et al.*, 2016).

G2 was asked to perform several roles in Chinese families. On the one side, the continually improving economic conditions of G2 have made filial piety easier to fulfil than when G1 were caring for their own parents. Mr. G1 (82 years old) in the Hao family said

*I thought I was not a filial child. I left my parents' home when I was a teenager. In after years, I only sent money back to my mother rather than stay around or make regular visits that would have been a shame for me as a son.*

Similarly, Mr. G1 (86) in the Li family experienced the same difficulties:

*It was even not easy for me to survive in those difficult years, not to mention to look after family members. They would be better without me [ during the years when I was believed to be a rightist].*

On the other side, G2 are the parents of the only-child generation. They put their whole heart into their only treasure, then to their grandchild. Understandably, when their only child has a new-born baby, they strongly wish to share their love and help to look after the grandchild.

## 6.4 The sandwich generation in China

### 6.4.1 Understanding the sandwich generation

The original ‘sandwich generation’ was considered by Grundy and Henretta’s (2006, p. 707) study of ‘mid-life adults who simultaneously raise dependent children and frail elderly parents’. The circumstance is that individuals, who have one or two living parents and adults but also partially dependent children, might be requested in late mid-life or early old age to meet competing needs from adult children and older parents (Grundy and Henretta, 2006, p. 707). The original definition talks about dependent children not adults, but the competitive market economy makes it crucial to invest resources in getting ahead, so, children are dependent for longer as they progress through education and try to acquire a property, and childcare, etc. In this study, this generation is G2, who support adult children (G3) and elderly parents (G1) at the same time. Typically, the Li family and the Hao family can be taken as examples. The Xing family will become one of this type of family in 2020.

Different attitudes have been found about caring for G1 or G4 in the Hao family and other families. During the interviews in their family about eldercare, G2 frequently mentioned that G1 delivered various forms of support in the (G2) early stages of their lives, such as buying a home, job hunting, caring for children. Moreover, G2-D1 repeatedly said that she was ‘enjoying’ grandchild care.

*My granddaughter is taking classes in the extracurricular class downstairs. We (G2/G3) have bought our granddaughter’s house in Heping (the best school district). [I am] happy to have time with my grandchild, because [there are] only several years that she (G4) will be here with me. My dad, I will go [there] too, but there [my father’s home] is too messy ... Now my brother often visits. (G2-D1 in the Hao family).*

G2-D1 and her younger brother (G2-S4) in the Hao family also found distance proximity to her parents important:

*I bought this new apartment close to my old home where my father (G1) still lives in that community. Besides, my youngest brother (G2) lived in that community before and then he bought a new apartment nearby as well.*

*We always lived very close to each other, which is convenient for helping each other... (G2-D1 in the Hao family).*

*I visit my father every other day. I used to live upstairs from my parents' home. The flat was also given by my parents, hoping that I would take care of them later life. Some years ago, I bought another apartment in a nearby community for my children to go to primary school, but to facilitate the care of my father, I have never moved in, but only recently my father has insisted that I should move to the new home. (G2-S4 in the Hao family).*

A transition occurred after G4 was born in the Hao family; G2-D1 played an important role in taking care of G4, which prevented her from seeing her father frequently.

*I used to visit my father every week. Now I need to pick up my granddaughter from the nursery, so I visit my father sometimes, not as often as before. But my younger brother still visits him regularly so that I can pay more attention to my little one ... (G2-D1 in the Hao family).*

*My mother gives me a hand since my daughter was born. Now, she continually picks up my daughter from nursery. Because you know, my husband and I are so busy that we have no time to take care of her very well. G3-D (G2-D1's daughter) in the Hao family.*

Another voice came from the Li family, where 'exhausted' is the only word to describe her daily life as expressed by G2-D1:

*It is too tiring to look after a child, and I did not expect to look after another grandchild again once my oldest granddaughter went to kindergarten. Instead, I assumed I would have a rest. At the same time, I must visit my parents weekly, but actually, only when I arrive at my parents' home, I can have a breath. Because my mother always asks me to take a break. In addition, my sister (G2-D2) will be there, so we usually cook and then lie down, talking with my sister in the afternoon. I guess I can only have a break when I am there with my sister ...' (G2-D1 in the Li family).*

The worst condition seems to have arisen in the Xing household, where, except G2-S1, the siblings were unwilling to share the responsibility of eldercare.

*Tired and no brother wants to help me. (G2-S1 in the Xing family).*

*My two brothers-in-law (G2-S2 and G2-S3) are so ridiculous! Even the younger brother (G2-S3) must be given money to take care of his mother. I want to make some extra money before my driver's license expires, but Xiaojing (G3-D) is about to have a child, and I must help. So, my husband is on his own; there is no other way. (G2-S1's wife in the Xing family).*

*My dad finds it too difficult to cope with the tasks of caring for my grandmother, and I am trying to help as best as I can, while I must give birth very soon in this year, and I live in the flat with my mother-in-law. She [the mother-in-law] said she was going to support me, but I wish my mother would take care of me like my other friends. (G3-D in the Xing family).*

Here, it should be explained that G3 (adult children) is the four-generation family's future pivot generation. They are engaged not only in family-related tasks but are generally often at the climbing stage of their careers. For that reason, they must balance competing demands inside and outside the family (Zelezna, 2018, p. 979). For example, in the Li household, G3-D decided to quit her job and has looked after her second daughter for more than one year because she could not reconcile her work and family obligations. That is why G2 is happy to be sandwiched within a reasonable spectrum instead of giving up the future of G3. This attitude is from the point of view of family harmony and solidarity.

#### 6.4.2 Parents and grandparents of an only child

Family resources such as money and properties flow down and are concentrate on the only-child generation. Due to challenging experiences, members of G1 with a decent pension said in the interview that they were willing to support their offspring with money, such as giving the grandchildren's red envelope (containing money). For instance,

*Following our experiences of the Great Leap Forward [1958-1960], hunger, and Cultural Revolution [1966-1976], we now live in a harmonious and affluent society. I think that I am happy now, and I want to deliver support, no, that does not mean support ... I am the lowest earner in my family now, as a pensioner, I feel happy to give a red envelope [usually a bit of money inside] or some gifts to my grandchildren or great-grandchildren ... (Mr. G1 in the Hao family).*

*I do not need money anymore, while Jiajie (G3: G2-D1's daughter) has no job now, and she needs to raise children. I can give her everything, and she needs the money more than I do. (Mrs. G1 in the Li family).*

Property is the other most valuable resource for generations to pass down. For example, in the Hao family, G1 bought an apartment for their youngest son (G2-S4). In the Huo family, G2 purchased a new apartment for their only son (G3). In general, paternal parents must prepare a home for new couples, a common trend in recent years. However, in middle-class households, maternal parents who are in the same or better financial conditions to their in-laws prefer to purchase a home or offer one to their only daughter like their father's parents do. Examples in this chapter are common, such as in the Hao family, where the G2-D1 couple started to organize an apartment in a good school district when their daughter (G3) was pregnant. Similarly, in the Li family, the G3-D couple moved into the former flat of the G2-D1 couple.

As a result, the material resources of the family tend to be concentrated in the one-child generation. In a multi-child family, parents also deliver financial support to their children if the situation allows, such as G1 in the Hao family. Therefore, this is a family interaction that does not happen exclusively with the only-child generation.

Being parents of an only child, G2 usually say that they cannot depend on their only child in later life, especially for practical matters. For the sake of mental support, G2 are willing to contact their adult children frequently. Therefore, it may be supposed that although the only-child generation will be unable to offer physical and material support, filial piety can still be carried out by providing mental advice and thus bringing honour to parents. Getting honour is the highest request of children in the traditional culture because it was defined those children are to achieve something in their life, such as 光耀门楣 (*guang yao men mei*), which means ‘glory shines up at the gates of the family’. In the Hao family, where Mr. G1 is very proud of his children and grandchildren, this has been very well illustrated. He told the researcher each story of his family members, such as children’s prizes, the name of their graduate schools, and their travels. As to his later life, he had a very detailed plan and would not wish to be a burden to his children. However, this wish has been changing in the middle class, where G2 focus more on regular video calls or phone contact with their children (G3) to keep close relations.

*They are so busy with managing their career ... my daughter has been educated so many years, and she has no idea about doing housework. I would like to give her a hand, you know, I only have this daughter and only one granddaughter, who is the treasure in our family ... (G2-D1 in Hao family).*

*All G3, in my family, have got a degree abroad except the youngest one who is still at school. They have a good education background and earn much more money than me, even than their parents now. My oldest granddaughter (G2-D1’s daughter) made about 400K CNY [about £44K] per year in Beijing previously. The youngest granddaughter (G2-D3’s daughter), who just graduated, has already found a job in the USA that pays her 70K USD [about £53K] per year... (G1-M in the Hao family, proudly).*



### 6.4.3 Living arrangement preferences

The G1 generation in this chapter has their own living arrangement preferences. They are concerned about emotional support from their offspring rather than physical and financial aid, as they wish to maintain their ‘autonomy and independence’ (Chen and Jordan, 2018).

In the Li family, the G1 couple even produced an order of preference for their living arrangements:

1. Live with a spouse but close to children’s home.
2. Live at home but occasionally need a domestic helper.
3. Live with a spouse in an institution or live at home but with a 24-hour helper.
4. If I lose my wife or husband, I will prefer to live in my daughter’s home.

There is a similar idea in the Hao family when Mr. G1 suggested his order of preference:

*My health is generally good, and I hope to stay in this community as long as possible. I have a group of friends around my age here, and we discuss this quite often. We already agree on the order of preference for care. First, ageing at home should depend on the spouse or children, which there is no doubt about. Then, if we need extra help, we prefer to hire a helper at home. The last choice would be to move to an institution. (G1-M in the Hao family).*

He told the researcher in detail about their conversations about ageing practices, including what practice would be carried out in what situation with the price:

*I walk around in the community every day and see neighbours who are also more than 80 years old. We are familiar. I could tell you certainly that we all agree on ageing at home. I agree with Li’s preferences, and I could tell you precisely what we are planning to do. Firstly, older people in good health prefer to live independently, with my children visiting me regularly. My children all live nearby, except my oldest son, who is so busy, but he also visits me when he has a short rest. I am so satisfied with this. Secondly, if older people do not want to cook but are in good general health, they will hire a helper to cook, typically costing 1000–1500 CNY (about £173). Thirdly, if you have mobility problems and need help in the daytime, you*

*could hire a helper for daytime care; it will generally cost you 4500–5000 CNY (about £519–£576). Fourthly, if you are frail and need someone to give you 24-hour care, you must hire a helper to live with you, which may cost you 6000 CNY (about £692). We have examples of all of these in our community. In the case of 24-hour care, you could go to an institution as well, but for now, I have heard of only one woman [who did that] who was my neighbour downstairs. When she came back to pack the rest of her things, she told me that her institution is in the Nankai district where lots of older people want to get in, because it is of good quality and at a lower price (two beds in one room, 3500 CNY (about £403) per bed monthly). She asked her friends to do her a favour to get in, because there is a long waiting list to get into that institution. (Mr. G1 in the Hao family).*

It should be pointed out here that preferences may change when G1's health changes. For example, Mrs. G1 in the Xing family changed her mind about ageing in an institution:

*My mother (Mrs. G1) used to think that she wanted to age in an institution with her friend. She was around 70 years old, and she had discussed the idea with her friend at that time, but when she was getting frail, she asked me to swear that she could age at home ... Once, she gripped my hand and asked to stay at home even if she was very ill. She told me she felt scared. How could I say no to her! (G2-S1 in the Xing family)*

Older people in their third age are independent; thus, they put autonomy, dignity and have their own power to make choices as a priority. However, when older people turn from the third age to the fourth age, their ideas may change with their health situation. Safety and a familiar environment move position to become the first preference on their list, but they still want to have their choices respected.

## 6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the narratives and stories of eldercare in relation to four families. To provide clarification for the reader, family resources and their kinship relations were described first. Each family has their own strategy to meet G1's needs for now, but there are conflicts in the family, such as an exhausted G2, or siblings giving uneven support. Moreover, families who depend on themselves organize their resources across the whole family. For instance, in the Huo family, three children in G2 take on different tasks to fulfil G1's needs, such as extra financial support, physical support and giving pleasure.

However, G2 favours supporting G3 over G1, according to some researchers, even when G1 is in bad health (Fingerman et al., 2010; Zelezna, 2018). Care for dependent older parents may be a strain that discourages middle-aged people from investing time and resources into G2's children or their own grandchildren (Zelezna, 2018). G1 may be unwilling to compete with the family requirements of G3 and G4, but they need to be frequently visited.

Additionally, needs are doubled when there are four generations in a family, such as in the Li and Hao families, because there are two generations (G1 and G4) who need to be supported. The pivot generation (G2) was quite busy providing support; there was no time to have a break. For example, G2-D1 (in Li family) felt exhausted and only had a break when she arrived at her mother's home.

A new sandwich generation is emerging and will face more severe issues on eldercare. G3, who is at the stage of rising in their career, meets requests from inside and outside the family. Fortunately, in this chapter, members of G3 were supported by their parents to look after dependent children, but still cannot afford to do so, such as G3-D (G2-D1's daughter) in the Li family. Imagine the situation in 20 or 30 years from now: how can G3 manage to care for two dependent parents with no siblings to share the responsibilities?



## **Chapter 7. Families who need additional help**

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## 7.1 Introduction

The last chapter introduced G2, the sandwich generation, whose story is pivotal to the research and the main entry point (except for the Xing family) for the family's participation. In this chapter, the second generation is still the pivot point in each family, but they tend to hire a helper at home to add an extra pair of hands to care for their older parents, though their rationale for doing so varies. The emerging phenomena of employing a paid helper to deliver support for the oldest generation, some scholars argue, is a compensational practice of declining filial piety (Cheung and Kwan, 2009). However, in the following detailed stories, it can be argued that these adult children are overloaded, rather than there being evidence of filial piety erosion. This chapter aims at offering an insight into families' narratives that wish to pursue additional assistance. Furthermore, after hiring a paid helper to live with G1, various problems result.

This chapter looks at three families: the Ye, Zhao and Wang families. As in the last chapter, each family resource, such as kinship, finances, occupations, and home locations will be unpacked at first. When the readers have been acquainted with the relationships and family members, the central topic of elder care in each family can be taken up. Finally, the common practice of hiring a helper at home in these three families will be analysed, over four questions: What is the rationale for getting a helper? What happens in the hiring process? What does the helper do? Does this practice work well?

## 7.2 Family narratives

These three families all share a common feature of hiring a helper at home, but their resources and rationale for making their choices are different. For some, it is geographical proximity (Powell, 2018). For others, the quality of relationships of family members (Zelezna, 2018) and the parents' health are all important factors involved in family practices. These will be described in detail below for each family.

### 7.2.1 The Ye family

The Ye family is made up of three generations: the G1 couple, three daughters in G2 and three only children in G3. They are all highly educated. Mr. G1 was a professor at the university, and Mrs. G1 was a leader in a factory. Their family resources are set out below (see Table 7-1). Those resources include people, money and who provide physical support.

*Table 7-1: Resources of Ye family*

Resources		Occupation	Education	Money
G1	Male (85), bedridden for nearly 3 months. Female (84), bedridden for 5 years.	Retired professor. Retired lead designer of a famous alcohol factory in Tianjin.	High school diploma and continuing to study for a bachelor's degree	Pension: 7000 CNY (about £773) per month. 6000 CNY (about £663) per month. Own their own home
G2	D1 (60) retired early in her 50s. Her husband (60) just retired in 2019	Retired technician. her husband is a retired professor but continues to work for a private college	Bachelor's degree	Pension: 5000+ CNY (more than £663) per month. 8000 CNY per month (about £884), income 5000+ (more than £663) per month. Own two properties: one to live in, one for investment
	D2 (56) retired early	G2-D2: retired early because of disability, previously worked in G1-F's factory	High school diploma	Pension 3500 CNY (about £386) per month, and a few subsidies (additional payments for disability)
	D3 (49) civil servant	G2-D3: civil servant. her husband and son lived in other cities because of their work and education	Bachelor's degree	Income: more than 10K CNY (more than £1105) per month
G3	D1's son (33), lives in Florida with his wife	G3 couple both graduated from US university and work in Florida	PhD degree in the USA	Salary about \$80K (about £61K) a year. Own their own home in USA

The Figure 7-1 below shows the locations between G1, the G2-D1 couple and the G3 couple. Obviously, it would cost them more time to travel back to Tianjin from the United States, which would take nearly 21 hours.



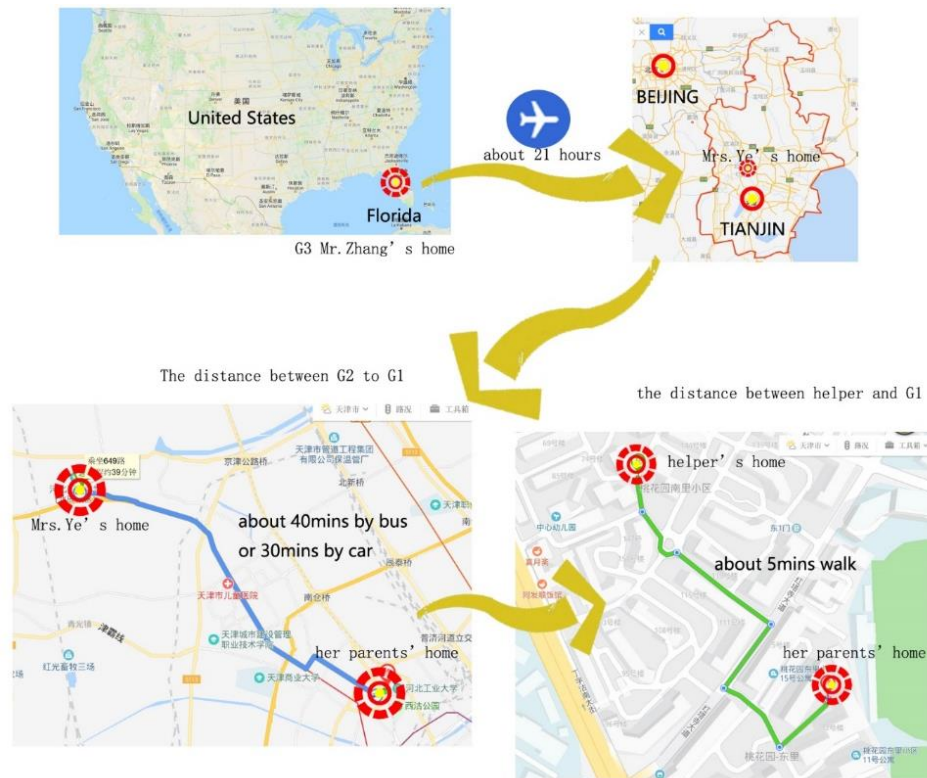


Figure 7-1: Locations between G1, G2 and G3

There has been a shift in class between generations in some families, but the Ye family have always been middle class. G3 (the son of G2-D1) is now located in the United States; the long distance between G3 and G2 made family reunions decline sharply in frequency. It can be seen that in the Ye family, G1 lives in a central location in the city and G2-D1 has moved to a suburban area. This distance takes G2-D1 nearly 40 minutes for a single journey to G1's home. The helper lives only five minutes' walk from G1's home. Understandably, locational proximity to the person needing care is a factor in determining what care practices can be offered. For example, the helper (female, more than 60 years old – which G2-D1 guessed because she refused to say) repeatedly mentioned that the reason she took this job was close to home. Because the workplace is close to her home, she could easily pick up her grandson from primary school every day.

Table 7-2: Living situations from G1 to G3 in the Ye family

	G1	G2	G3
<b>Community and buildings</b>	 <p>The gated community</p>	 <p>The apartment block in the suburbs (some ground floor with private garden).</p>	 <p>House in Florida, USA</p>
<b>Living room and kitchen</b>	 <p>Living room</p>	 <p>Living room</p>	 <p>The kitchen</p>

As the analysis of resources suggests, the older couple are now in need of a high level of care that demands a significant time investment. The G2 (three daughters) have looked after their mother (Mrs. G1) for several years since the onset of her dementia, but now she has become frailer and her physical needs are increasing. In addition, Mr. G1 had a fall in January 2019, leaving him also bedridden at the time of the researcher's visit to their home.

It is difficult even for two family members to wash Mr. G1's body and cut his hair. Normally, there is only one adult child at home to provide support, which means that the care needs of both G1 parents cannot be met at the same time. The need for more support than G2 could provide such that G2-D1 suggested they hire a helper at home.

The care costs of G1 are met by their own pensions. Their pension cards are held by G2-D1, but all her sisters have a say in how to spend it. The idea of hiring a helper was suggested by G2-D1, whose sisters agreed with the plan, but they also guessed that their father would not agree. They decided to tell a white lie and pretend that the helper was a remote relative of G2-D1's husband. The hiring process was taken on by G2-D1 and she kept all receipts of expenditure and shared these with her sisters by sending them photos of each one.

There are several concerns in the Ye family that have been repeatedly mentioned by family members. G2-D1 claimed that her father is old-fashioned in his ways. She believes that the time to spend money is in later life, and if their money is not enough to pay expenses, she might sell the apartment of her parent and rent a place near her or live with her, which will allow her to employ a qualified helper and let his offspring rest. She feels ashamed that this is not the way her father acts. He feels that his daughters must take care of them and that they (G1) can keep their personal income, which makes him feel comfortable. Mr. G1 here reflects a rather conventional view of filial piety that the extended family, not strangers, should individually carry out the responsibility of looking after older parents. He may fear that his daughters may come to visit less due to care tasks being taken on by outsiders, because his concerns are not just about material matters, but about the loss of affection.

Additionally, ‘face’ was quite often mentioned by G2 in the Ye family to describe their father (G1). G2-D2 said loudly and very irritably:

*If my father was not so concerned about his face, he would not have broken his leg at all!*

And added:

*My father cares about his ‘face’ more than anything! He would not like to receive additional help from outside the family. But we (the three daughters in G2) were too exhausted to take care of two older people who are bedridden. So, we had to make up a lie that the helper we hired was a distant relative ... (G2-D1 in Ye family).*

In traditional Chinese culture, the concept of ‘face’ can be understood as a person’s perception of their place in society, the perception of their role and status in society, representing Confucian norms and social values. It can be calculated, but only in the unique interaction in which it occurs and can be improved, preserved, or lost (Li *et al.*, 2016). In the case of Mr. G1, he thought that by using a walking stick outdoors, his altered portrayal of himself made him lose face. Mr. G1 was not willing to show himself as a vulnerable person but needed to present himself as able bodied and capable. Although ‘face’ is a particular concern for specific cultures, there is a basic human

desire to maintain a picture of ourselves. His daughters, however, felt the explanation for his decline was that he still put his 'face' first.

G2-D1 thought that all three daughters were bound by filial piety, because G1 valued face (*mian zi*) as his primary concern, namely that reputation was much more important than material needs or wants. G2 also paid more attention to others' criticisms of themselves and their children, which also shows that G2 cared as much about face as their father. For example, during the interviews, G2-D1 emphasized the quality of citizens (*suzhi*) several times, and she looks down on people who cannot behave well in public places. She also gave the example of their helper; the reason why the helper accepted the job in the Ye family was that she found that educated people were easy to communicate with and did not ask for unreasonable help, such as a man asking a female helper to wash his body while making dirty jokes. G2-D1 has formed a friendly bond with the helper, treating her like a sister in that she will often bring the same for the helper when she gives some gifts to her sisters, such as fruit or fresh meat, etc., which is to express her appreciation for the help.

*We have a locked room in my parents' three-room apartment. That is the last refuge of my father. The room is full of his treasures, such as his paintings and calligraphy, which he does not let anyone touch. He has defended his dignity all his life, such as refusing to use his walking stick, but we [the three G2 sisters] think that he is stubborn in his later life and cherishes his reputation too much. I guess I am kind of like him, oh, I say, just perform to maintain good relationships. I would not say I like to discuss people behind their backs, and yes, I would not want others to say bad words about me. Maybe this point was influenced by my father; I also care about what everyone thinks of me. (G2-D1 in the Ye family).*

G3 felt that he was used to living in the United States, but family responsibilities still would call him back to China.

*If I go back to China, the only reason is that I am caring about my parents. It is the same, if I feel unhappy in the US; my parents cannot do anything except worry. I cannot let it happen, and try my best to earn face for them, which is another way to be a filial child, I think.*

*I am seeking opportunities to work in China because my parents are becoming older. Although I am afraid that I may not get used to Chinese society now, I should look after them in their later life, and they are the only reason that I want to come back to China. (G3-husband (33) in the Ye family).*

G2-D1 in the Ye family has placed her son and daughter-in-law's graduation photo on the table in their living room, which is the most prominent position for guests to see it when they visit their home. G2 expects a filial response from her son but takes a pragmatic view of how this might be performed:

*They are filial children, and I think they must pursue their career development, which is very important for their living. We (G2-D1 and her husband) could visit them, and we also like to look after their baby in the future if needed. We'd love to... (G2-D1 in Ye family).*

In the Ye family, G2-Mrs. Ye (oldest daughter) told me that their relationships with their parents are very close. They live a lifestyle that they can sacrifice for each other, in which parents usually can self-sacrifice for children. For example,

*My second sister (G2-D2) has been disabled since she was young, so my mother tried her best to find a job for my sister and finally, my sister took over my mother's job. My little sister (G2-D3) and her husband had no money before, but we were all very poor in the 1990s, they lived with our parents for nearly six years until they could afford an apartment...*

### 7.2.2 The Zhao family

The second family is the three-generation Zhao family: Mrs. G1, three daughters in G2 and three only children in G3. There are three daughters in G2, which is the same as in the Ye family. However, in G1, Mr. G1 passed away several years ago, leaving his wife alone.

Table 7-3: Resources of Zhao family

Resources		Occupation	Education	Money
G1	Female (86)	Retired teacher	High school education	Pension: about 5000 CNY per month (about £577), one apartment in Qiqihar (which she lives in)
G2	D1 (63); her husband (62)	Retired doctor. Previously a professor, now still working as a supervisor in a private college.	College degree. Bachelor's degree	Pension: 8000+ CNY (about £923) per month. 8000+ CNY (about £923) and income 5000+ CNY (about £577). Own two apartments in Tianjin (one for G2; one for G3 couple to live in)
	D2	Self-employed	College degree	Income: unknown. Owns two properties: one in Qiqihar, one in Yunnan (for investment)
	D3	Self-employed	College degree	Income unknown. Own two properties: one in Qiqihar (for investment), one in Tianjin
G3	G2-D1's only daughter	Couple: both sales supervisors	Bachelor's degree	Couple's salary: about 250,000 CNY per year (about £27,445)

G1 now lives in Qiqihar city, which is in the northeast of China. G2-D1 travels to her mother's home, which takes her about 20 hours by train for only a single journey (see Figure 7-2 below). The G3 couple (G2-D1's daughter and her husband) live in the same city as G2-D1, not far from each other (see Figure 7-3 below).



Figure 7-2: G2-D1's travels to G1's home



Figure 7-3: Distance between G2-D1 and her daughter's home

The Zhao family is a three-generation family, and the gatekeeper participant was Mr. Jia (G2-D1's husband), who was a participant in my focus group. He showed a great interest in my research and told me that his wife also did. Therefore, after several visits, Mrs. Zhao (G2-D1) agreed to join this study.

In the Zhao family, Mrs. G1 was 86 years old in 2019, and was still in good health. Their story starts with her. She is a retired teacher, and she is always well dressed. It could be observed that she is an elegant person who wants to maintain her dignity.

The three daughters of G2 have tried to take care of their mother (G1) in many ways. When G1 was over 80, her daughters decided to hire a helper to live with her. The idea had already been discussed over the five years or more since their father died. The issue was then that only G2-D3 lived in the same city as their mother, so it was difficult to meet their mother's needs as they wanted. After the decision, their family practice was that G1 lived with a 24-hour helper and G2-D3 visited her regularly. However, three years ago, their practice changed to one of co-residence with family when G2-D3 moved to a southwest city because of her business and G2-D1 persuaded G1 to live with her in Tianjin. As a result, their co-residence of three generations was a traditional family practice, as in former times, and provided an effective way of performing filial piety, at least in terms of time and resources. Moreover, Mrs. Zhao (G2-D1) told me that she, with her husband, had moved from her hometown to Tianjin already more than 20 years ago. She felt guilty that she had escaped from her duty to care for her parents and wanted to do something to pay them back.

However, only a few months later, G1 wanted to go back to her own home in Qiqihar in the northeast of China. Thus, the three daughters (G2) discussed this again and hired another helper at home, and each G2 daughter in turn comes back to stay with their mother for four months of the year. Last year, G2-D3 also moved back to her hometown, but their family practice remained the same. G2-D2 and G2-D3 now have new-born grandchildren to look after and G2-D1 told her two sisters that she could spend more time with their mother because she does not have a grandchild yet. Therefore, it may be seen that their family members, particularly G2, faced the competing interests of childcare and eldercare. It is interesting that the traditional family practice of multiple generations living together had only limited acceptability to G1 in the Zhao family. The idea that G1's life-world is confined to the family is perhaps being challenged here by someone who still has a friendship circle and values being independent in her own home. The Zhao family perform a variation of co-residence, with each of her daughters living with G1 in turn. It can be shown in the Zhao family that the family practice is balanced by the family members' situations and G1's opinion is respected by G2.

### ***Resources in Zhao family***

In the Zhao family, unlike the Ye family who directly gave money to G3 to buy a house in the United States, G2 renovated their old apartment for the G3 couple to move in. During the renovation period, G2 asked G3 to come and live with them while G1 was there too. Talking about their feelings about living together, G2 and G3 had different points of view, but they agreed that they preferred to live separately in their own homes.

The renovation took around one year and cost around 200K CNY (about £22K). Because this apartment was a wedding gift from G3-female's parents, the single mother of G3-male also wanted to express her happiness by making a financial contribution. G2-D1 told me the details of the money flowing into the family:

*We paid half of the cost of their renovation and let his [the son-in-law's] mother pay half. We understand that it is difficult for a single mother, so it does not matter how much she spent. It is just an act of goodwill. But when our daughter and son-in-law lived in our home, we asked them to give us 5K CNY (about £571) monthly to cover costs, but I only took the money for two months and the rest we gave back to them and suggested they use the*



*money for travelling. Because the only aim of taking their money is that we want our son-in-law to realise that we agreed that they could live here, which is conditional, not free.*

When G3 planned to carry out the renovation and showed G2 their layout, the G2 couple did not agree with the idea entirely at all. G2-D1 said ‘They really want to spend huge amounts of money on renovation. I thought it was a complete waste of money, but I have to admit that the outcomes were pretty fascinating.’ The ideas of G2 on lifestyle and consumption vary from G3, but they also support the options of G3.

The young couple (G3) took up the task of taking care of their father (G2-Mr. Jia) while G2-D1 went back to stay with G1. G2-D1’s husband is relatively well, which is due to the delicate daily care of his wife, so that his several chronic illnesses are under control. Thus, after G2-D1 left, the G3 couple paid more attention to Mr. G2.

G2 emphasized that they had few opportunities to talk with G3, because they did not know how to have a conversation with them. When the researcher talked about filial piety, the G2 couple told me,

*We cannot easily communicate with our daughter, especially when she has her own family now. We take care of her grandparents and try our best to fulfil our duties. We believe that G3 will get the message because she sees her parents giving care to her grandmother. Learning by observing and absorbing good values is more effective than a lecture. (G2-couple in the Zhao family).*

This idea also was evidenced when I interviewed the G3 couple, who said,

*Our parents just say the same things again and again, and we have a lot to do at home, because we both work at home, and when we have time, we just want to watch a movie, sleep, or go travelling, but our parents cannot understand. We have such different lifestyles. But as to filial piety, we will do our best to take care of them just like they have done for our grandparents ... (G3-couple in the Zhao family).*

### ***Friction between G1 and G2 over the helper***

The helper, who has served for more than a year at G1's home, constantly asks them to increase her salary. The helper was suspected of having 'sticky fingers' and helping herself to food, but G1 was willing to forgive her for all this and her many other flaws that led G2-D1 to be irritated:

*For example, the female helper has been divorced for many years, but she hooked up with a stranger and just left without any word. A few days later, she came back, begged my mother to forgive her and hire her again. I was so angry, but my mother was just fine and accepted her again, which I cannot understand. (G2-D1 in the Zhao family).*

G2-D1 has tried to persuade her mother to come to Tianjin and live with them. She (G2) thought her mother might like to live with them (G2, G3) because G2-D1's home was close to her younger sister's home (G2-D2) and their family could meet more often. However, Mrs. G1 insisted on going back to her home after several months.

*I was used to living in my own home. It was good to live with my oldest daughter (G2-D1) because she has good hands for taking care of me, I know, but I prefer that she could come and visit me in my home. It is different ... they (G2, G3) are so busy ... they (G2) must help [G3] to decorate the apartment, I can do nothing to help ... (Mrs. G1 in the Zhao family).*

Independent seniors prefer living in their own space rather than living with an adult child's family members together. They are still considering helping, but their children are thinking about how to care for them.

### 7.2.3 The Wang family

The Wang family is made up of four generations: the G1 couple, two sons and two daughters in G2, four only children in G3, and a two-year-old girl in G4 who is G2-D3's granddaughter.

Table 7-4: Resources of Wang family

Resources		Occupation	Education	Money
G1	Male (87). Female (87).	Retired professional technician.	Bachelor's degree	Couple: Pension about 80,000 CNY (about £9,230) per year. Own one apartment in Shenyang
G2	G2-S1 (63)	Professor. S1's wife is a retired editor.	PhD degree. Bachelor's degree	Couple: 250,000 CNY (about £28,846) per year. Own two apartments in Tianjin (one to live in; one for investment). Own one car
	G2-S2 (61)	Self-employed. His wife is a construction engineering supervisor.	College degree	Income: unknown. (wife): about 200K CNY (about £23,077) per year. Own two apartments and two cars
	G2-D3 (54)	Doctor	Master's degree	Income: unknown. Owns two apartments
	G2-D4 (48)	Accountant manager in a national factory. Husband is a construction engineering supervisor and is a colleague of G2-S2's wife	Bachelor's degree	About 100K CNY (about £11,478) per year. (Husband): about 200K CNY (about £23,077) per year. Own one apartment and one car.
G3	Female (33)	Designer	Master's degree	200,000 CNY (about £23,077) per year. Owns her apartment in Beijing.

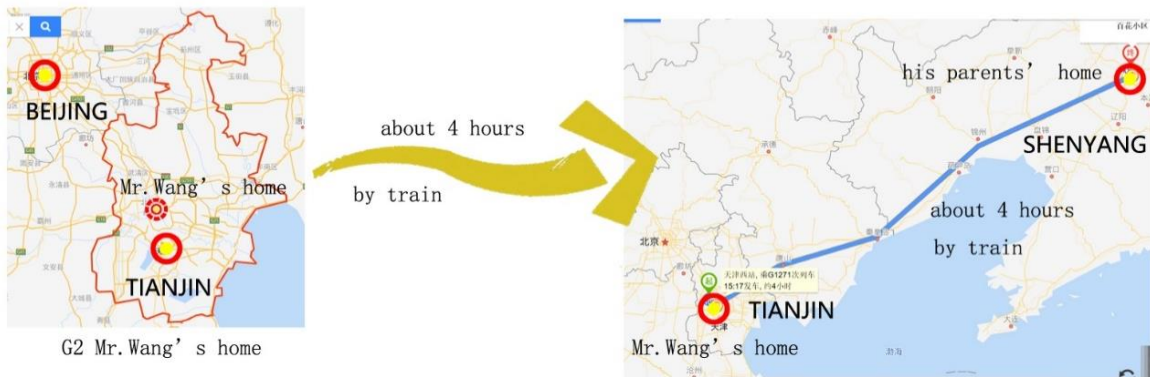
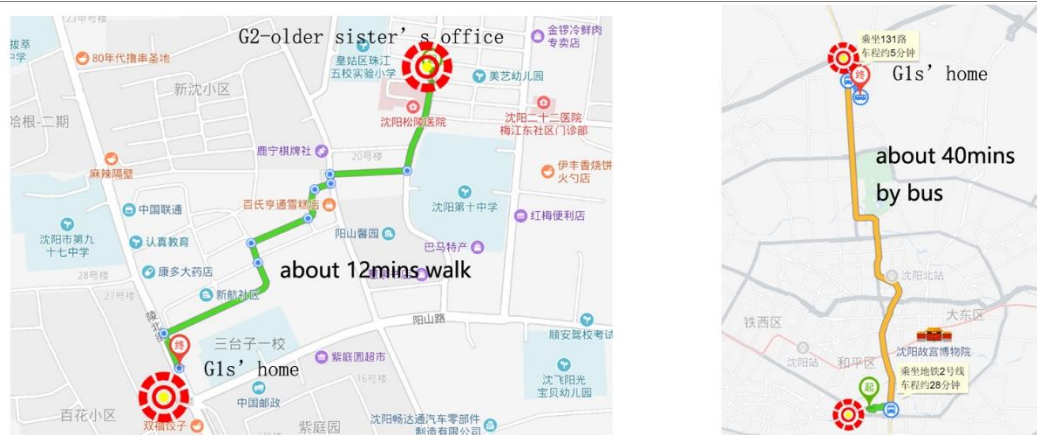


Figure 7-4: G2-S1's travels to G1's home



Figure 7-5: G2-D4 and G2-S2 are close to G1's home



G2-older sister's office close to the G1's home

G2-older sister's home

Figure 7-6: G1-D3's office is close to G1's home but her home is 40 minutes' distance from G1's home

It is shown from the above figures (Figure 7-4, Figure 7-5 and Figure 7-6) that three members of G2---excluding G2-S1---were residing with G1 in the same city. At first, their family practice was carried out only as the G1 couple called for G2-S2 to take care of them while he (G2-S2) lived

nearby, and G2-D4 could still visit frequently. Since Mrs. G1 became bedridden, G2-S2 decided to sleep in G1's home delivering support and he has considered quitting his job to look after his mother. However, several months later, G2-S2 told his siblings that he cannot continue because he felt depressed when he saw his mother's health worsening. He recommended that they employ a helper who could take care of their mother 24 hours a day at home.

G2-S1 (63) and his wife (G2, 61) migrated from Shenyang to Tianjin in 1999. Their G1 and other siblings still live in Shenyang. It takes about four hours to travel back to their hometown by train. G3-Mrs.Wang lives in Beijing, and she usually goes back to Tianjin monthly. Travelling between these two cities is convenient because there is a high-speed railway which takes only 30 minutes.

### ***Frequent changes of helper***

Eight different helpers to the Wang family have come and gone within a year, and two different organisations that introduced paid care workers have already quit. The helpers were not quite able to fulfil G1's needs. The evidence is shown below (Figure 7-7).



Figure 7-7: Screenshots of the conversations between helpers and the agency using the WeChat app

These two images are screenshots of conversations between the agency manager and a helper using the WeChat app, which were sent from the agency manager to G2-S2. The key point of the messages was that the helper talked about why she refused to work in the Wang family any longer, because she felt miserable staying with G1. The company manager's intention was to ask G2-S2 to persuade Mr. G1 to be friendly and show more kindness to helpers, since the manager may

easily have felt that Mr. G1 was a stubborn and strict person after several care workers had found excuses to quit this job.

At the end of the fieldwork period, G2-S1 told the researcher that they had finally found the explanation for the repeated changes of helpers. It might be that his father (G1) still wants assistance, not just his mother, but one helper does not assist two dependent older people at home efficiently. So, they were thinking about recruiting a couple of helpers to look after their parents. This would cost 6400 CNY (approximately £726) monthly. To cover their additional costs, G1 requested G2 to sell their old apartment. For more than five years, G1 has lived in the spare flat owned by G2-D3, since G2-D3 intended to upgrade her parents' living standards and purchased a new apartment near her parents' former one.

### **7.3 Common issues in these families**

China is undergoing profound changes due to a rapidly ageing population. However, China has not prepared well for the eldercare issues that result, so the care practices and support for the middle-class family have changed, and this has brought about severe conflicts for many generations (Cheung and Kwan, 2009; Wang and Wu, 2017; Zhang, 2017a). G1 are found in this chapter to have different attitudes to hiring a helper at home: in the first family Mr. G1 thought his daughters should look after him and only accepted a helper when he was persuaded that she was a relation; however, in the Zhao family it is G1 who states this is what she needs.

Therefore, the discussion considers several issues:

- Why hire a helper at home? The rationale of looking for a paid care worker.
- The process of how to hire someone. The practicalities of employing an outside person.
- What about the scope of the helper's duties and the issue of quality of care?
- Is it enough to hire a helper for G1? What else does this generation need?

#### **7.3.1 Why hire a helper at home?**

Partly from the consequence of the societal norm of family support for our older people, and because of the tremendous financial strain, the government has encouraged informal care to support older people. Public services that are state-funded only accept the 'three NOs' (no children, no relatives and no pension), while the private care home can only be afforded by the upper-middle class and above (Tu, 2016a). Therefore, there is a gap in care for the middle-class family. According to research, Zhang (2012) found that until 2012, 90% of the elderly still relied on family care (Tu, 2016a).

In addition, the number of formal care workers falls far short of the needs of seniors. According to Wang and Tian's (2015) research, there were more than 36 million bedridden or semi-bedridden older people in China, but only 356,000 care staff and 50,000 certified carers for seniors (Tu, 2016a). Thus, there is a long-term care problem for middle-class families, and particularly urban citizens, in planning for their ageing, because the entire one-child generation is mostly in their twenties or thirties or are even younger. Their parents are not yet dependent on them for intensive

care, but it could be imagined in 20 or 30 years that those needs may be an issue if they cannot be well planned for (Tu, 2016a).

A lack of domestic service is becoming more and more urgent problems in urban areas. A researcher (Teh, 2019) has stated that there are business opportunities regarding Chinese seniors' care because of a large gap between eldercare needs and market support. In detail, 49% of the older people have certain daily needs and some need formal help, but only 16% of them can be satisfied.

### ***The dilemma of working caregivers***

Caregivers in the Zhao and Wang families shared experiences of juggling work responsibilities and older parents' needs. In the Ye family, although G2-D1 said that she retired voluntarily, she explained taking care of her mother – who has dementia – accounted for part of her reasons.

*I quit my job ten years ago, partly because, at that time, my mother started to show some slight symptoms such as losing her keys, forgetting to pay at the market and so on. Another reason is that a policy was launched that would benefit pensioners at that point of time, so I decided to retire. In contrast, I encouraged my husband to work after his retirement, because he has two older sisters who take on the full duty of taking care of their older parents (G1), which he does not need to worry about. (G2-D1 in the Ye family).*

G2 in the Zhao family shared the memory of how they decided to retire:

*When my mother lived alone, I wanted to ask her to live with me, as I thought that I could look after her and work at the same time. But she insisted on finding a paid carer for her home, which accelerated my retirement plans. (G2-D1 in the Zhao family).*

It can be seen from the interviews that Mrs. G2 in both these families had the opportunity to choose to retire and become a pensioner because of the policy on female retirement age (50–55 years, depending on the workplace's specific regulations) in China. However, Mr. G2 would usually work until they are 60 or 65; at the university, that depends on the job position. For example,



*I am a professor at the university, and I love my job. Additionally, I want to accept the opportunity to work until 65 years old, but the problem is that my mother's health situation asks for 24-hour assistance. I come back to support my siblings as much as I possibly can, but still, I am already over 60 years old, and this practice has absorbed my energy because just the travel for commuting is about five hours by train. While care work is non-stop with no opportunity to rest or take a breath. It makes me anxious when my turn to care is coming but feel so guilty towards my family when I go back to work. (G2-S1 in the Wang family).*

From this interview, we can see that working children struggle with their work and caring duties. It has resulted in G2-S1 being unable to work wholeheartedly and, at the same time, he feels that he does not fulfil his family duty.

### ***Increasing care demands***

In only a decade, empty-nest older-people households, where someone is living alone or only with their spouse rose to 50% of the total of Chinese seniors from 38% in 2000 (Feng et al., 2017). Mid-aged children (G2) of parents who live alone or with no children around, they worry about their older parents all the time and cannot concentrate on their work. They practice diverse choices to maintain contact with their parents, but it is still difficult to feel easy about this situation, especially if one's parents are frail. However, it is hard to say whether this practice of long-distance intimacy is derived from 'love and respect' or 'abstract duty' (Sheng and Settles, 2006). Emotional support is most likely from adult children to older parents because they usually tell only the 'good news' to their parents – news that might make their parents happy rather than make them worried about them (Tu, 2016b).

Several aspects make family support impossible; where the oldest generation are bedridden and in need of long-term care, which is a challenge to adult children. For example, both G1 couples in the Ye family and Mrs. G1 in the Wang family are bedridden and need nursing care. Another crucial point is that there is not yet an adult child living near his or her older parents. For example, after the youngest child (G2) in the Zhao family moved to Sanya city, their mother (G1) is alone, which makes G2 worried about her (G1), especially at her age (more than 80 years old).

Some families have tried to obtain other support from local services. For instance, before hiring a helper in the Ye family, G2 used a meal delivery service to send lunch to G1's home for several years, which was managed by a local newspaper company and was provided only for local older people. G2-D1 told me that:

*When my mother got dementia, we found the service from Tonight newspaper's ads [the local newspaper], and the newspaper published the weekly menu. This service made our life easier because we had limited time to look after our parents and were always worried about whether they could have a meal on time. (G2-D1 (60) in the Ye family).*

However, these paid services are not adequate when both of their parents need long-term care. The difficulties of family caregivers are illustrated by the narratives of the Ye family and the Wang family:

*It is challenging for us to look after my father. It is impossible to cut his hair or wash his body by myself. I will wait for my sister to help, but she is quite busy with her work and usually takes the night shifts when looking after our father. We even cannot chat a while when we change over our shifts. Besides, she must prepare breakfast and dinner, and I will do the housework and take care of our mother. We cannot manage the situation without hiring someone to help. (G2-D1 (60) in the Ye family).*

*I cannot look after my mother for 24 hours. I feel so sad and incapable. My mother wants to go to the toilet quite often, like 7–8 times a night. But she refuses to use adult diapers at night, but she is so frail because of her heart disease and lost kidney function. So, I need to pick her up and move her to the toilet at night, 7–8 times. I cannot complain to her, but I am already more than 60 years old, I cannot always live like this ... I feel depressed and weak day by day. (G2-S2 (61) in the Wang family).*

In the Zhao family, G2-D1 shared her feelings about the endless worry about her mother:

*I moved out from my hometown around 1990, and I was the first child to leave my parents. After my two little sisters left, my mother was on her own.*

*Since then, I cannot feel at ease, and I dread calls in the evening because I am afraid my mother has had some emergency. (G2-D1, 63-year-old, in the Zhao family).*

### ***Care is affordable***

Tianjin's average monthly pension in 2018 was 3032 CNY (about £338) (Tianjin Statistical Bureau, 2019). In this study, members of G1 mostly have much more pension than this, which is especially true if the G1 couple both have pensions. So, hiring a helper is affordable for G1, who have been well educated and salaried. For example, in the Ye family, their daytime helper costs 4500 CNY (about £500 per month), which was agreed after discussion with the agency. In addition, there is an extra lunch cost for older people (15 CNY, equal to around £1.60 daily). Thus, including lunch, the care would cost them around 5000 CNY (about £558) per month.

*It was a reasonable price for caring for two older adults who were both bedridden. The fee covers typically one person, but we only offer services to older people nearby, so if the helper was happy with this price, we were delighted to make a deal. (Manager of the local care home).*

The cost of hiring a helper for the Ye family is affordable:

*My father has a pension of around 6000 CNY (about £687) per month, and my mother has 4000 CNY (about £458), so they have a total of 10,000 CNY (about £1146) per month. It is enough to hire a helper and there is some extra money for their medical needs. (G2-D1 in the Ye family).*

The parents' pension is the first fund from which family members to pay for such expenses and family members normally choose a way to care that costs less than the pension:

*My father (Mr. G1) asked me to sell their apartment since they moved into the new apartment that my sister (G2-D1) bought for them. But I thought it was not necessary to sell in a rush and they do not lack money. Because their pension is nearly 7000 CNY (about £802) monthly, it is quite enough for their living expenses if we do not hire a helper. After hiring two helpers at home, which costs 6400 CNY (about £733) per month, the pension is*

*tight. Thus, I decided to sell their apartment to pay for their care. (G2-S2 in the Wang family).*

However, resources mean that care is not always affordable for a single older person, especially a widow whose pension is only slightly above the average. Although there is not a clear standard for a domestic helper's wage, it cannot be below the average market income (see Table 7-5 below).

*Table 7-5: Price list of domestic helpers in Tianjin*

Type of helper		Tasks normally include	Normal wage in Tianjin	Comments
Live-in	Independent older people	Preparing three meals per day, housework, etc. including helper's meals and accommodation	3500 CNY (£391) per month	Detailed work may be negotiated. Employee is almost always from another city who needs money and a place to live, ordinarily due to escaping an unhappy marriage.
	Assisted living for older people	Preparing three meals per day, housework, care work., etc. including helper's meals and accommodation	4500–8000 CNY (£500–£894) per month	
	Dependent older people or dementia care	Preparing three meals per day, housework, care work, etc. including helper's meals and living at home.	6000+ CNY (more than £670) per month	
Day care at home	Independent older people	Meals, housework, etc. including helper's lunch	1500+ CNY (more than £167) per month	Detailed work may be negotiated. Most of the employees are women, but sometimes some male helpers are usually introduced between employers
	Assisted living for older people	Meals, housework, care work, etc. including helper's lunch	3000–5000 CNY (£335–£558) per month	
	Dependent older people or dementia care	Meals, housework, care work, etc. including helper's lunch	4500+ CNY (more than £500) per month	
Part-time		Care for older people who stay in hospital after operation (need to pay for care worker's meals)	200 CNY/day (£22 per day excluding care worker's meals)	Professional care workers in a hospital

*(Source: Baidu.com; Zhihu.com)*

It can be found from the table above that the lowest wage was 3500 CNY (£391) per month to take care of a healthy senior. Therefore, a single pension cannot be left with much money after paying the wages of a care worker living and helping at home.

### ***Intensive assistance makes G2 feel depression***

G2-D1 stated that her father was spoiled by themselves (three daughters) because they care a great deal about his feelings. The three daughters listen to him carefully, so in their family, this made him selfish at home, and G2-D1 felt her father does not think about others' feelings. For example,

when I visited G1's home, G1 was complaining to the helper that his youngest daughter massaged him but hurt him doing so. He still felt pain the next day, so he complained, 'My daughter treats me like a dog!! She hurt me!' When G2-D3 explained the situation to her older sister while crying, G2-D1 comforted her, 'I see, I see, our father always blames me, so I have experiences that you do not take so seriously, just think he is acting like a child. Let him yell, and after that, he will forget and feel more comfortable.' Her sister (G2-D3) was sobbing and nodding her head with no words, and then she went out to go to work.

The members of G2 in those families seek time to enjoy themselves after retirement. Moreover, caregivers try to have a break from ongoing care issues.

*My routine is taking the bus to the bus stop nearest my parents' home, then changing to ride a bike and buy some fruit on the way to their home. After arriving at their home, a busy day starts; I don't get to have a rest until it is nearly noon. Sometimes, I only want to have a cup of coffee in the café and do nothing, merely watching people walk around ... but, at home, I have many hobbies, such as growing flowers, knitting, etc. ... (G2-D1 in the Ye family).*



Figure 7-8: Flowers in G2's living room



Figure 7-9: G2-D1 demonstrates her hobby (knitting)

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Parents' health situation will worsen, while some adult children are already on the verge of emotional breakdown. G2-S2 feels to the extent that his own life is on hold:

*I feel sad and powerless ... I have a 10-year hobby of doing exercises in the early morning, and I thought I was much healthier than most people of my age (61). Thus, when my father asked me to look after them, I did not*

*hesitate. But after a month of 24-hour caring for my mother, I cannot continue ... the worse my mother's situation is, the worse my depression is.*  
(G2-S2 in the Wang family).

### 7.3.2 The decision to hire a paid helper

To hire a helper for older parents is a complex decision in a family with several children. Powell (2018, p. 117) has argued that decision-making in a family is not an independent choice; it is made as ‘complex intergenerational family negotiations.’ It seems the primary caregiver of the parents and the oldest child has a strong voice (see Table 7-6 below) as do the older parents too.

*Table 7-6: Caregivers in each family*

<b>Family</b>	<b>Caregivers</b>	<b>Main support</b>
Ye family	Three daughters. One female helper.	The oldest daughter (G2) delivers support in the day shift; the youngest daughter (G2) takes the night shift.
Zhao family	Three daughters. One female helper.	Three daughters (G2) in turn (four months per year each).
Wang family	Two sons and two daughters. Female helper/ two helpers.	The second son (G2) takes on most of the duties, such as finding helpers, negotiating duties and cost, and arranging caring schedules. The older daughter (G2) and youngest daughter (G2) also deliver support.

In some cases, it was not G1's idea to hire a helper at home. Some of them prefer their child (G2) to take care of them, because it is an affront to their ideas of how families should work to let a stranger provide physical support. There is some evidence in this study:

*At first, I (G2-D1) suggested we hire a helper, which was refused by my father (G1). It was nearly a month-long negotiation between my sisters and me; we (G2) decided to tell a lie to our father that the helper was a distant relative in his oldest son-in-law's family. Moreover, we told our father that he could ask her to help him with no hesitation as you would with your daughters.* (G2-D1 in the Ye family).

However, the researcher observed that Mr. G1 was ashamed to ask his helper to change his urine bag. Most of the current supply of helpers are female (Wang and Wu, 2017), which may cause older men to feel embarrassed about asking for help with intimate tasks. There was an increase in male helpers in the Beijing services market from 2.4% to 13% between 2000 and 2006 (Wang and Wu, 2017). This is a trend to be encouraged.

Elsewhere, Mrs. G1 in the Zhao family, who is in good health, was not averse to hiring a helper, which made the decision-making process much easier.

*I want my daughter to stay with me of course, but they also have their problems to solve, which I understand. I only hope they could visit me more often ... (Mrs. G1 in the Zhao family).*

*My mother is a very dignified woman, who loves everything to be clean and organized. These standards were more and more difficult to meet as her body was not as healthy as before. We (G2) worry about her and hope she is going to enjoy high quality of life even in her later life, so we wanted to recruit a helper, which we all agreed upon quickly in my family. (G2-D1 in the Zhao family).*

Unexpected changes occur in people's life cycles that make people forced to make new choices. Those can be seen by these three families in the process of recruiting helpers. Although Mrs. G1 has been bedridden for almost five years in the Ye family, the three daughters have tried their best to look after their mother. However, this stability was destroyed by the limited mobility of Mr. G1 at the beginning of 2019, which means that they (G2-three daughters) had to look after their mother and father simultaneously. Similarly, it was the suddenly deteriorating condition of Mr. G1 in the Wang family that made it impossible for their primary caregiver, G2-S2, to deliver the required physical assistance. After the youngest daughter (G2-D3) moved out of their hometown in the Zhao family, there was no offspring living there, leaving their mother (Mrs. G1) potentially unsupported. Thus, they decided to hire a helper.

Furthermore, considering that dealing with a paid caregiver at home means that a stranger is immediately part of family life makes it very difficult to cope when a caregiver is behaving unpleasantly. Bringing someone into the home inevitably eliminates family privacy, even for 24 hours a day, regardless of the need for support. There are three main types of paid care workers in the domestic services system: the helper who stays either for 24 hours a day, during the daytime or part-time. The part-time helper is very common with young adult couples who are busy at work and have little time to do housework, where the helper is primarily in charge of cleaning. Recently, more and more older adults have accepted this way of receiving help, including cooking, cleaning,

and delivering groceries. For older people who are in general good health, this kind of service gives them convenience and, to a certain degree, keeps their privacy at the same time.

The most difficult challenge is living with someone unfamiliar to family members. A good relationship between the hirer and care worker could make this contract relatively stable, which is the most important thing for a family that requires long-term care services. However, the reality is uncertain to be predicted since an outsider is involved in a family's everyday life.

G2-S1's wife shared a terrible memory of hiring a male helper

*It was about 20 years ago that my father (G1) was bedridden, relying mostly on my mother to look after him. As the situation became worse and worse, my mother was overloaded. So, at that time, I went back to Shenyang to help my mother to find a male care worker who was strong enough to move my father and give baths to him. Nonetheless, the nightmare started. That guy who I hired from an agency had a history of violence. He tried to blackmail my family, and I finally requested my friend, a policeman, to get rid of him ... (G2-S1's wife in the Wang family).*

The helper in the Ye family did not reveal her real age and ID card details:

*I cannot ask her [the helper's] age directly because that is so rude. I think she is more than 60 years old. Still, I have recruited her from a care home that works as an agency between employer and employee, so, the agency tries to avoid private contact between employer and employee. They do not give personal information to employers. But because of her age, I am afraid that my family would get into trouble if she became sick due to intensive housework at my parents' home. We (G2) are all worried about that ... so I want to make sure of her age ... or maybe change a carer... (G2-D1 in the Ye family).*

A paid caregiver was suspected of pilfering:

*The woman has already worked at my mother's home for a year. She has asked for a rise in her wages several times this year, because, you know,*



*my mother's pension was rising this year, so she asked if her wage could increase at the same time. Also, I cannot understand that a box of sausages that my classmate brought me just disappeared. There are only two people at home, my mother and her. My mother cannot eat that much in so short a time; obviously, she [the helper] steals, but my mother told me just to let it go because it would be embarrassing to make everything clear ... Still, I thought it revealed the helper's sticky fingers ... (G2-D1 in the Zhao family).*

The care workers gossiped about the family's home situation:

*The helpers are changed several times, and they were from the same service agency. These helpers discussed my father secretly and believed he treated the helpers too harshly. They [the helpers] complained to their boss about my father's living patterns, and they shared details about my family's condition. Several of their gossip messages were screenshotted by their boss and sent to my brother (G2-S2). The boss aimed to ask us to persuade our father (Mr. G1) to change his lifestyle a little, which was awkward, but we (G2) do not have a choice because we need their [the helpers and service agency] support ... (G2-S1 in the Wang family).*

The stereotype that care workers have poor working practices is widely understood within Chinese society. More importantly, it has been shown that some shortcomings have already influenced the well-being of families who hired domestic helpers. The lack of a supervision system to protect both the payer and receiver should be taken seriously. This will be returned to in the discussion chapter later.

### 7.3.3 What does the helper do? Why rely on them?

First and foremost, domestic helpers perform physical tasks. The cost varies between the helpers who live in and those who do not. This means that if the helper lives at home, they will also do the night shift (24 hours of work). A day-shift helper (as with the Ye family) and a 24-hour helper (as with Zhao and Wang family) are available to the three families in this chapter. So, what is the helper doing exactly? For illustration, there are two screenshots below (see Figure 7-10 and Table 7-7) sent to the researcher by Mrs. Ye (G2-D1) showing the work list of the assistant in the contract.

← 护理表.xlsx QQ浏览器文件服务				
	A	B	C	D
2	年 月	1	2	3
3	1.日间护理/天			
4	2.翻身、活动四肢/天			
5	3.大小便器具消毒/天			
6	4.清理房间卧室/天			
7	5.地面清洁消毒/天			
8	6.喂水喂药/天			
9	7.餐具消毒、中午喂饭/天			
10	8.上下午喂水果各一次/天			
11	9.三洗、擦身子/天			
12	10.衣物清洗/周			
13	11.床单清洗/2周			
14	12.剪指甲/2周			
15	13.剪头理发/月			
16	14.刮胡子/3天			
17	护理员签字			
18	签字			
19	注：除第14项外其余各项护理均是针对两位			

Figure 7-10: Care tasks of paid helper (see translations below)

Table 7-7: Care tasks of paid care workers (including daily, weekly and monthly tasks)

1	Day care/daily	8	Help to eat fruit/daily
2	Turnover, help to do exercises/daily	9	Help to wash body/daily
3	Clean the toilet/daily	10	Do the laundry/weekly
4	Clean the bedroom/daily	11	Clean the bedsheets/every two weeks
5	Clean the floor/daily	12	Cut nails/every two weeks
6	Help to drink water or take medicines/daily	13	Cut the hair/monthly
7	Help to eat meals/daily	14	Shave/every three days
	Signed		Date

As seen in the table, the care worker was to carry out all the practical tasks throughout the day. Both the Zhao and Wang families employed 24-hour helpers (who live at the employer's home and are on standby for the needs of older people). Thus, their helpers resided with their older parents all day and, except for the holidays, took over the practical tasks of the offspring.

Helpers may relieve family caregivers' mental stress. The helpers were valuable to the families as they could improve the families' well-being, and by caring for the older members in the family, they could reduce the strain of overloaded family duties that could impair individuals' mental

health (Zelezna, 2018). For example, G2-S2 of the Wang family has mentioned this in his conversations and felt depressed when he stayed in his parents' home. There is another piece of evidence in the Ye family:

*There had already been five years of careful care of my mother by our sisters after she was diagnosed with dementia. Now, my father is also bedridden, which means both need careful care. My father is so stubborn, which makes it much harder to meet his needs. I feel so exhausted and tired, but the situation improved after the helper came to assist us and I might [be able to] have a break or maybe go out for a bit to change my mood.*  
(G2-D1 in the Ye family).

#### **7.3.4 Is it enough to hire a helper to deliver physical support for G1?**

The emotional support of children is still vitally important to older people who hire a domestic helper at home. For example, in the Ye family, Mr. G1 has been bedridden for a month, and he is coherent but frail. He could talk vividly to the researcher about his life stories, studying experiences, and time as a teacher and his students. It is apparent that he loves to speak with someone. However, during the conversation, he repeatedly asked 'When could I walk again? How long could it be? What do you think?' The helper and researcher both comforted him that 'You will recover very well soon'. The helper even described animatedly that he would be healthy soon and go out with her accompanying him. However, Mr. G1 still kept asking, until G2-D1 responded to him that he would get better and better in the future. After being told that, Mr. G1 was satisfied and had a light smile on his face. It is impressive that the older father was eager to receive a positive response from his adult child, or maybe because he is also afraid that he might not regain his mobility.

In addition, cooking skills are also crucial for older people. In my study, several of the older people have mentioned the helpers' cooking skills. In the Zhao family, Mrs. Zhao (G2-D1) told the researcher that her mother (Mrs. G1) had taught the helper how to cook delicious and tasty food for her.

*Can you imagine that my mother (Mrs. G1) refused to change the helper who stole a box of sausages because she cooks well? Besides, my mom*

*always accepts it when she [the helper] asks for a rise in her wages. My mom is a picky person when it comes to cooking, and I also learn from her ... (G2-D1 in the Zhao family).*

There was a similar story in the Wang family. For instance, G2-S2 told me that this helper could stay in G1's home longer because she cooks well. On the other hand, in the Ye family, G2 pay for the local care home to deliver lunch to older people because they believed that asking the care worker to cook is very troublesome – that the carer could easily be distracted by other chores. To compensate for the taste of old parents, G2-D3 always cooks dinner for them (G1) when she takes over from the helper; the favourite dishes her father (G1) – noodles and egg custard – are on the list of food to be cooked.

Furthermore, training programmes should be made free for informal caregivers on eldercare or older people themselves. This is an important point that I noticed during my fieldwork. Because older people's health situations need to be monitored, mistaking a medicine dosage may be more serious for a frail older person than others. For example, Mrs. G1 in the Zhao family had to go to hospital because she had taken a normal dosage of medicine for an adult; after seeing a doctor, she was told that older people need to reduce the dosage to half. G2-D1 was a pharmacist and professional nurse, so her mother always asked for her advice when taking medicines, but even she still had no experiences of frail seniors; the situation was dangerous.

*My mom always takes some painkiller or pills for a headache when she had a cold or fever. But this time, after she had taken two pills, she felt unwell. My sister (G2-D3) sent her to the hospital and the doctor told us that older people like my mother should cut down the dosage of medicines ... I felt so sorry for my mother ... (G2-D1 in the Zhao family).*

Something similar happened in the Ye family; fortunately, they were supported by their care home manager, who had more than ten years of caring for older people.

*My father had abnormal defecation after he was bedridden. We (G2) had no idea [what to do], and we decided to call an ambulance from the hospital nearby to help us. The helper called her boss, then the care home manager came and delivered help. It was impressive. You have to say that*

*it is necessary to hire an experienced helper, which makes older people like my father more comfortable. My father had a good appetite after that day. Thus, I finally knew why he ate so little in the days before that day ... (G2-D1 in the Ye family).*

From the fieldwork, the researcher notes that the agency market should be well organized, and the training of domestic helpers should be more professional and systematic. In addition, some female helpers may suffer verbal or physical abuse; some bedridden men feel uncomfortable asking a female helper to do intimate tasks, such as changing urine bags or clothes, or giving a bath. That can be avoided, or older people's stress alleviated through proper training.

Besides, social connection plays an important role for those members of G2 who have moved to another city. Some internal migrants moved in their middle age, and they already have built up their social network in the new city. Mr. G2, in the Wang family, suggested that a social network could benefit caregivers:

*I am the oldest son in my family, and according to the traditional filial piety, I need to take care of my parents at home. But I moved to Tianjin in 1999 and have already settled down. Thus, I could not live with my parents, which makes me [feel] guilty, and I try my best to go back and visit them. On the other hand, I attend our community after-dinner-walking group. After chatting, I found other people my age has the same problem, so we talk and release the stress, which makes me much more peaceful. We try our best to take care of our parents in our own ways so that we do not need to feel guilty. Thus, I thought it was a benefit to me to join in social activities. (G2-S1 in Wang family)*

It can be seen from the conversation that the paid live-in care worker is taking care of his parents, but the in-depth guilt that derived from respect for traditional culture is still surrounding him. Luckily, engaging social activities and finding people who have the same experience work well to ease those emotions.

## 7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, these three families shared the dilemma that one or both older adults were needing long-term care, but this was not temporarily weakened by grandchild care and there were other siblings to share the duties. Therefore, three of the G2-S in these interviewed families were willing to work full time and were willing to add to the family's financial capital particularly during unforeseen circumstances; these G2-S were willing to financially support, such as family emergencies, medical bills or an increase in the salary of the helper. Mrs. G2 who, in her late middle age or early older age, was expected to aid G1 or her husband; they either chose to retire, such as G2-D1 in the Ye household, or to be pushed to retire after considering family circumstances, such as G2-D1 in the Zhao family.

In conclusion, there are still a few questions that should be considered. Firstly, conventional eldercare experience does not fulfil the needs of those families. There are different explanations as to why adult children (G2) continue to apply for extra assistance to take care of their older parents (G1), particularly when they need to move to another area, or when they need long-term care due to the health problems of G1, etc. There is at least one G2 person in each family that might come and supervise every day, which is why G1 accepts a stranger living at home.

Secondly, helpers are unwilling to share sensitive information with their employer. For example, in the Ye family, how should one deal with the issue that the helper is trying to conceal her personal information? Is it acceptable that the helper hides his or her personal records? And to what degree should the employer know the helper's information before the helper enters the home?

Third, why are individuals becoming domestic helpers? It may be that they need money, and they do not have other skills. Or they may want to do something that is worthwhile. In several informal encounters with care workers, I learnt that some care workers feel that their job is still a position of low social status. For example, an informant told the researcher that if her family was satisfied or her daughter did not badly need money, no child would let their mother do this nursing work, which is another way of saying that she felt she was a 'servant'.

## **Chapter 8. Families with no G1**

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## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces three families whose G1 is no longer alive, so those in G2 are the oldest members of their families. This generation is considering their future preparations for ageing in these families.

In this chapter, G2, who are starting their later lives, no longer belong to the ‘sandwich generation’. They move the family responsibilities over to G3. Although it has become more commonplace for grandparents to play a substantial caregiving function (Falkingham *et al.*, 2020), each family’s condition is far more distinct. Compared with G1, G2 are early retirees and still energetic, while G3 want work and family commitments to be balanced. Luckily, G2 are now in good health and able to look after G4 in some households, which makes it simpler for G3. Without this help, juggling career and family is difficult for G3.

The situations of three families, the Kong family, the Han family, and the Fu family, are unpacked in this chapter. The condition and relationships of each family will be addressed first. Grandparents offering childcare is the shared goal of all three families. As healthy retirees, how do they meet or understand in the sense of is it just physical childcare or other things too, particularly without distractions from eldercare? Do they have a more balanced later life than their counterparts in the last two chapters? How do G3 respond if their parents are hesitant to provide childcare support?

## 8.2 Family stories

### 8.2.1 The Kong family

The Kong family is made up of three generations: a G2 couple, a G3 couple (the only-child generation), and two children in G4 (see the Table 8-1 below). They (except G3-S's father) are now co-resident in G3's three-room apartment. G3 is the first middle-class household in this family.

*Table 8-1: Resources of Kong family*

Resources		Participants	Occupation	Education	Money
People	G2	Husband (60). Wife (59) (G3-wife's parents).	Retired worker.  Retired salesperson	Did not go to high school	Pension: 3500CNY (about £404) per month. Pension: 4000 CNY (about £462) per month
	G3	D (35) (the first contact person of this family).  Her husband (41)	Housewife.  Engineer of railway company	Master's degree	Income: about 500K CNY (about £57,691) per year Own two properties: one for G3 couple, G4 and G3-wife's parents' co-resident together, one for investment. Own a car
	G4	S1 (6). D2 (6 months).			
Locations		G2 had a 40 m <sup>2</sup> apartment, but they have sold the apartment to move in with G3-D.			

G3-D (wife) was formerly a designer in the architecture department of a state-owned corporation, but she gave up her job to look after G4 and take up full-time family duties. Her husband is now the only full-time employee, and he will be in various places depending on the project location. The apartment for G2/G3/G4 coresident is around 150 m<sup>2</sup> (see Figure 8-1) and is a three-room apartment with two bathrooms, which has been seen as an improvement for their living condition from Mrs.G3's perspective. They are now the cornerstone generation and earners of this family and represent the new middle class.

Their apartment is situated in a large neighbourhood with public amenities such as a sports centre, kindergarten (see Figure 8-2 below), stores, etc. Therefore, it is easier for G3-D to take her son to school and go out for groceries.



Figure 8-1: The living room



Figure 8-2: Kindergarten in the community

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### *Life stories*

G2 in the Kong family have their own activities, such as socializing with their friends, dancing, and travelling. Mrs. G2 wants to enjoy her later life rather than looking after her grandchildren but she accepted the idea of living with her daughter when it was proposed. At first, Mr. G2 decided to lend his daughter a hand, so he used to help look after his first grandson (G4-S1) so that his daughter was able to work at least part-time thanks to his assistance with childcare. However, this situation only lasted for about two years.

G3-D told the researcher that:

*My mother never looks after my son at all. My father wants to help me, but he is so careless that I cannot depend on him, because my son has got ill so often in that period. It makes me determined to quit the job to take care of him by myself.*



Figure 8-3: Pet of G4



Figure 8-4: Hand-made pyjamas for G4

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G3-D's husband works for a national railway company with a good salary. The job requires the engineer to live where the project is. Therefore, her husband comes back home only once a month. Everything is dependent on G3-D.

*I understand how difficult things are for my wife. She needs to deal with everything by herself. I cannot be there, but I try to keep in touch with my family by using social media. I stand by her side when she complains to me a lot about her parents because I cannot be there to help her. I try my best to persuade them, but it did not work, so I always tell her that she can rely on me. (G3-husband in the Kong family).*

At their post graduate studies, G3-D and her husband were classmates and got to know each other. During that time, when the G3 husband lost his mother, they supported each other and went through those painful days together. His father, who is in good health, lives in a small town in the province of Shandong. Due to the inconvenience of travelling with young children, they visit him once a year.

### ***Tensions and conflicts***

There are issues about taking care of G4 within the family. That affects the attitude of G3 towards her parents. G3-D says she would not be looking after her parents, because when she felt exhausted,

her parents cannot lend her a hand. Although G3-D does not like to explain too much her facial expression reflects her disappointment.

G3-wife recalled that she tried to cut down her work schedule when she knew she was pregnant. She tried to work half-days, but it did not work for her.

*Working in the design sector, you know, you cannot get the job done before the piece of work has been constructed, so I have always brought the work home before. I cannot put my heart fully into the design work when my son was born. So, I quit my first job and got a part-time job. At that time, my dad promised that he would like to take care of his grandson. That was why I figured I would be able to balance my job and family in the first two years. However, I had found it unreliable to count on one's parents; at least I cannot trust my parents. I took care of my son by myself then; I am a housewife now, and I am pregnant again, eight months already. No one offers me a hand now; I am supposed to rely on myself. (First interview with G3-wife in the Kong family).*

She expressed her disappointment with her parents and the jealousy of her friends. Her conversation was full of depression and frustration, and she had not even told any of her friends that she was pregnant with a second child. She was jealous of her friends who served in colleges or civil service agencies because they had a long period of maternity leave, and their job was relatively less stressful. Also, when they sought support, their parents at least offered a hand.

*You see, now, I am pregnant again ... happy though, but I do not want to tell any of our friends yet ... and I do regret now that I asked my parents to live with me. Now I must send my son to school every day and look after myself well, but also, I need to cook for my parents! I even suspect that no one will look after me when I deliver the second baby, and who will take care of my son at that time? I feel so tired all the time ... my parents did not even take care of me well when I was a child ... I would not be happy to take care of my ageing parents and I even do not want to look after my grandkids in future ... (G3-wife in the Kong family).*



Figure 8-5: Tidy kitchen



Figure 8-6: Organised lifestyle

G3-D's kitchen (see Figure 8-5 and Figure 8-6 above) shows that she is a tidy person and likes things to be organized. When the researcher asked G3 how she felt about her own later life, she told me that:

*We [my husband and I] already have a plan that we would like to move to a small town where there are lower living costs and a better environment. Or maybe find a high-quality care home in that small town. We cannot depend on our children in the future and to be honest, we will refuse the duty of looking after grandchildren as well ...*

This new G2 as it were, people who are freed of work and see their life now as an opportunity for pleasure and relaxation, which is an unusual circumstance out of all ten families interviewed. The G3 couple takes the obligations onto their shoulders, performing as the man earning money outside the home, and the woman taking all the family duties. The G3-wife appears to have a strong voice in the Kong family and her current situation has clearly coloured her thinking about her own later life and her determination not to care for older or younger generations.

### 8.2.2 The Han family

The Han family is made up of three generations, including the G2 couple, the G3 couple, and a son in G4 (see Table 8-2 below). The three generations (G3-S's parents, G3-S and his wife, and their son) are co-resident in G3's two-room apartment in Tianjin.

Table 8-2: Resources of the Han family

Resources		Participants	Occupation	Education	Money
People	G2 (husband's parents)	Husband (63). Wife (62).	Civil servant	College	Pension: About 8K CNY (about £923) per month. Own one apartment in hometown to live in at some point in later life
	G3	S (36). His wife (36).	Electrical engineer. Design manager.	Bachelor's degree	Income: 350K CNY (about £40,384) per year. 400K CNY (about £46,153) per year. Own two apartments: one for G3 couple, G4 and G3-husband's parents' co-resident together. One for investment. Own a car.
	G4	S (4)			

The G2 couple has moved from a city in the northeast (Anshan) to Tianjin and co-reside with the G3 couple to help to look after G4.



Figure 8-7: Locations between current residence and hometown of G2

Comparing the two families in this chapter so far, the younger couple (G3) are living with G3-wife's parents in the Kong family, while in the Han family, the G3 couple lives with G3-husband's parents. Furthermore, the family structure is different from the Kong family in that the G3 couple are both only children. The G3-wife in the Han family is not an only child; she has (unusually) a younger brother who can share the responsibility of caring for their parents.

The G2 couple were officials in Anshan city, Liaoning province (a tier-three city in northeast China). In their hometown, they are classified as middle-class status, which is based on their pension, jobs, and education. They (G2) live with G3 and G4 in G3's flat in Tianjin because it is important to take care of G4 and for the G3-wife to return to work.

G3-wife's parents (G2) were previously farmers and lived in the village of Tianjin, which was later urbanized. Their original house was a bungalow with a yard that was exchanged for three apartments in a new community in the town. This G2 couple have no pensions, but they still help their son (G3) to manage his shop and look after their grandchildren (G4). Moreover, G3-wife's parents (G2) and her younger brother (G3-S2) live separately in two apartments but in the same unit, and the extra one is rented as an income stream. It may be judged that her parents focus on their son, and in turn, the son would assume responsibility for their care.

### *Narratives of the Han family*

The G3-husband and his wife were schoolmates and met each other at the university and had a long relationship before marriage. They tried to settle down in Beijing at first, which was difficult because of the *hukou* (registration permit) and the high price of housing. Then, they decided to settle down in Tianjin, which was less stressful and close to G3-wife's parents.

The G3 couple belong to the new middle class now. It seems that they can balance their family duties and career very well, supported by G2 (G3-husband's parents). When G3-wife had their son (G4), she gave up her job and looked after her son for nearly one year. During that year, they had limited money to pay the mortgage, so, the G3-husband suggested his parents to come to Tianjin and help to look after G4. After that, the career situation of the G3 couple got back on track.

In the Han family, the three generations are co-residents, appearing to be the same as the Kong family, but the distinction is that the G2 Han couple still have their own property in their hometown, so they can make other decisions later in life.



G3 wife -part of the single child generation - is the second person (the first one is the G3-husband in the Li family of Chapter 6) in this study to have a sibling and therefore to have another family member to share care and decision making. G3-female's brother lives close to her parents, so she can pay less attention to them. Her mother and father-in-law were living with them, and they shared the larger space in their apartment. They are living in a new community that was built in 2012, developed by Vanke (the most famous real estate company in China). Moreover, they are planning to buy another apartment located in the most popular school district of *Nankai* district for their son.

### ***Tensions***

The G3-wife in the Han family works diligently, and she told me that

*Ageing is asking for nothing but money! I have to earn much more money to prepare to get to later life ...*

She has the same situation as the G3-wife in the Kong family because she cannot depend on her parents, though there, it was a lack of trust between generations; here the issue is the lack of financial resources of G2. Fortunately, her mother and father-in-law came to Tianjin to take care of their grandson (G4), which makes it possible to put her full energy into her career and purchase better standards for living.

As was obvious in the Kong family, co-habitation leads to many struggles, but the Han family nevertheless retains peace and harmony on the face of things. The G3-wife, for example, told me that

*I think my mother and father-in-law are happy living here because they have selected the best space in our apartment that we [my husband and I] have paid for! My husband and I are sleeping in a small room with our son! Can you imagine that? But what can I say, at least they (G2) help to look after my son, otherwise I would be powerless without their help, right?*

Then, the researcher asked about her parents' situation. She responded:

*You know that I have a younger brother who lives near to my parents, so they [my parents] help my brother to take care of my nephew and my new-*

*born niece lately, and of course my brother looks after them [my parents] in exchange. So, I do not have much to worry about.*

However, certain things have happened in a household where each has their own opinions, such as Mrs. G2 (G3-husband's mother) having her own concerns:

*My daughter-in-law is so stressed at work that she has little time to take care of my grandson (G4). We have got to support her. While my son often works overtime, she [the daughter-in-law] works late into the night or early in the morning every day. In my mind, I hope she will pay more attention to my grandson, but you know, the younger generation has the desire to make more money. It is not wrong, but I think you are expected to balance your family obligation and have time to be with your child.*

The researcher also asked G2 (G3-husband's parents) how to plan for later life. They replied:

*As for later life, we are hoping to go back to Anshan city. There are a lot of relatives in our hometown, and we should support each other. They (G3) are too busy. We cannot count on them to look after us.*

There are some common issues in the Han family: first, the problem between the daughter-in-law and her husband's mother. This can happen in any household, but co-residence makes it more tense. Second, the G3-husband ignores the obligations of family relations. For instance, some clues may be seen from the layout of the room. The G2 couple share the best space in the apartment and the G3-husband has a separate game-playing space (see Figure 8-8 below). Though the G3-wife works late and has little time to stay at home, she deliberately seems to return home late to keep the family harmony.



*Figure 8-8: G3-husband's gaming room*



*Figure 8-9: G3 and G4's bedroom*

It can be seen from the Figure 8-9 above that G3 had little time to clean their bedroom, that G3 was busy with work, and that G4 was busy with his studies. It can be suggested that G2 and G3 do not interfere with each other's room cleaning, and G2 would keep protecting privacy at G3's spaces when G3 left home.

However, these issues do not seem to be as essential as taking care of G4 because G2 offers the opportunity for G3-wife to concentrate on her career. She is a major part of the financial resources of the Han family. Then, it could be understood why she told the researcher at first, 'Money is the most important thing in later life!' because she equates her earning capacity with power, at least in the domestic sphere of the home.

### 8.2.3 The Fu family

The Fu family is made up of three generations: the G2 couple (G3-husband's parents), the G3 couple, and a girl in G4 (see Table 8-3 below). The G2 couple (G3-husband's parents) moved to Qingdao to help G3 to take care of G4 after they retired. Before G2 moved, they (G2 and G3-S) have lived in Tianjin several years, and G2 still have a property in Tianjin. The interviews focus on G2-husband's parents and the G3 couple in their family.

Table 8-3: Resources of Fu family

Resources		Participants	Occupation	Education	Money
People	G2	Husband (68). Wife (67).	Retired professor. Retired doctor.	Bachelor's degree	Pension: 10K CNY (about £11,538) per month. 7K CNY (about £8,077) per month. Own two apartments: one for G2 to live in. Another property is empty in Tianjin. Own a car.
	G3	S (41); His wife (40)	Architect design director. Design manager.	Bachelor's degree	Income: about 450K CNY (about £51,922) per year. About 500K CNY (about £57,691) per year. Own a flat and two cars.
	G4	D (12)			
Social circle		Spouse, different generations, Neighbourhood.	Mrs. G2 joined the older people's social group in the community where various activities take place. Mr. G2 joined a swimming group as well.		

This family is a typical '4-2-1' family. G2 are in their early retirement period, active and independent. G3 are both working in the construction industry and are in that period of their career when they are ascending the career ladder. Thus, G4 was looked after by G3-wife's parents from her birth. Then, G3-husband's parents took over and decided to move to G3's city.

When G2 (G3-husband's parents) moved to Qingdao city, Shandong province, they sold one of their apartments for nearly one million CNY (about £113,372) but still needed to add extra money to be able to buy a new apartment because of the location in the most popular school district. The location of the apartment is close to their son's (G3-husband) home as well.

G3 were classmates in university, and they decided to settle down in Qingdao city after they graduated. They have bought an apartment in the city centre, but it is not in the school district. So, when G2 moved to Qingdao and prepared to buy an apartment, they (G2 and G3) recommended buying an apartment within the school district.

### ***Moving from a big house to small apartment***

G2 moved from Tianjin to Qingdao to take charge of G4 who was taken care of by the parents of G3-wife before they arrived, and they would come to help when they had time. Since 2014, the parents of G3-wife wanted to go back to their hometown, so the G2 couple agreed to move to settle down with their son. They enjoy going to the park and attending the community's elderly school to practice dance and photography now, but they cannot regularly attend the class because they need to cook lunch and dinner for their granddaughter and pick her up from primary school. However, Qingdao is a coastal city that is popular for its sea, sunshine, and beach, so they sometimes travel to the seaside to take photographs.

They feel relaxed about their move to the small apartment:

*You see our apartment, which is just 70 square metres, but it makes us feel that life is so simple. Because in Tianjin, we were staying in a large townhouse, you know, there was a garden, right? Since the year our daughter-in-law was pregnant, we have always driven between two cities. The garden and the big house have been our burden. We always asked each other questions such as 'Did you lock the door?' 'Yes, I locked the door from the front gate.' 'No, no, no, I asked whether you locked the garden door and the garage door or not.' 'I am not sure ...' and occasionally, when we came back to Tianjin, we realised that our garden was in a mess. We went straight to clean up the garden without taking a break. It was so tiring, and now we are so happy that we can live in this lovely apartment. In fact, we find it is enough for both of us to stay.*



Figure 8-10: The building in which G2 live



Figure 8-11: G2 live in a high-rise community

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It can be shown that a big house may be a strain for older people. Switching to a small apartment allows this G2 couple to believe they can concentrate on their interests and take care of G4. Living near their son and in a smaller apartment makes life easier than it was before. G2 expressed their happiness about the city environment:

*Qingdao is a very good place for older people, it is famous for its environment. You can see, it is full of foreigners here, they come from across the world and love this city; then, they will stay here just like we did.*

Older people's preference is for a warm climate. For example, the G2 couple explained why their family grew to love the city in a short time:

*You know that we northeast people, prefer to move to other cities that are not as cold as our hometown [G2 were born in Qiqihaer city, Heilongjiang province]. Almost all my relatives have moved; only a younger sister still lives in the hometown, but she has bought two apartments in Hainan province, which is the warmest place in China. She often invited us to live in Hainan with her during the winter period.*

The other aspect that made them decide to live there is the convenient location:

*This community is pretty good, and there are lots of public services in the community. For instance, I can easily find a third-age university. My husband likes to go swimming, and the swimming pool is located right behind our neighbourhood. The pharmacy is also easy to find, and I might take a prescription [there] on the way to pick up my granddaughter. In addition, our medical insurance could be transferred from Tianjin to Qingdao easily. (Mrs. G2 in the Fu family).*

### ***Tensions in the Fu family***

G2, in this family, seem to enjoy their life for now, and they are satisfied about this relocation. G3 also gave the same view about the city:

*My wife and I began working after we graduated from university, which is almost 20 years ago. I came to Qingdao when I was 18 years old. It's a lot better than Tianjin. I moved to Tianjin from Qiqihaer city, Heilongjiang province, with my parents in my high school years. I lived in Tianjin for just a few years, which did not give me a sense of belonging. Qingdao is a lovely and open place, and my parents love it, too, and it is very nice for us (G2 and G3) to support each other that we live in the same place and that we are close to each other. Actually, my mother used to find a job for me in Beijing after my graduation, but I love the city of Qingdao, so I decided to stay here.*

Thus, the stresses in the Fu family can only be seen in the G3, who find it difficult to balance busy work and family duties. Mr. Fu (G3) said the following:

*We are both too busy in this construction industry, especially when you are in a management position. We have no choice but to leave our little girl to my parents who have my full confidence. We hope we can get a lot more time to be with them, but I really think that right now is not a perfect time.*

These three families have a common priority that G2 is needed to provide childcare assistance, since G3 are at the most crucial stage of rising the career ladder, while G2 do not have any other family responsibility at this time, unlike some members of G2 in Chapters 6 and 7 who need to take care of their vulnerable parents. Therefore, G3's first option is to ask for G2 support.



## 8.3 Grandparenting

### 8.3.1 A social norm perspective

G2 taking responsibility for G4 has become a social norm in recent Chinese society (Zelezna, 2018; Du *et al.*, 2019; Zhu *et al.*, 2019). Grandparental care of G4 plays an important role in allowing women to re-join the labour market (Li, 2017). The issues emerging from G2's side in this study are obvious in some examples, such as G2 in the Fu family. This grandparenting social norm can be understood in Chinese society. First, family-oriented values were rooted in the core of Confucian culture, which is evidenced by other researchers (Zhu *et al.*, 2019). The practice of grandparenting is strengthened in only-child family (Goh and Wang, 2020). In fact, an investigation by Du *et al.* (2019, p. 353) showed a decrease in enrolments in children's day-care programmes from 26.1% to 22.2%; in contrast, grandparenting increased from 39.9% up to 55.6%. A national survey of Du *et al.* (2019) study also gave a similar estimate that the number of Chinese grandparents who provided care for grandchildren was 58%.

Second, since the one-child policy was launched, lasting about three decades, older parents asked for more high-quality emotional support, rather than material support, from their adult children (Wang and Hsueh, 2000). Grandparental childcare brings multiple benefits to older people. According to Di Gessa *et al.* (2016), it can create feelings of usefulness and belonging in older people. This feeling may help in improving the health of seniors, because grandparents who provide support with childcare are more likely to enjoy close emotional relationships with offspring (Di Gessa *et al.*, 2016). In addition to this, childcare tasks require physical activity, which sometimes mean that grandparents need to pay more attention to self-care exercises (*ibid*). This would be another reason that family ties become closer between generations (Zhu *et al.*, 2019). For instance, both G2 and G3 expressed that they benefit from grandparenting in the Fu family. G3 have mentioned that they cannot manage the balance between work and family duty without G2's help.

*We like to take care of our little granddaughter – the only child. We could not help with taking care of our granddaughter until we retired, and then we wanted to move to the same city for convenience. To a certain extent, this duty in our family is competitive and we need to negotiate with our in-*

*laws, because if you become a caregiver, this will build a closer relationship. We are all happy to be so. (G2 couple in the Fu family).*

Third, the early retirement age of women (50 or 55 years old; female cadres<sup>24</sup> can choose to retire at 60 years old) in urban China may also be a vital factor in comparatively younger grandparents having the time and the good health to take on grandparenting (Du *et al.*, 2019). In turn, grandparenting delivers great support for married women re-entering the labour force (*ibid*). In this study, the Han family can be taken as an example to evidence this point. G3-wife had a whole-year career gap when she was pregnant and gave birth to her son (G4), because there was no one that could lend her a hand at that time. Only when her parents-in-law (G2) retired and came to G3's home was she able to return to the labour market.

*It was unfortunate that I had to leave my job because I was pregnant with an 8-month-old baby, so I could not focus on my job, and I did not have any inspiration for my design work. After a year's stay at home with my son, I could not wait to return to the labour market with the help of my husband and his parents. I am so glad that my father and mother-in-law can support me, unlike some of my former colleagues who were forced to be housewives. (G3-wife in the Han family).*

### **8.3.2 Perspective of reciprocity**

Filial piety is profoundly embedded in the cultural tradition of East Asia, but there may be a growing conflict between expectations and reality, such that people concurrently retain competing feelings or sentiments that are partially attributed to countervailing assumptions about how people should behave (Connidis and McMullin, 2002). This fieldwork provides some new ideas that intergenerational reciprocity tends to happen in the transitional stages, such as when G4 is newborn or older people become frail and need help. Besides, it involves many factors include living arrangements, health situations and work–family balance. For instance, in the Han family and Kong family, G3 are co-residents with one side of their parents' generation. The difference is whether G2 look after G4, which seriously influences the response of G3. In this chapter, some of

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<sup>24</sup> A cadre refers to a person who has the status of a cadre or has a cadre establishment.

my G3 respondents hold the view that the childcare provided by G2 is as an act of reciprocity for eldercare in the future. For example, the G3-wife in the Kong family said that:

*I expected that my parents would help me to take care of their grandchildren, but I was wrong. In turn, I am hesitant in my heart of hearts to support their later life.*

*I do not want to look after my parents, and I already regret asking them to live with us. (G3-D in Kong family).*

A different response is as follows:

*I should no longer complain about my father and mother-in-law. Probably, my mother-in-law might be complaining to me because I never do housework at home, and something else, because I work very hard, I do not even have time to spend with my son. Of course, my career cannot be continued without their help at home; in turn, I will do whatever I can when they need support. (G3-wife in the Han family).*

The common point of the Han and Kong families is that G2, G3 and G4 are all living together. In the Han family, the G3 couple lives with G3-husband's parents, while in the Kong family, the G3 couple live with G3-wife's parents. In these two families, resources flow from G3 to G2, because in these two families G3 gained middle-class status through education and career choices, while some of the G2 parents were working or farmer class. G3 are the major breadwinners, with far greater earnings than G2. In the Han family, G3-wife's parents have no pension at all; while G3-husband's parents have a pension total about 8000 CNY (about £917), which is an average income in their hometown but a little low in a tier-two city. In contrast, the G3 couple earned about 750K CNY (about £85,933) last year, which was roughly ten times more than their parents did. Moreover, G3 put the needs of G4 first. There is a common agreement that G3 hope that G2 could give them a hand to look after G4, which may be considered as reciprocity between generations.

In Confucian culture, family relationships are built up with interdependence during the life course (Goh and Wang, 2020). Respecting and obeying older people was always picked out in the disciplines of 'filial piety' that young adults were asked to follow. However, G3 is re-examining the relationship with their older parents when they have children. Some of them understand each

other and find out a strategy for mutual support with three generations, such as the Fu and Han families. Conversely, some of them looked back to their childhood and rethought their relationships, such as G3-D in the Kong family.

In parallel to those adult children rethinking filial piety, the urban pensioners are re-evaluating filial obligations, because they are less financially dependent on adult children due to their pensions and supplementary medical insurance, but grandparenting care may result in close emotional relations (Goh *et al.*, 2016). Some studies argued that grandparental care is a strategy of older parents, whose belief is to '[pay] forward for their old-age care' (Goh and Wang, 2020, p. 238). However, this argument does not feature in the research of two cities – Fuzhou and Singapore (*ibid*). Older parents are reducing their expectations, to 'hope for' rather than expect adult children's caregiving as a norm.

On the contrary, G3 adult children are caught in a web of obligations to the practice of intergenerational reciprocity in this chapter. The economic strain on G3, which is primarily due to high housing costs and children's education, demands that both husband and wife are required to do well in their employment, creating difficulties in fulfilling career ambitions and becoming attentive parents. Additionally, these intense pressures may be doubled if their parents need support. However, both grandparents and parents normally accept developing their family line, which equates to investing their resources down to the next generation (Goh *et al.*, 2016). For a new middle-class family, investing in their child's education would be the biggest cost in the family; for example, the cost of a school district apartment, tuition fees for extracurricular classes outside school or tuition fees for a private school itself, etc. The costs may even be planned once G3 becomes pregnant, because the costs of bringing up a child are huge. There is evidence of this from these three families. The direct financial and people resources flow from G2 to G4 in the Fu family. G2 moved to Qingdao directly and bought a school district apartment to contribute to their granddaughter's education and G3's careers.

In the Han family, G3 plan to buy a second apartment in a good school district. The G2 couple continually support their decision by looking after G4 and taking over family chores. From the conversations, the author found that the Han family believe in the traditional practice without further consideration:

*The more work, the more money, its aim [is] to buy a good educational opportunity for our son. He (G4) is also their grandson. They (G2) cannot just leave, can they? (G3-couple in the Han family).*

In fact, a similar idea is found with G3-wife's mother, because G3-wife is not an only child; she has a younger brother. Her mother holds the traditional view of family practice, as in her (G2) own words, 'taking the duty of grandparenting [looking after the children of their son] just as he [G3-wife's younger brother, their son] looks after us, we take it for granted'.

There is an exception in the Kong family, where there is no financial and physical support from G2:

*I cannot rely on my parents to take care of a baby; thus, I will pay for a professional nanny for my upcoming baby. They cannot have a say [in this], because I am spending my own money for my baby. (G3-wife in the Kong family).*

Therefore, it can be seen from the study that reciprocity between G2 and G3 plays an important role in relationships becoming closer or getting worse. More specifically, when G3 express their attitude to eldercare, it seems to be more related to whether parents delivered help or not.

### **8.3.3 Tension between generations**

The tension between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law is not a new thing. There are gaps between them, such as educational background, living environment, lifestyles, etc., which influence their relationship. This issue is magnified by co-residence, as evidenced in the Han family. First, the arrangement of their apartment's rooms was not satisfactory to G3-wife's mind, because her father and mother-in-law chose the biggest room in the apartment. Second, her mother-in-law only prepared meals when their son came home. but not for her. G3-wife told the researcher that:

*It may be a common point that parents only cherish their own child. I can understand but [am] a little sad because it makes me feel that I am not a family member.*

However, G2 also seems that they have many issues and no one to listen to them:

*They (G3) work very hard, and they cannot take care of themselves at all. Not to mention our grandson; we came to help as soon as possible when my daughter-in-law had given birth to the boy. We have no relatives or friends here and my husband spends almost all day in the bedroom, and the only reason that we come here is to support them. (G2 couple in Han family)*

Another central issue is caused by being ‘a good grandparent’ and not being involved in G3’s family affairs too much. The biggest conflict in the Kong family was different ideas about the care of G4. G3-Mrs. Kong gave the researcher several examples: she often found that her son ate unhealthy food. Moreover, her son was often sick, and she was very worried about her son. Occasionally, she came home early to find that her son was playing by himself in the car parking area, which was very dangerous, and her father (G2) was watching people playing chess. After that time, she (G3, Mrs. Kong) decided to leave her job and focus on looking after her son. But when the researcher talked about that moment, G2-Mr. Kong told me that

*I really tried my best to take care of my grandson. It is my grandson! Can I do harm to him? I want to share in taking the weight from my daughter’s shoulders too. But my wife ... she does not help, I am a careless man ... you know, maybe not very careful... (Mr. G2 in the Kong family).*

Therefore, the gap in education between G2 and G3 may result in big differences of opinion about how to take care of G4. For example, in the Fu family, when we talked about how many after-school classes G4 had taken. Mrs. G2 told the researcher that

*There are too many classes; we (G2-Mr and Mrs. Fu) have complained that our granddaughter was so tired. She (G4, 12years old) must attend dancing class on the weekends, and her English class on Monday and Wednesday after school, Math’s class on Tuesday and Thursday; also, on Friday, she has a painting class, and dancing in the weekend. She was so busy. But her parents (G3) insist on her continuing, we (G2) do not say anything more ... they (G3) love to compare everything, this generation (G3), you know, you cannot let your child lose on the start line, which I think is so unnecessary.*

Then, when the researcher interviewed the G3 couple, they told me that:

*They (G2) are old school. Their (G2) knowledge cannot understand how fast the changes are and how fierce the competition is in this society. We just do everything as other parents do, because if you do not, your child will lack initiative, which she will blame you for in the future, that you have not tried your best to provide her with the opportunities. We just do not want to let her down in the future.*

Parents asked the little daughter to show her dancing skills (see Figure 8-12 and Figure 8-13 below).



Figure 8-12: G4 practicing her dancing skills 1



Figure 8-13: Dancing skills 2

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So, when I went back to Mrs. G2 in the Fu family, she told me that

*We [the G2 couple] totally understand that, and we are old already, we just deliver help when they (G3) need us. We also try our best to enjoy our life. As to G4, it is indeed their problem, we just take care of us and do not burden them (G3), I think that is the best ... do not get over-involved in their (G3) life, we agree with that ...*

In the Fu family, G2 saw the opportunity of looking after G4 as hard-earned. G2 couple in the Fu family cherish the opportunity of being with their granddaughter and helping their children.

## 8.4 Social network support

One may observe that the three families, especially compared with those families in the previous two chapters, discussed their social activities more than family interactions. They tend to seek other ways to handle their tensions instead of staying at home as much as possible, resulting in a worse situation.

### 8.4.1 The neighbourhood

The community plays an important role for both G2 and G3 in this chapter. The families have limited family relations within their family circle for various reasons, such as changing social status and migration after their retirement. The policy of one child has created bean pole families. When there is no G1, but there is G4, families become atomised, and the focus is down to the nuclear family line, not across to siblings. Therefore, a friendly neighbourhood in the community fulfils people's spare time and increases familiarity with other people and the environment.

'We are so lucky!' said G3-D (G3-wife) in the Kong family. A weekend party was held almost every week by inviting her neighbour's family to her home. This small social circle was built up when G3-wife had her first baby, and she received much support from her neighbour who has a boy around that age as well. This weekly reunion has not been halted once the Kong family moved to a new neighbourhood and welcomed their new neighbours to join them.

*This is really a coincidence! We [my old neighbour and I] are so lucky we could meet each other when we both were pregnant and wandering in the open spaces of our community. We are happy to look after children together, because we could let them play at the same time; our husbands were also happy to join in. This is a rare and precious rest time for housewives. (G3-D (G3-wife) in the Kong family).*

Some new middle-class people aspire to be identified with a good lifestyle, which is advocated in recent advertisements of a newly built gated community in Shanghai (Pow and Kong, 2007). This gated community is defined in the market that aims to sell to people who are well-educated, professional technicians and high calibre citizens (ibid). The Han family is in a typical new middle-class community developed by Vanke real estate company, who is well known for their good after-sale services because property services are also owned by their developer's own company.



The residents' committee organized many kinds of activities and groups to create opportunities for residents to meet one another. G3-wife told me that

*I joined in a reading group in our community, which was held by residents. Although I didn't attend it very much, it gave me the chance to get to know my neighbours. It gives me the advantages of maintaining a successful friendship with my neighbours. For example, occasionally my son plays with his friends in the neighbourhood on a weekend, and I can do my job, and other parents can take care of them. Now, I know that my neighbour upstairs works in the IT industry and downstairs are book editors; you see, we keep in contact with each other and provide help ... particularly, we don't worry about letting kids play together ... (G3-wife in the Han family).*

While G3, prefer people with similar life values, G2 tend to build up relationships quickly based on being 'same hometown mates' (*lao xiang*: people from the same location) (Xu and Wu, 2016). For example,

*We found it is easier to get close with lao xiang in unfamiliar place. It can be quick to build up friendships because we have the same migrant label. To some extent, it is more difficult for retired migrants to find a sense of belonging than for our younger counterparts, so retired lao xiang of the same age helped us a lot. (G2 couple in the Fu family).*

Mrs. G2 in the Fu family also often goes to the dancing activities that is held in the multi-function centre of the community:

*When I was young, I loved to dance. Since we moved into this neighbourhood, I discovered that they had a dance class for older adults, which made it easier to make friends and get to know the environment.*

Therefore, the community is important for three generations, creating opportunities for people to make friends who may have the same social status and shared interests or life values.

#### 8.4.2 University of the Third Age

In these three families, both G2 and G3 enjoy the community activities. G2 would like to attend older people's classes. According to the news, there was a limit on spaces, which is a big issue, and demand is continually growing (The Economist, 2018). The older people's school is a place not only for studying, but also for making social relationships.

Third-age schools in China mostly aim to provide a channel for older adults to join social activities. Classes in such schools are focused on seniors' hobbies. Although a colourful life enhances older people's social activities, a class requiring a short period of training such as a professional caring project could be added to list of classes.

A lack of spaces in older people's schools makes entry as difficult as for pupils entering high-quality primary schools. According to the news, adult children help their older parents queue to sign up for a seat in classes in the early morning (Hu, 2019). Regarding this issue, governments from central to local governments have launched a policy about planning for older adults' education. For example, Tianjin plans to organise educational activities that would provide places for 40% of older people during the period 2016–2020 (Hu, 2019).

However, education resources for older adults are still lacking because of the huge population. According to the Statistical Bureau, up to the end of 2018, the number of those aged 60 and above accounted for 17.9% of the whole population, which was greater than those aged 15 and below (17.8%) (Qian Zhan Research Institution, 2019). Meanwhile, the education resources for older people (including older people's colleges and remote education classes) only provided places for 5% of the over 60s (ibid). Besides, we need to learn from other countries. The lack of resources is partly because older adults tend to purchase the free classes in the public older people's schools rather than pay tuition fees for their education.

There are some examples in this study:

*I would like to take a dance class in our community centre where the old people's public school is located. My husband loves to go swimming. We both attend the service centre every day, which is part of our life. (Mrs. G2 in the Fu family).*

*I used to visit the drawing class in my hometown, but now I'm busy looking after my grandson and countless chores at home. (Mrs. G2 in the Han family).*

*Compared with older people's education, I tend to play or watch chess matches with neighbours in the neighbourhood, but my wife would like to take part in some dance and singing lessons, which involve a bus trip that is not easy and is time-consuming. (Mr. G2 in the Kong family).*

There are large demands on third-age schools in China, which are understandable, because lifelong learning is approved by both Confucian thought and Mao Zedong's ideologies (The Economist, 2018), considering learning to be a virtue, as the idiom said that 'Study hard and every day you will improve'. At the meantime, some practical sessions were taught to help older adults to keep pace with technological developments, such as learning to use a smartphone or a computer. The first universities for the elderly in China have been targeted at retired cadres of the Communist Party. Some of the schools are usually reserved for former government employees, while most welcome urban residents (The Economist, 2018). The most significant element to participate in courses is convenient access for older adults, because they are busy with their housework, chores, and childcare, which are already distracting their attention; thus, they use these courses to rest and socialize with peers.

## 8.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have investigated three families who have all lost their G1, which places G2 in the position of the oldest generation, but unlike G1, this generation is younger, fitter, and relatively better off. With no frail parents to care for now, they can focus on delivering help to their only child (G3) and his/her family, which has become a social norm. In the future, how will these well-educated G3 respond to caring for their parents when they are frailer? There are some clues in this chapter.

Changes picked up in the fieldwork are shown to suggest that the older parents are more independent of their adult children, especially those who have a good pension, while the younger generation would possibly be more assisted economically by their older parents. Goh and Wang (2020, p. 248) argue that most grandmothers do not equate childcare with reciprocity. The grandparents supply care to grandchildren out of love.

Compared with the last seven families, kinship in these three families is shown to be simpler, because the connections of siblings in G2 are not as close as in those families who have G1s. The focus of these families flows downwards to look after G4. Interestingly, G2 who were asked to take care of grandchildren in these three families have different attitudes. In turn, the G3 generation has different attitudes towards their parents particularly in relation to the idea of future eldercare (G2).

In those families where G2 are supportive and family relationships are close, G3 for the most part would like to support their parents in turn; however, this is not so in those families where G2 are reluctant to help G3 or their relationship is not close. In my study, there is a G3 who lives with her parents and does everything for them but stated that she did not want to take care of them when they get frail. If they will not put any effort into the relationship, neither will she. This complaining about parents to an outsider is a challenge to ideas about filial piety (and face) and may indicate that family practices are being questioned in ways that were not possible before. For the moment, the G3 wife in the Kong family has no choice but to continue with the family arrangements she has suggesting that some notions of filial piety may restrain her from asking her parents to leave.

## **Chapter 9. Discussion and Conclusion**

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## 9.1 Introduction

In the last three chapters, ten family narratives and related problems have been shown in which the traditional practice of caring for older people has had to be adapted and rethought. Tensions have been found in the last three fieldwork chapters, which illustrates the diverse ways in which families adapt to change and complications.

The key results are expressed in the following section, which seeks to review the fieldwork whilst also returning to my original research questions. As a sandwich generation in the chapter 6, G2 is one of the family resources that takes care of both the younger and older generation – grandchildren and older parents. Then, in Chapter 7, the research has explored the way struggling G2s call for additional help. In comparison, in Chapter 8, G3 sees their family relationships based on mutual support which does not always seem to function. Complex shifts have arisen in middle-class families from generation to generation and are often affected in practice by value shifts and socio-economic factors. From families who depend on themselves, who are familiar with Chinese culture, switching to ask for additional support from outside the family, has led to a dynamic change between the desires of older parents and the responses of adult children.

This chapter, therefore, revisits the research questions to reflect on the implications of my findings (section 9.2). It is the time to learn from other societies that share the same culture and who have been experiencing an ageing society for longer and build Chinese strategies for supporting older adults and their families (section 9.3). This thesis has found that filial obligations are questioned by the awareness of Western values or demographic shifts. Simultaneously, adding on financial resources, I have found that among younger adults (G3) and/or older parents (G2), their everyday practices are built on mobility and choice making; however, individuals and families themselves are beset by risks, uncertainties and unstable situations (section 9.4).

The author summarizes the entire PhD process in the final section (9.5). It is a treasured remembrance that marks the end of this journey as well as the beginning of further research. At the end of the section, the limitations of this study are also discussed.

## **9.2 Reflection on research questions and implications of findings**

This section summarizes the main findings and revisits the research questions. The first three sections review the research questions about how emerging middle-class families may be moving away from traditional eldercare practices. The ideals of the middle class also change between generations, not only adapting the rules of filial piety, but also exploring the approach that suits their own family. To respond to this shift, the state and the market need to consider how their policies and practices might support these practices.

### **9.2.1 RQ 1: Familial resources among Chinese middle-income status**

The economic reform and policy transitions have resulted in the rise of the Chinese new middle class. In this study, the interviewees are a group of middle-incomers who are well-educated and are beneficiaries of the Chinese reform moving from low social status in a class conflict society to higher social status in a knowledge-economy society. Their financial and cultural capital have improved their ability to explore self-improvement.

Adopting Bourdieu's concept of capital, family resources play an important role. The author argues that economic status including property ownership, earnings and pensions impact heavily on middle class family practices. Financial resources are utilised to purchase a lifestyle, and the exchange of personal time, but also care services for the oldest generation and educational investment for the youngest.

#### ***-- Economic resources arise (pension comes first)***

With the deepening of reform and the establishment of the social security system, up to 80% of urban retired people have a pension (Li, 2019). Older people can be described as better off than previous ones in every aspect of life. Urban pensioners are more independent than their predecessors. In this study, retired G2 are far from frail, on the contrary, they are the main caregivers in the four-generation families.

Their pension is not just the bottom line for their independent life after retirement; it gives them the option of monetising care services. Some families are able to input less informal care thanks to paid care options (Silverstein, 2021, p. forward). Rather than providing care for ageing parents, a thriving middle class is increasingly purchasing it (ibid); unlike children's care, which requires



supervision from family members, eldercare monetization relieves adult children's stress more effectively.

***-- Health-oriented based diverse lifestyles***

The health status of older adults was significant, particularly when the older person was becoming frail. On the one hand, it is a family concern if the ageing adults require long-term care or aged people are living alone. In this study, the findings show that siblings in G2 share the role of caring for G1, which cannot be repeated in the next generation because most G3 in this study are only children. If G1 are frail or bedridden, the physical labour of this is taxing for G2. It has been shown that families ask for additional help even if G2 have siblings who can share tasks. The chances of this will increase especially with the one-child generation, particularly when G3 settles in another country. The findings suggest that the frailty and poor health of G1 puts demands on a family that cannot be met by an only child.

On the other hand, the dominance of consumption-oriented values in middle class life make the purchase of elder care services easier. It makes buying private care services acceptable and commercialization, such as hourly-paid cleaning assistants, the chef who came to cook the New Year's Eve dinner, and personal care workers are examples of this. In the future, G3 will be in the position of taking full responsibility but may well be looking for greater paid help or responding to G2's awareness of care settings as more appropriate. In addition, these are dynamic matters, so there will be a widening of options, probably with higher standards.

Lifestyle mobility is occurring among middle-class families, with family members choosing different lifestyles, such as retirees who purchase an apartment in a city with a beneficial environment and live like a 'snowbird' (Chen and Bao, 2020), while young adults chase better working opportunities (Xu and Wu, 2016). The greater breadth of roles for women that confer higher socio-economic status result in middle-class G1 depending equally on their children regardless of gender.

***-- Extremely high priority for investment in education and assets***

In the period of planned economics, older people (G1) were settled in apartments, which were rented by their work units to employees. Thus, during the house privatisation period, employees bought their accommodation from work units as compensation for the working years of older

employees. As a result, it is more usual for older people to be homeowners in urban area, and in turn, some G2 have benefitted from their parents (G1) being homeowners. Both G1 and G2 have seen property investment as the means to secure their position and wealth. As this study has revealed property ownership and the resources to acquire others is a major plank in elder care practices.

Official statistics show that almost half of apartments have two bedrooms, (Tianjin Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2018). However, most of the interviewees in G2 own more than one property, and frequently one of the apartments is three-bedroomed or larger. Besides, most G2 in middle-class households have savings that could purchase another apartment for G1 or G4 to achieve the purpose of living close by but separately which emerges as a variant on living as an extended family.

According to Zhang (2010), market development communities are an indicator of social status in big cities. These high-cost communities include a high possibility of accessing public resources such as high-quality schools, hospitals with a good reputation and convenient transportation. For the younger generation to buy such apartments needs the support of parents (or even grandparents as well) who give or lend money to the young couple for the down payment while the mortgage normally is repaid by the young couple themselves (Zhang, 2017). In order to make up the deposit, some parents may sell or lease out their own apartment that they bought from their work unit. to facilitate the purchase of their children's new apartment, which is usually better equipped in a gated community (ibid).

The research revealed a variant of gentrification (*jiaoyuficators*) adopted the practice of purchasing a high-quality school district flat just for the education of their children. G2 in the Hao family, for example, has been planning to buy a property for her granddaughter's benefit since her daughter became pregnant. As can be observed, the middle class does not hesitate to invest in their children's education.

#### **-- *Children-centred living arrangement***

To meet the competing care requirements of two generations (G1 and G4), a new style of co-residence (in proximity but living separately) has become a feature of middle-class family life. This can be viewed as a new variant of the extended family cohabiting, because this arrangement

can meet people's needs from two sides: G1 need emotional support from a regular visit and practical help; G4 also need day-care. Therefore, the trend of middle-class families is to interpret co-residence in new ways that allow each generation to live separately but close to each other for support.

This phenomenon pulls out a point of several types of co-residence. In the findings, it has been demonstrated that co-residence works well for G2/G3/G4, such as the Li, Han, and Kong families, but G1 is no longer living with their children. This is partly due to urban citizens' health insurance and as many as 80% have a pension, which allows them to live independently. In the findings, the cost of care workers is paid by the older people's pension, which is the first choice of family members including both adult children and older parents. The average pension in 2018 in Tianjin was 3032 CNY (about £340) monthly (Tianjin Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, 2019). Middle-class older people in this study have a pension that is obviously higher than average, but it is still limited in the face of hiring a care worker and maintaining the same lifestyle.

Overall, it has been demonstrated that older individuals, particularly G2, are not economically disadvantaged, but they still have reason to be concerned about their later years because their family's primary attention is on children rather than seniors. Furthermore, elders should ensure that they maintain their health, since this is the foundation on which everything can run smoothly, which puts a strain on the seniors.

### 9.2.2 RQ 2: Family practice and their negotiation on how to manage and balance the family resources

According to Ikels (2004a, 2006), caregivers' family behaviours vary depending on their family and personal situations. Ten families were interviewed, and they had diverse care routines, but they were mostly based on three conditions. First, assessing the health of care recipients, adult children will select what sort of actions to take based on their family's circumstances. Hiring a paid care worker is one of the responses to the transitions of later life, especially for older people who have lost their spouse and/or their health and are empty-nest parents or people who live alone. This demonstrates that family support has also become more 'monetized' (Izuhara & Forrest, 2013, pp.530-531).

Moreover, social norms have a significant impact on care practice. Sometimes, filial obligations bind adult children to look after their parents using family resources rather than seeking outside assistance. Adult children (G2) who have no dependent grandchild and reject the responsibility of looking after parents themselves are likely to be judged harshly by social norms. Acting as a filial child through appropriate behaviours is a moral obligation. Adult children are concerned about whether their elder care practices are sufficient in comparison to their peers (Lim et al., 2014), which is connected to the Chinese concept of 'face' (*mainzi*, 面子). 'Face' describes the needs of an individual for respect and affirmation. In general terms, to achieve this, an individual must make his/her behaviour conform to social norms. Moreover, facework recognises the fear of being looked down upon because one's behaviour does not pass scrutiny or fit with social norms (Yang and Sun, 2015). This might be one of the reasons that G1 prefer to depend on family members (Song *et al.*, 2017); it might also be the reason some G2 or G3 have different opinions, even though they follow the rules.

Additionally, intergenerational relationships during a life play an important role in family responses to eldercare. In families with multiple children, the interviewees share their eldercare duties depending on how close their relationship is. Firstly, parents have invested different resources into each child, which may result in reciprocal practices. For example, in the Ye family, G1 helped G2-D3 in her early marriage, so she wanted to make her parents happy in later life and tried her best to take on the night shifts while giving care. Secondly, siblings have a close relationship with each other; therefore, they support each other. These practices included financial

help, help with social resources and ‘house support’ between siblings in this study. For example, the youngest son (G2-S4) in the Hao family used to live in an apartment that belonged to his older parents (G1) with the agreement of other siblings. He takes on the duty of looking after their father without any discussion in their family. Similarly, G2-S1 in the Wang family helped his siblings to educate their children to compensate for not being around to take care of their parents. In the Zhao family, three sisters of G2 negotiated the eldercare duty and reorganised tasks according to their grand parenting timetable. Lastly, children who experienced harsh parenting may have a negative effect on their caring for elderly parents’ later life. Take an example from the Kong family in this study: G3-Wife has stated that she is unwilling to look after her parents if they become frail. When talking about her childhood, she has not given any positive feedback of her parents. This is given greater weight when G3 expressed the view that since her parents will not provide adequate grandchild care she will not care for them in their later life.

Finally, geographical separation, such as the long distance between parents and adult children, may have a significant influence on future eldercare practices. Some families are already dealing with the issue of adult children relocating to different places, away from their frail parents. Taking the Zhao family as an example, all three G2s live in separate cities, but they live with G1 on a rotating basis. This requires not only the support of good family relationships, but also a constant balance of family resources.

Adult children who move to other cities (inside or outside China) are common in G3, particularly among highly educated middle-class households (Xu and Wu, 2016). As grandparents of those children, G1 feel very proud to see their descendants’ achievements. According to previous research, Chinese older people hold a strong family concept as ‘a familial obligation that refers to the responsibilities of supporting family members in need’ (Song *et al.*, 2017, p. 1417). Not only does it ask children to respect and follow their parents, but to support their parents financially and emotionally, and the most important point is to bring honour back to the family (Peng *et al.*, 2019). While parents of one-child have mixed feelings. They declared their complete support for their children’s decisions, but also expressed anxiety about their future life, and the only thing they could do at the moment was enjoy the time and then strive to be as strong and healthy as possible, adding that they did not want to burden their children.

More families will confront the problem of the sole youngster living abroad or relocating to another location in the future. In the case of Ye's family, the lone son (G3) moved to the United States and started a family there. The sole son in the Fu family, elected to leave Tianjin and settle down in Qingdao, and G2 followed soon after not only to care for their grandchild but also to ease the future care of G2.

### **9.2.3 RQ 3: expectations and responses shift between generations**

According to Yan Yunxiang (2021), the traditional family is a purely functional group in which intimacy is suppressed as much as possible and cannot take precedence over hierarchy and discipline in the family. In the new family, the importance of intimacy has increased. At the same time, however, the functionality of the family has not disappeared and has become even more important because of the challenges of the individualisation of the social structure (Cai, 2021). The centre of family life and the various resources under the new familism are transferred from ancestors to the offspring, especially to the grandchildren (ibid). It is important to emphasise that the downward flow of resources refers not only to material but, more importantly, to spiritual (seeing the only child as the only hope of the family), including both emotional and meaningful aspects of life (Cai, 2021).

Adult children are dependent on older parents longer and more heavily than before, which is from funding their marriage home to grandchildren care. While the Chinese market economy has produced a 'new middle class' with more financial independence, many are still dependent on their parents' newly earned fortunes rather than the state or the market (Izuhara and Forrest, 2013, p.534). In Izuhara and Forrest (2013, p.534) research, parents continue to support their adult children in co-residency, sometimes long into their 30s, due to the money earned by the middle class, particularly in Shanghai, and more competitive and uncertain labour markets. Prolonged co-residency reliance and greater financial assistance by adult children for many aspects of their lives are new phenomena that provide a new dimension to intergenerational dynamics and the role of families in transitional welfare systems (Izuhara and Forrest, 2013, p.534). In this research, co-residence for middle-class families occurs from when a baby G4 is born to when they enter kindergarten or primary school. This timescale provides for several years of G2/G3/G4 reunions

(possibly temporary living arrangement), but their family priorities may shift after that, necessitating different domestic arrangements.

For the contemporary middle generation's couples, the communist system provided more equitable labour options (Izuhara and Forrest, 2013, p.531), Mrs G2 has a solid pension after retirement, as indicated in this study, but they have taken on most of the family responsibilities (their conjugal family and own parents) as well as childcare/grandchildren care. This demonstrates that gender continues to have a significant influence on the distribution of family responsibilities.

Mrs G2 and G3, on the other hand, identify as daughters of their parents rather than daughters-in-law of their husbands'. This might be interpreted as parents assisting their daughters at a young age so that she values her parents more and has a stronger relationship with them. For example, when the Ye family's youngest daughter (G2-D3) married, she lived for six years in her parents' house that provided her with considerable assistance. In exchanges between the generation of only children and their parents, this emotional bond is much stronger. In reality, through their own experiences, individuals have developed their own concept of life and have re-evaluated conventional behaviours (Lynch and Danely, 2013, p.223). As a result, it is not difficult to comprehend how social standards are transitioning from daughter-in-law to daughter eldercare practices. The most significant alteration in G3's attitude occurred during fieldwork.

### ***G3 are talking about 'I prefer' more than 'I have to'***

It may be the case that the emergence of individualisation and the pursuit of personal interest, has given the young generation their own understanding of filial piety (Zhang, 2017; Barton *et al.*, 2013). However, according to Liu's study (2021, p.17), China may have evolved into a child-centred culture, but the younger generation is far from self-sufficient. Instead, children are supposed to follow a path that their parents have planned for them (*ibid*). The only-child generation's upbringing is becoming increasingly controlled rather than personalized, because of neoliberal market and governmental factors conditioning academic performance (*ibid*).

Only children who grew up in a consumerist, knowledge-based culture were expected to excel academically rather than spend time performing household chores or other tasks (Song *et al.*, 2016). After the only child graduates from the high school, he or she acquires greater independence and, until s/he finds his first formal employment, a say in the family. Rather than sacrificing time, work,

or money to make their parents happy, the younger generation seeks enjoyment and comfort in life; yet, they believe that success in making parents happy is another way to fulfil family duties (Zhang, 2017).

Additionally, young adults have a changed attitude to this family duty and accept it by saying ‘I prefer’ or ‘I chose to do this’. As a result, despite the fact that the only child generation is heavily impacted by consumerism and has access to liberated Western culture as a point of reference, the moral ideal of filial piety persists (Liu, 2021, p.17). The economic and welfare instability has intensified the moral ideal of filial piety, as evidenced by the children's sustained economic importance to their parents in later life (ibid, p.17).

### ***G2 is keeping fit to avoid being a ‘burden’ to G3***

Older parents (G2) repeatedly mentioned that they do not want to be ‘a burden’ to their children. Unlike their parents (G1), they contribute family resources into their only child’s education, and encouraged their children to chase better opportunities, including settling down in other countries. As the parents of the one-child generation, G2 do not refuse the idea of ageing in a care home. G1 apparently tend to rely on their descendants and have a greater opportunity to be familial care recipients. The research supports the view that eldercare as far as they are concerned is a family matter. Within the family, things can be resolved. Otherwise, ageing in a nursing home in later life would cause them to lose face and dignity. For example, in my findings I demonstrated that continued residence in a neighbourhood provides opportunity for greater scrutiny of each other’s lives so the filial or non-filial behaviours of one’s children are on display to all. They choose to rely on their adult children, whose care is first on their wish list.

In the study, to meet family needs, some G2 are in the position of being floating grandparents (Qi, 2018), and some are floating children who travel to support G1 in other cities (see chapter 7, the G2-D1 in the Zhao family, G2-S1 in the Wang family). Unlike the research of Huang (2021), in which the G2 who were interviewed valued and prioritized their own interests over family duties, in this research G2 put family first, even if sometimes to the detriment of their own wellbeing. Taking care of a grandchild is understandable for family members when siblings of G2 were negotiating duty of eldercare. For example, in this study, one of the Mrs G2 in the Zhao family stated that she had no grandchild to look after unlike her sisters, so she took the bigger elder care duty. More than that, these trade-offs are easily understood by their peers. The most common



excuse for missing social functions or class reunions is normally taking care of older parents or grandchildren. It is so common that it is easily understood by their social network members.

In Professor Yan Yunxiang's research (2021), it is also pointed out that neo-familism is now the status of the family in China, where the bond between children and parents is not only in terms of material and property, but also in terms of spiritual and ideological links. The intimacy of the one-child family has long been at odds with the patriarchal nature of the traditional family, so it is not difficult to understand the coexistence of intergenerational conflict and mutually frictional values within the family. However, in a society where the policies and welfare system are uncertain, the family function is not denied, rather it is strengthened (Yan, 2021).

#### **9.2.4 RQ 4: Policymakers, market and planners how to support**

There have been tremendous changes in family concepts in modern China over the past 120 years (Yan, 2020). These include the survival stage of the nation in 1900-1949 where nationalism and love of country was seen as surpassing family and individualism (ibid). The collectivist period of 1950-70, proposed to subordinate the family for the love of country and break the traditional family bonds, but certain policies were still tied to the family, for example, the division of political identities, housing distribution policies, etc (ibid). In the decade between 1980 and 1990, the full implementation of the one-child policy was met with a shift to a child-centred culture (ibid). From 2008 to the present time, the importance of old-age care and the new three-child policy have all re-emphasized the importance of family.

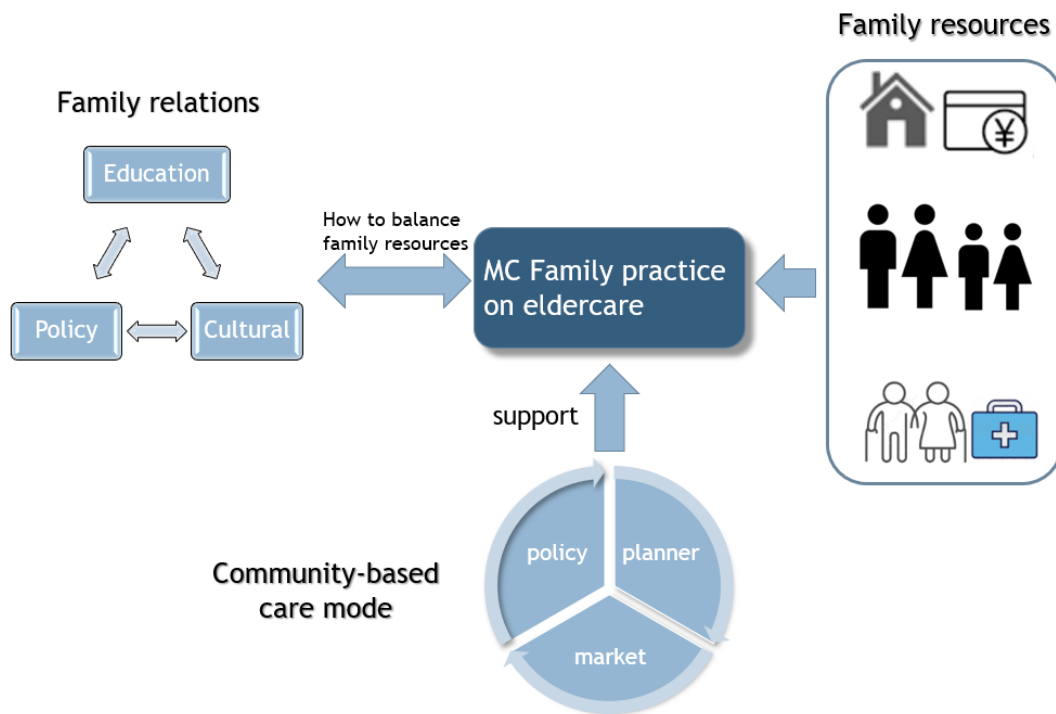
This is a historical context why diverse beliefs have coexisted in the family for multiple generations. However, because of the same cultural roots, family harmony remains a priority, and as a result, family practices are organized differently depending on the circumstances, but all with the goal of family harmony and development.

Liu's (2021) study states that modern Chinese youth lack the ability to be independent. Professor Yan Yunxiang's (2021) research also pointed out that individuals in Chinese society are tied to their parents or children, not only materially but also emotionally and mentally. However, the small size of the family and the geographical fragmentation of modern society have made the model of family solidarity unsustainable. Improvements in policy and welfare systems can

facilitate the harmonious development of families, however, in China, policies are often introduced with the family as the unit of measurement, which is still very detrimental to the geographically dispersed family.

***Planners, market and government co-operation***

Public policy, as the first and the most essential driver, has increased urban dwellers’ income and improved citizens’ living conditions. Therefore, those who want to support old age in terms of mechanisms and welfare systems should look for models of support that are suitable for smaller, diversified or even individual households, rather than a family-based model of resource regulation. The ability to mobilise various social organisations together with market mechanisms, rather than relying exclusively on policy regulation, would also allow for greater diversity in senior care. Planners and policymakers have the responsibility to create a platform that can effectively deliver services. Figure 9-1 shows that a community-based platform can support family practices.



*Figure 9-1: Drivers of and family support regarding eldercare*

The community took over the role of welfare that used to be taken by the work unit during the Mao era, which to some extent delivers support to the family. The community can manage a group of people in both geographic proximity and through similar lifestyles. Although ‘in the 13th five-

year national plan (2016-2020) for developing the older people care system' launched in 2017, some cities are already going forward with community-based care services. For instance, Beijing and Shanghai have implemented the local policy of '90-6-4' or '90-7-3' (90% of care is provided by the family, 6-7% by the community and 3-4% by the care institutions) that tends to integrate care resources at the community level, as 96%–97% of older people are supported by families and community services within walking distance. Shanghai, as the most developed city in China, has gone further than other cities on community-based care for older people, and other resources like seniors' volunteer teams (Gilroy, 2013), third age schools, etc. (Yang Qiaowei, 2021; Chen and Han, 2016). For example, in *Changning* district in Shanghai, people aged 60 years old and over accounted for 33.5% of the population, which is a typical seniors' community. The local authority reported that due to the ageing population, an older people's service centre, two daytime care centres, one care home, seven dining rooms, 17 seniors' activity rooms and 58 service points have been set up (Shu, 2020). It aims to create a 'living services circle' within 15 minutes' walking distance.

Caregivers (both formal and informal) are gradually being acknowledged, and their contribution to society is becoming increasingly significant. Reducing the physical and financial burden of eldercare on families can also enhance family relationships, which can have an impact on older people's health. Although there is legislation that reduces taxes for individuals who care for their older parents, there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of boosting awareness of the carers' responsibility.

In addition, the subsidy policy has recently focused on care institutions, including tax relief, bed subsidies and policies to support institutions of integrated medical care (China National Committee on Ageing, 2020). However, the lack of professionalism and supply of long-term caregivers is the biggest issue. The policy should focus on those who provide older people's care, including family members, informal caregivers, and helpers, from training to financial compensation. Familial care and community care both lack stable caregivers and institutional care lacks experience and diversity (Zhan *et al.*, 2006) while the new care sector lacks regulation, training, or care workers' progression. Thus, it still will take time to develop and diversify the eldercare market to meet the needs of Chinese middle-class families.

### **9.3 Practices on eldercare in other societies and practices in China**

In Asia, a comparatively robust long-term care system for the increasing number of seniors has been developed in places like Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Chen and Han, 2016). Some other societies have encouraged older people to hire foreign domestic workers, such as in Singapore and Hong Kong. However, the populations of many East Asian countries follow a Confucian culture and Confucian ideals including filial piety and the care of older people. Present welfare policies either erode filial obligations or complement the existing family informal care systems (Tsutsui *et al.*, 2014), which is explained in various ways, but the aim is always to meet the demands of eldercare.

#### **9.3.1 Policy and care programmes in other Asian societies**

It has a culture of filial responsibility rooted in Japan of intergenerational co-residence, as have many Asian societies (Tsutsui *et al.*, 2014), but young people flooded into big cities leaving their parents in their hometown. Facing a rapidly increasing older population, to support eldercare, Japan was the first country in East Asia to institute long-term care insurance (LTCI) in 2000, followed by South Korea and Taiwan in 2007 and 2008 respectively (Maags, 2020), ‘making long-term care a right for older adults regardless of income and family availability’ (Tsutsui *et al.*, 2014, pp. 798,806). In combination with other plans and services, the Japanese LTCI scheme and the current gold plan are planned to care and protect senior citizens (Raikhola and Kuroki, 2009). The Taiwanese trade unions have also succeeded in moving funding for government healthcare programmes away from lower pensions, instead to increasing commitment to them through taxes, while the South Korean government has established a tripartite pension reform commission (Flynn and Schröder, 2018).

Malaysia and Singapore have updated their strategy for multi-generation homes, and Malaysia also proposes tax benefits for households who take on the duty of eldercare (Raikhola and Kuroki, 2009). As one of the countries with the world’s longest life expectancy, the Singapore government has introduced policies to promote the recruiting of foreign domestic labourers to supplement or complement informal care efforts, which enables families to live up to the demands of their frail, older parents (Rozario and Hong, 2019). A survey shows that ‘14% of households hire an FDW [*foreign domestic worker*] at home because it is proven to be cheaper than ageing in the care home, additionally, older people prefer ageing in place’ (ibid, p.198). Similarly, dual-income families in

urban areas have become a social phenomenon in Taiwan and the product of economic need (Song, 2015). The policy makers want cheaper care by hiring migrant staff without extending social security coverage (ibid). The aim was thus to release highly educated Taiwanese women from their household duties by making them outsource care services by the government of Taiwan, like those in Hong Kong and Singapore (ibid).

Taiwan relies on those FDWs as much as Singapore. Additionally, Taiwan has developed the integration of foreign healthcare employees into the system and the availability of cash advantages to them since the launch of the LTCI policy (Song, 2015). However, Japan and Korea are in line with the encouragement of native care workers rather than FDWs (ibid). Because care work is a pattern of women's job market and the unemployment rate in these societies is already high (ibid).

Therefore, it has been shown that LTCI is a trend of policymaking that benefits older people. It requires different standards in various local governments, and financial subsidies need to be included into local financial plans. Care marketisation is another issue on which policymakers are trying to make progress, especially guiding market development.

The long-term care policy is very much enforced through financial subsidies, human capital and accessible spaces. For instance, the LTCI programme supports Japan's senior citizens (Kolpashnikova and Kan, 2019). The government acknowledges, however, that the program is under financial pressure (ibid). Considering the sudden spurt in older people's health demands, when the number of prescriptions was doubling in the first five years since the launch of the long-term care system, the government was obliged to update the policy from its initial focus on public provision -- '*she hui hua*' (socialism), to a local one-- '*di yu hua*' (regionalism) and family provision -- '*zai jia zu hua*' (re-familism) (ibid, p.3).

Over the passage of decades, traditional informal care systems have changed, whether in response to greater access to formal care or because of the tide of irreversible social change. Recently, as in Asian countries such as China, the pace of such changes can be rapid (Tsutsui *et al.*, 2014). Japan reassesses the role of families and explores alternative forms of care based on community needs considering the rapidly rising cost of LTC (long-term care) and the anticipated lapses in demand and supply of care resources (declining fertility and no desire to import FDWs). Japan's newest initiatives, in fact, include the Integrated Community Care System (ICSS), which has been designed as part of the 2012 LTCI revisions to integrate medical and LTC within local

communities (Tsutsui *et al.*, 2014); for example, community service for the frail such as: 1) home help service; 2) short-term stay service; and 3) day service (Raikhola and Kuroki, 2009, p. 68). Besides,

*Subsidies support family care: 1) Special loans are available for those family caregivers who plan to build or remodel their houses to have a room for their ageing parents. 2) The income tax-deduction program is applied to those taxpayers, regardless of the amount of income, who are supporting a person aged 70 or older. When an older person is seriously impaired, the deductible amount is increased (Raikhola and Kuroki, 2009, p. 67).*

Therefore, families reorganise their resources and balance the care tasks following the shifting policies that may benefit them. The trend of care marketisation and segmentation may offer opportunities of respite to family caregivers, but still, the LTC policy aims to build the most basic safety net for the poor and frail. This is because the marketing of care that unintentionally overlooks the care pressures of lower-income households, and policies also need to ensure the well-being of foreign care workers (Rozario and Hong, 2019). Additionally, filial piety as a predisposing factor has a possible effect on service usage and may mean lack of control or be viewed as giving up on one's commitment to filial obligations for their parents or older relatives by others who are opposed to the use of international care staff (*ibid*).

The World Health Organization (2015, pp. 100-105) recently suggested designing strategies to encourage healthy ageing. Proactive efforts can be taken to help understand the diverse needs of older people by gathering feedback on a regular basis from older adults. With the cooperation of high-tech and qualified caregivers, this may be possible to get feedback from older people daily. It might be helpful for transferring value from families providing physical assistance to the role of organising and maintaining resources and delivering stable emotional support for older adults.

### **9.3.2 Blueprint of Chinese Government respond to an ageing society**

The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (2018) has for the third time refined the Law on the Protection of Elderly Rights and Interests, with an emphasis on familial care that is still a base model for the care of older people in the future (No.13, chapter 2); but in chapter 4 of the social service report, No.38 has added in the role of neighbourhood support. Huang (2021) reported that the '14-5 plan' (2021-2025) has described a way to improve the happiness of older people's lives as 'Multi-layered, more precision, higher quality' that is more promising in later life. The general Office of the State Council (2020) has also pointed out in the governmental document (2020) No.52 that promoting the healthy development of old-age care services is conducive to improving people's livelihood and welfare, promoting family harmony, and fostering new drivers of economic development.

Additionally, the Chinese government is also actively exploring community eldercare services and piloting LTCI in some cities. Since 2016, national policymakers have already noticed the importance of reducing the pressure of long-term care on families, which led to the LTIC pilots. From 2019, Tianjin was added to the list of such cities (National Healthcare Security Administration, 2020). The informal community-based caring service that bridges the gaps between institutional care and home care is public policy; however, it cannot fully satisfy demand (Minguez, 2012, p. 258).

In this study, findings have reflected some problems about the urgent need to improve the training quality, supervision system, decent wages and career structures of the care workers. This is a global issue as is the question of who will pay for all of this.

#### ***One side—more choices in market and protect customers***

Laws and regulations need to protect vulnerable older people because at the moment it is an unregulated sector where clearly, older people are being abused (financially) and potentially in other ways. Often, derogatory perceptions are not groundless, because there are risks in asking strangers into older people's homes. In Chapter 7, evidence can be seen that some paid helpers have unpleasant habits such as stealing or gossiping about their client's private issues. This reputation of carers as being poorly educated and dishonest is also seen in the research of Osterman (2017), who calls the career disrespected. Therefore, targeted training and industry standards are necessary.

Furthermore, the declining number and increasing age of paid care workers is a problem for future care in determining who will deliver paid care for older people (Wang and Wu, 2017). It is a strategy of urban pensioners to hire poorly skilled internal migrants from some less developed areas (Dong *et al.*, 2017). This is because the paid carers are of two types: the first is the professionals who normally work in hospitals, nursing homes or other institutions. The second, larger group are untrained care workers from rural areas who are hired to work in older adults' homes because of their low cost. The average age of this group is over 45 and most are female (Wang and Wu, 2017). For example, the helper in the Ye family is a 66-year-old woman; the Wang family employs a woman of over 50 years old, and there is a live-in care worker who is nearly 50 years old in the Zhao family. The continually changing demographic structure makes this mode difficult to maintain.

WHO proposed an integrated person-centred health service in 2016, which 'presents individuals, families, and communities at its centre, placed within a service delivery context that supports universal, equitable, person-centred and integrated health services' (World Health Organization, 2015, p.13). Referring to this conceptual framework, the model of integrated care based on the community can be considered. Gong *et al.* (2017) has suggested in the paper that the market responds with services, while older people are the users and active participants, but the role of the local authority is to supervise. The role of the local authority, service providers, third party and buyers, and how to organise community resources to meet the tasks of eldercare should be clarified (*ibid*).

Additionally, social policy should encourage easier access to qualified commercialized diverse, personal and precise care services. For instance, demands range from older people who need long-term care to healthy seniors who want house cleaning. Long term care can be subdivided into physical healthy but cognitively frail, and physically disabled but intellectually unimpaired. These diverse older people have different care needs, which requires flexible and diverse care services and patient caregivers. This asks the market to provide more choices of care models and local authority could take the supervision roles.

### ***The other side: Professional training and Care work's welfare***

Supplementing family care with a nurse/helper also emerges as a strategy to manage the tension of declining people resources in the family. If the care receivers have a moderate cognitive disorder



plus at least one physical issue, the care providers might easily feel overwhelmed (Chong *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, it is advised that children and domestic helpers undergo systemic training and assistance in addressing issues (*ibid*). Training of care workers, professional nurses and day-care centres should be integrated into a community-based network. For example, the policy from Japan should be introduced so that family long term care givers get an allowance from the state and make scholarships available to students whose subject is social care services.

However, the lack of professional male helpers is a more obvious problem. It is difficult to hire a male helper in the market. For example, during the fieldwork, the manager of an institution stated that:

*All the care workers in my nursing home are now females. At first, I wanted to recruit a male helper, but they did not usually stay for very long. Maybe because the reputation<sup>25</sup> of this job is not quite as good as any other job, I suppose. (Manager of care home)*

In daily care, there are issues about the need for physical strength in moving and lifting older people that women may struggle with; on the other hand, older women and their families may resist the idea of a man being involved in the intimate tasks of their washing or toileting (Holroyd, 2003).

The need for long term care is increasing as the population ages. Zeng *et al.* (2012) According to Zeng *et al.* (2012), the number of disabled seniors in China will increase to 18.98 million in 2030, 2.9 times the number in 2000, necessitating 5.34 billion working days of informal care, three times the amount in 2000. Additionally, in China, the number of people living with dementia is expected to increase from 9.5 million in 2015 to 16 million by 2030 (Prince *et al.*, 2016). According to Wang *et al.* (2018), primary care workers reported their workload is such that they are unable to manage their job. Caregivers declining--both informal caregivers among the family and paid care workers in the society are reducing willingness to take care of older adults in the long-term--is a real issue to think about.

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<sup>25</sup> It is believed to be women's work because hands-on care is seen to be the role of women in Confucian concepts of filial piety. Also, it is commonly seen as women's work globally.

### *Training for care workers*

The last section reflects a lack of a professional route into the care service industry, from college a taught subject and job certificate to a welfare career. Cash encouragements like, scholarships for students, reduced tax for care homes, social insurance for care workers, and allowances for caregivers should be considered. For example, middle-aged caregivers who may not in the future receive their pension until 65, could have an allowance for looking after older parents/grandchild.

This year with the Covid-19 situation, caregiver and care recipients are challenged mentally and physically. ‘In many countries, this is the first time these facilities have received such targeted and sustained attention. It has given rise to many conversations about the importance of industry regulation against elder abuse, neglect, and fraud, as well as the management of infectious diseases.’ (World Alzheimer Report 2020, p. 153).

Therefore, along with improving caregivers’ training and extending LTC related policies, high-tech facilities may give an opportunity to innovate with those policies to improve eldercare services in the future care model. In the sense of transnational communities, information and communication technologies have supported the connection of family members for several years and their emotional support could be maintained (Hsu, 2019). Other academics also argue that cultural roots, which are not reshaped, require individuals to respect seniors, but expressions and practices change with technical and economic development (Sung and Dunkle, 2009). With such advantages, technology-enabled eldercare strategies are being developed and deployed to minimise the socio-economic cost of ageing, and smart home-based technologies have been adopted as part of the shift to allow ageing in place (Woods and Kong, 2020).

### 9.3.3 Further research

There is a trend of raising the retirement age to release the pressure on government; China is no exception, as it has already launched a policy of ‘gradually raising the retirement age to 65 in 2045’. This calls for a comprehensive care system to support citizens’ care needs, such as eldercare and childcare, whose responsibilities are currently taken on by the ‘early retirement’ generation. The practices of elder care are dynamic and would benefit from longitudinal research. This is because families need to explore any strategies that can make their life better, and these will be influenced by the implementation of new policies.

Two points were highlighted by my interviewees. These could be further discussed in future research. One point was picked up by G3 in the Ye family, who was wondering whether or when he would come back to China. In addition, he was thinking about which city he would live in; the place should have opportunities for his career development and be convenient to take care of his parents at the same time. Because he and his wife have lived a substantial part of their lives in the United States, he is wondering whether he would move smoothly into a different social and political context. This illuminates the necessity and urgency of supporting older people whose children move away.

Concerns were raised by several interviewees whose children settled down in other countries. They repeatedly mentioned that they would like to see a small social network of maybe three to five families coming together to support each other through social activities. G3 has a role in mentally supporting, watching and information sharing roles. It is necessary that every small social network, referred to above, has one or two children living nearby who could offer support when an emergency occurs. These one or two adult children may not usually help regularly, but when older parents (G2) know they still have children or trustworthy young people (G3) nearby, they do feel more secure.

This strategy might be considered, and a way could be explored to nest it into a comprehensive care model, since it is considered not only by those older people whose children live abroad but also by the older people who are ‘empty nesters’. More specifically, the only child who cannot take care of their elderly parents all the time is under a burden that separates those people from their employment and their core family.

#### 9.4 Risk, uncertainty, and instability in a neo-liberal society

Keith *et al.* (2013, p.2,5) argue that ‘it is not Western neoliberalism that is constructing the Chinese economy but instead that China is constructing capitalism anew and also urbanism’. There is a Chinese model, ‘as Weber noted, was based in an amalgam of immanentize Daoism and Confucianism’ (ibid, p.3). In the China model, ‘as relational, risk is shared: especially between the generations of a family’ (ibid, p.4).

Family is a mediator between society and individuals and the baseline of eldercare, while the family is afforded individual duty and social duty. However, multiple family duties load on to the shoulders of G2. For instance, G2 in the Zhao family has her own worries: there is also conflict between the need to care for G1 and her own wish to care for her grandchild, which is linked to the idea of – the sandwich generation (discussed in the chapter six):

*I love doing housework, which may be weird to young people. However, for me, it is like doing exercises and chores at the same time. I need to be healthy. My family members depend on me, my mother, of course, I really do not want to be a burden to my daughter either, I also want to look after her child in future ... I feel too busy to handle everything; sometimes, I wish I could be split into five pieces ... (G2-D1, 63-year-old, in the Zhao family).*

The reality is that each generation has their own problems in this study. Taking the Li family as an example, the G1 couple has their own preference for later life; the G3-wife cannot manage the work and childcare at the same time, and the G3-husband felt humiliated to live in an apartment provided for by his mother and father-in-law. G4 was busy with their after-school classes.

Ironically, the policy to allow a couple to have two children were adopted in 2015 (China’s third "relaxation" of the birth policy in the May 2021, which a couple allow to have three children), has resulted in more competition with those giving care to the children. In addition, the rising age of retirement puts stress on the sandwich generation of the family. Indeed, compared with the average worldwide retirement age of 67, China has a much lower retirement age threshold, with a basic standard retirement age for women of 50 or 55 and for men of 60. The response is that China plans to gradually lift the retirement age to 65 for both men and women by 2045 (the 13th Five-Year Plan) at the planning stage (China Daily, 2016). Not only does this strategy aim to raise the number

of working people, but also to alleviate the pension strain on the Chinese government. However, such tactics will place the sandwich generation in a weaker position because they will potentially struggle both inside and outside the family.

Almost every part of the family relationship has been influenced by policy factors for financial development, welfare assistance, family planning and retirement age. The significance of the middle class is becoming more complicated rather than standardised, driven by Confucian philosophy and Communist thought, in addition to the tension between traditional culture and modern education.

#### **9.4.1 Risk and uncertainty in the neo-liberal society**

Moving into a market-oriented society that emphasizes personal choices shifts risk to individuals and their families. According to Baars and Dohmen (2013, p. 34), lifestyle is ‘the key concept from which people choose experts, develop relations and form their identity’. It builds up the connection with factors that decide how well we can be in the ageing process, because it influences the decisions about ‘what experts and expert knowledge [we should] base our lives, with whom ... we connect’ (ibid, p.34).

However, middle-class lifestyles cannot easily be maintained without public welfare system support because, in the case where older parents need long-term care, either the financial or physical cost must be carefully rebalanced. In this study, two types of elder care were discussed: self-reliant families and families needing additional help to support older family members ageing in the community. In this study, G1 all mention that they want to age at home (or in their original community) as long as possible. To meet their needs, most G2 have thought about what else they can do if they cannot hire a domestic helper for G1. Because the traditional norm of co-residence has been broken, it is more difficult for G2 to provide practical care when it is needed (Bai, 2019). Therefore, hiring a caregiver at home seems a compromise strategy to meet the needs of middle-class families, both allowing older parents to maintain their preferences and adult children to fulfil their family duty by “borrowing others’ hands”.

As written in Li Qiang’s book (2019, p.58), he argues we are conducting an experiment from the new government that was built in 1949, but for the first three decades, we failed. The CCP discontinued the traditional ‘*li*’ framework but failed to construct a new form social stratification. Firstly, with the working class in power in 1949, people were divided by their political background;

then when Deng came to power in 1979, the proposed strategy that ‘let a group of people get rich’, moved Chinese politics from ‘Egalitarianism’ to ‘Equality-Opportunism’ (ibid). Along with this change, polarization between rich and poor is increasingly evident. During this process, Li Qiang emphasizes that family and culture are a lubricant that, like the human immune system, allow the PRC to self-regulate and self-recover, whilst family resources can be re-organized, such as multiple siblings helping each other, and similar culturally based values tie family members together to solve challenges (ibid).

On the contrary, Ren (2013) argues that traditional rules were broken down suddenly, but new concepts have not been normalized, which may cause new uncertainty, questions, and risk. The challenge ‘is inadequate governmental provisions for family-based and institutional-based elder care, which is sometimes rationalized by a simplistic view of filial piety’ (Canda, 2013, p. 225). Whereas Confucian philosophy ‘emphasizes the importance of timeliness and adaptation’ (ibid, p.225). ‘Principles and practices should be adapted according to the real circumstances, opportunities, and historical conditions of the present and a given culture’ (ibid). However, the present adaption of filial piety results in middle-aged people providing care for grandchildren in the expectation of their later life well-being has become a social norm that is mostly found in the one-child family, which means the previous meaning of filial disciplines has been replaced by this reciprocity mode.

In fact, most middle-class families can adjust their expectations of children and maintain self-reliance. However, in this study, I observed tensions around the way in which families understand filial obligations. For example, G3-wife in the Kong family regrets inviting her parents to live with them. It shows disciplines that we are used to seeing as sacred, are being doubted and questioned. This is not an indication that filial obligations no longer apply but that reciprocal care is required by G3. It is understandable because the public care services cannot meet those requirements either. It can also be understood that the relationships between parents and children, employer and employee, etc, are power relations. This also has been discussed in traditional Chinese culture—the book of rites, as the five relationships ‘*wu lun*’ (relations between lord-minister, father-son, husband-wife, brothers, friends), which restrict and guide the hierarchy (Chan and Tan, 2004). In a feudal society, you can see your role model and learn it. While in current society, these power relations are identified by interacting and these identities are fluid and uncertain. For instance, a

person may have multiple identities, from institutional, market based, societal to familial. Parents act as friends to the children, and to each other. It thus, cannot be limited to five relationships, and due to the long lifespan, it becomes more complex.

#### **9.4.2 Responses of family practices to shifts in circumstances**

Although, the sandwich generation- those who provided care for two generations at the same time- is, at present, a small percentage, this situation will become more serious if G3 choose to have more children or the retirement age is increased in future. There are three families in this study who were required to care for two generations (both G1 and G4): The Li, Hao and Zhao families, and also the Xing family in the near future. To respond to these physically intense care tasks, middle-class families have different strategies according to their various family resources.

**The first** is the most popular response: to create geographical proximity. Two life transitions make G2 and G3 consider returning to co-residence: one is that their parents' health situation changes or that older parents live alone; the other is the birth of G4. According to Fei Xiaotong (1983), the Chinese family means the 'extended family' that includes the spouse and children embracing parenthood and grandparenthood (Hu and Peng, 2015); while in the Chinese census, the household is defined in this way: 'persons who are related as family members (or others), residing, and living together, constitute a household; a person who lives by him/herself also constitutes a household (ibid, p.2). In 2010, a one-generation household became the majority in China (ibid). However, in middle-class families, this situation is short-lived until G3 have children and seek co-residence (Hu and Peng, 2015; Kumar and Williams, 2020). The traditional family practice was built on the paradigm of co-residency. If people live together, it is easier to assist others, but because of drivers such as work opportunities and education are splitting family members apart. People living long distances from each other means that more time and money are invested in commuting, exacerbating the caregiver's financial burden.

Co-residence was how families used to live, and now middle-class families are again returning to a new type of co-residence to support each other, particularly around the care of G4 rather than G1. In Li *et al.* (2012, p. 622), the arrangement of people living separately but close to each other 'serves the purpose of carrying out filial responsibility while protecting the privacy of both generations.' This is one response to the highly physical demands on the sandwich generation in a middle-class family. G2 would like to live close to G1 because it is a convenient way to deliver

support: ‘Regular journeys that were part of an ongoing routine of caring, as well as the need to be available to respond to a crisis or emergency, obviously meant lost opportunities to go elsewhere and do other things’ (Croucher *et al.*, 2020, p. 8).

Accommodation shortages in the past kept people living in extended families; now one of the reasons for living together may be the very high cost of buying a home so shortage of desirable accommodation that is affordable. The high cost of housing in the big cities of China drives G3 back to live with one set of their parents. The high price of a house makes it usual for families to gather money from multiple generations to afford the deposit in the megacities, while the young couple still needs to be able to meet the mortgage payments. For example, a 2012 report found that couples living in major cities such as Beijing or Guangzhou spent about 42% of their monthly gross income on mortgage payments. Home prices ranged from 28 to 40 times the average household income in 2017 in other densely populated cities, such as Shanghai and Shenzhen (China Power Team, 2020).

Older generations tend to give financial support to the younger generation and create the opportunity to live close by. The probability is that ‘elderly parents may still want to show their ‘value’ by providing financial support to their next generation’ (Peng *et al.*, 2019, p. 436). In this study, several of the middle-class G2 mention that they may purchase another apartment for their parents nearby to make it convenient to provide help. However, in practice, they found it was difficult to ask older adults to leave their homes and move in together. Instead, some G2 tried their best to buy another apartment close to G1 and stay occasionally with their parents to provide convenient care support.

**Second**, those who cannot fulfil the physical duties required buy services for their parents besides providing mental support. According to Peng *et al.* (2019), the life satisfaction of older parents in a highly developed Chinese society may be influenced more by receiving emotional help from their adult children, whereas financial or housework support may be carried out by other means rather than by the next generation. This explains the attitude of the majority of G2 and those G1 who are healthy in this study, because as far as money is concerned, G2 are independent; physically, they would not want to depend on their children, but only require emotional support, which is a high priority. Older people are revising their filial piety expectations by becoming respectful of



the unavailability of their adult children to provide physical support due to the increasing geographical proximity and decreasing family size (Peng *et al.*, 2019).

For those families who hire helpers, geographical proximity is a vital consideration for families as they work out in practical terms how best to organise care and support. Interestingly, location not only influences the possibility of care from their children but also the helpers' decisions. There is an example in the Ye family: the helper accepted the job after considering the proximity of the workplace from her home. In recent research, Falkingham *et al.* (2020) suggested that what is needed is a concentration of services including grocery shops, schools, and health and social care services co-located with housing. This would enable caregivers to deliver support for multiple generations conveniently and would allow interaction within different age groups.

Political and cultural shifts result in the dilemma of family relations and the desire to reinterpret filial piety. It is expressed in the responses of G2 and G3, whereby G2 as an 'adhesive generation' that links G1 and G3, have various ideas in practices of everyday life. These differences might lead to thoughts on how families considering their elder care practices can be influenced in future.

#### **9.4.3 Class, gender, and thoughts**

Timonen (2016) argues that constructing models of 'active' and 'successful' ageing in everyday life, sees older adults as 'problems' and 'burdens' that needs to be solved. Consider the presumption that older people should behave as informed consumers, making decisions and taking responsibility for their own wellbeing (Bertelsen and Rostgaard, 2013). However, older people (particularly those who need care) are often viewed as lacking personal identity and agency (O'Dwyer and Timonen, 2010).

Timonen (2016) has critically stressed the paradoxical and puzzled hypotheses of 'successful ageing' and 'active ageing' in the book--*Beyond Successful and Active Ageing: A Theory of Model Ageing*. First is that 'the puzzle of gender and social class blindness, arising from the implicit assumption that women and men, and rich and poor people, have similar trajectories in ageing' (ibid). Even though men are gradually required to provide care as a result of changing gender roles and demographic trends, the allocation of care labour between men and women remains unequal (Conlon *et al.*, 2014). These aspirations fall disproportionately on women, especially those in lower socioeconomic classes (ibid).

Another paradox is attempting to achieve homogeneous results in an ageing society that is being more heterogeneous (Timonen, 2016, p.2). Mid-incomers bring opportunities to boost the economy of the older people market, but who cares about the eldercare issues in a lower-income group of people and what is the role of the state. In fact, 70% urban dwellers are mid-incomers with the definition of middle class, but they can be further classified as upper middle (Hao family), mid-middle, and lower middle (Xing family) groups. Although findings have shown differences between their living arrangement, siblings' relationships, and obvious assets' gap, they all balance the family resources to adapt to the market and manage family developing, and none of them find this easy. For example, Mr. G1 in the Hao family talked about his wife (Mrs. G1) who required care 24-hours a day, which drained his four children. From the angle of money exchanged for time, of course, they can hire care workers to look after parents, but they always questioned the quality-of-care workers.

Second, Filial piety (*xiao*) was a gender-oriented value, but in current society, with the family seen as a unit, people decide how the resources flow and develop appropriate practices within it. Gender roles were divided clearly in traditional society. Along with women working full time, the addition of the one-child policy enhanced the position of the daughter in the family. People see roles in the family no longer divided by gender that required the eldest son to financially support parents and the daughter-in-law took the physical and emotional tasks. Partly due to financial independence of the oldest generation, filial piety is interpreted wider and 'ren' (kindness), 'ai' (love) and 'shu' (reciprocity) have greater meaning (Chan and Tan, 2004), which can be reflected in the parents-children's relationships, more like friends rather than patriarchy authority relationships. Moreover, it must be noted that G3 (only-child generation) will give extra credit to their parents who deliver grandchildren care support. Meanwhile, gender has not been shown to make a great difference in looking after parents in this study.

There is a resource flow within the family and the family is adapting in line with societal changes. It could be understood that traditional filial piety not only asks the eldest son to take care of parents, but also parents to leave the house and farm to the son. Now, parents help the only-child to buy their first apartment and often they help with the care of their grandchildren; in turn, the only-child will take care of them in their old age without hesitation or, so it is thought.

Third, in neo-liberalism, people have responsibility for their choice. the value of ‘all up to you’, such as parents plan for children, adults plan for later life. so, what is the government’s role? Scholars argue that states and governments put the risks of individuals’ choices on the individual. There has been a shift of emphasis from public to private (individual/family) welfare responsibilities, including the assumption that it is the responsibility of older people to maximize their functional abilities, maintain their incomes through work and savings, and remain active, contributing members of society through unpaid inputs to the care and well-being of kin and others (Timonen, 2016). ‘This is the puzzle of assuming strong agency in welfare production on the part of older adults in the midst of growing structural uncertainty’ (ibid, p.3), in which society identifies “solutions” to all “problems”, and policies that promote “successful ageing” transform the negative ageing issue into “active” engagements (ibid).

Nevertheless, the family is always on the front line of providing support for older people, particularly because of the culture of Asian society. More importantly here, the contribution to society of both formal and informal caregivers should be re-evaluated, because families and paid helpers provide a significant saving to the state on eldercare. Yet, as gerontological studies have demonstrated, certain people understand and practice filial piety in stereotypical and negative forms in family relations and political aims because older adults are seen as a burden (Canda, 2013, p.228). For example, some public coverage can inquire into where caregivers’ beliefs about filial piety prod them into a feeling of burden and inappropriate shame and guilt or mandates them to refuse supporting services (ibid). Identifying the information sources may guide professionals and policymakers in increasing individual and family awareness and policy advocacy (ibid, p.228).

Finally, there is a discussion of family resources, which includes children, salaries or pensions, housing, health, and so on, and which extends Bourdieu’s idea of capitals. In most cases, family care puts all of its resources on the table and negotiates the best practices. While political capital in China, in particular, has a significant influence on the lives of senior people and their families. This is seen in variations in pension gaps, health-care subsidies, and housing arrangements, among other things. Mrs. G1 in the Xing family, for example, who retired as a local government civil servant, earned a respectable pension when compared to G2’s friends who were retired employees. As a result, the author points out that political capital in China can be transferred to other capitals (such as housing, subsidies, etc.), which could impact on family eldercare practices.

This study, again, does not contribute to the 'solutions' of looking after older family members, but rather discusses from a family point of view the adaptability of middle-income families on eldercare, and their family practice response to changing socio-economic context. It would be worthwhile to explore how older adults and their families perceive and justify their behaviour in situations where drastic shifts in how they live and what they do are anticipated (Gubrium and Wallace, 1990).

## **9.5 Reflexivity and limitations**

### **9.5.1 Reflexivity**

During my research journey, I have faced self-doubt many times. For example, the greatest concern is how to find participants and how can I get the participants to talk about their own family affairs; how to make ensure an appropriate selection approach. The key difficulty during the study was to realise the complexity of the qualitative data that was collected from the people between generations, from within their families, not forgetting their children and their caregivers. The interviews and findings in the fieldwork have prompted the author to review the topics of study and the goals of the research repeatedly. Qualitative family interviews allowed the author to discuss the key topics and challenges, and for conclusions to be produced. This study let the author gaining further insights into the complexity of family care and the struggle to fulfil obligations in a society where face and filial piety still have a strong hold on people and what that might mean for you as an only child of ageing parents.

Ageing is a global concern, given the reduction in fertility and the continually rising life expectancy. It is also important to emphasise here that at the macro-level, we must take account of cultures, customs, local democratic values, civil society and social rights, because family practices are significantly affected by them. This study provides us with a generational awareness of our contemporary societies, such that planners, policymakers, and stakeholders can strengthen the collaboration that contributes to the unique needs of their families. The research also provides an opportunity to consider, learn and explore help for older adults who may possibly receive care from the only child.

### **9.5.2 Limitations**

At the start of this study, I realised that most of the available literature on eldercare in Chinese was quantitatively based. A small amount of qualitative research focused on health-related topics. Therefore, a few family stories that aim to understand the family strategy of eldercare in a changing socio-cultural and demographic context are still worth in-depth investigation. Besides, according to Walsham (1995), the generalisability in interpretive research requires the development of theories, principles and proposing meanings (Halaweh, 2012). Strauss and Corbin support it,

claiming that the object of grounded theory is to establish theory, and that the more conceptual the concepts are, the more applicable the theory is (ibid).

However, there are some limitations that should be considered in further investigation. Firstly, this topic focused on urban areas, because rural areas come under a totally different system and policy in China, such as family planning, welfare support, etc. If further research is allowed, fieldwork could be undertaken in a rural area to compare the differences of family practice on eldercare.

Secondly, I was unable to contact a family whose parent is ageing in a care home or such institutions. Further research might widen an understanding of these choices and how they are made within a family. Finally, this study has focused on the middle class whose rise will drive more solutions from the market as it begins to realise there are opportunities to be exploited. The families whose stories have been explored have had financial resources that gave them added flexibility. What is the story of care practiced by those who lack these benefits (i.e., working class families and/also the difference in families with urban and rural Hukou)? How will the care needs of their older people be met? There is much research to be done.

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## **Appendix A: Information on the research (in English)**

This research investigates how to understand changing views and practices of eldercare in Chinese middle-class families. This fieldwork is for a thesis that the researcher is writing for her PhD at Newcastle University, UK. The case study area is in urban region of Tianjin, China. The purpose of this fieldwork is to collect data of participants' eldercare practices and later life planning in relation to their life experiences, such as life transitions and historical experiences, as well as their opinions about unsatisfactory aspects of family practices and how policymakers can design and deliver support.

This research has been given ethical approval by the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK.

During interviews and focus groups, the researcher will only raise questions or topics that are related to the research purpose. You are free to answer as fully or as little as you wish or to refuse to answer. However, I would really appreciate it if participants could discuss these topics, which are important to all of us.

The researcher will strictly protect participants' privacy and will not use their research data for other purposes apart from academic research. The researcher's contact information is listed as follows:

Name: Lu Wang

Address: School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, NE1 7RU, UK.

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If participants need to contact the researcher's supervisors or the school, they are welcome to contact the following university staff by email:

Prof. Rose Gilroy (first supervisor): R.C.Gilroy@ncl.ac.uk

Dr. Andrew Law (second supervisor): Andrew.Law@ncl.ac.uk

Ms. Marian Kyte (Learning & Teaching Assistant): Marian.Kyte@ncl.ac.uk

## **Information on the research (Mandarin version)**

研究课题介绍: 本研究主要调研关于家庭养老模式的日常活动及困难, 涉及了家庭三代人对于家庭养老的看法以及观念的转变。这是为了研究者在英国纽卡斯尔大学获得博士学位而撰写学位论文所用。案例研究区域是在天津市市区。实地调研的目的, 包括与家庭三代人的访谈和小组讨论, 是为了收集参与者的日常家庭活动模式, 还有对自身养老的计划, 以及对于现存家庭养老方式不满意的地方和矛盾等。

本研究课题已获得纽卡斯尔大学建筑规划和景观学院的同意, 同时, 在开展实地调研之前, 大学学术道德委员会已审阅了研究者提交的学术道德审查报告, 并批准调研如期展开。

在调研期间的访谈和小组讨论, 研究者仅会提出切合研究目的的问题和话题。研究者不会强迫任何参与者回答或对任何问题和话题给出回应。但研究者将会十分感激参与者能就他们感兴趣的问题或话题分享更多的经历和意见。

研究者将严格保护参与者的隐私, 所收集的数据资料将不会用于除学术研究之外的任何其他用途。研究者的联系信息如下:

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**Appendix B: Consent Form (in English)**

Title of study:

How to understand eldercare in Chinese middle-class families: A case study of Tianjin, China

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research study. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form.

I confirm that I have read the information sheet for the above study, I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and I have had any questions answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. I understand that if I decide to withdraw, any data that I have provided up to that point will be omitted.	
I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study, as described in the information sheet.	
I consent to my research data being stored and used by others for future research.	
I understand that my research data may be published as a report.	
I consent to being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be used for research purposes only. I understand that being audio recorded is optional and, therefore, not necessary for my participation in this research.	
I agree to take part in this research project.	
Participant _____ Name of participant Signature Date	
Researcher _____ Name of researcher Signature Date	

**Consent Form (Mandarin version)**

授权同意书

研究课题:

关于中国中产阶级家庭养老的探索：基于天津市的案例研究

感谢您参与这项研究。请在阅读完研究课题的内容介绍后填写如下授权同意表格。

我已阅读完研究课题的介绍，并已充分了解到该研究课题的有关信息，有疑问的地方我已提出并获得了满意的答复。	
我理解我是自愿参与该研究，同时我可以随时退出并不需提供任何理由。我知道一旦退出，我之前提供的任何数据信息都将删除。	
我同意我的个人信息用于研究课题介绍中说明的研究目的。	
我同意我的研究数据被保存并可以用于将来的研究。	
我知道我的研究数据可能将被发表成研究报告。	
我同意接受语音记录并知道这些记录将被仅仅用于研究目的。我理解语音记录是可选择的，因此如何我不愿意被录音，我将会告知研究者。	
我同意参与此项调查研究项目。	
参与人 _____ 姓名 签名 日期	
研究者 _____ 姓名 签名 日期	

**Appendix C: Questionnaire (in English)**

Name\_; Age\_; Sex\_;

Occupation ; Mobile Number\_

1. Are you living with your children: yes\_; no\_.
2. Do you contact your children regularly: yes\_; no\_.
3. Are you living with parents: yes\_; no\_.
4. Do you contact your parents regularly: yes\_; no\_.  
how: by QQ, WeChat\_; by phone\_; by visiting regularly\_.
5. Are you willing to live with children or parents: yes\_; no\_ others .
6. Are you willing to work after you retire: yes\_; no\_.
7. Are you willing to look after your grandchild after you retire: yes\_; no\_ .
8. Do you join activities with joy: yes\_; no\_ e.g. learning (calligraphy, photography, chorus, etc.); travelling\_; others.
9. If older parents need long-term care, do you choose: a. hire helper at home; b. by yourself; c. send parents to institution; d. others.
10. How do you find that information (e.g., helpers, institution, etc.) a. through family or friends; b. through agency; c. through TV advertisements; d. through the internet; e. others.
11. If you are moving apartment, what do you think is the most important: a. good school district; b. being close to older parents; c. being close to health resources; d. being close to the workplace; e. with convenient life facilities (e.g. market, shopping mall, etc.); f. others.
12. Do you pay more attention to health by: doing exercises\_; obtaining health information\_; buying nutritional goods.
13. Who is the first person that should be notified when you have an emergency: children\_; neighbours\_; parents\_; relatives.
14. How do you divide these resources, assuming they total 100% ?

	Physical	Time	Money	Social resources
Parents				
Self and spouse				
Children				
Grandchildren				

Discuss or think:

1. What do you look forward to about your later life?
2. If you need to move, what kind of community would you like to live in? and who would you want to live with?
3. What do you think the most important thing is in later life? and why?



## Questionnaire (Mandarin version)

姓名\_\_\_\_\_；年龄\_\_\_\_\_；性别\_\_\_\_\_；

职业\_\_\_\_\_；联系方式\_\_\_\_\_。

1. 与子女一起住：是\_\_；否\_\_。
2. 与子女定期联系：是\_\_；否\_\_。
3. 与父母一起住：是\_\_；否\_\_。
4. 定期联系父母：是\_\_；否\_\_。  
联系方式：QQ，微信\_\_；电话\_\_；定期看望\_\_。
5. 是否愿意与子女/父母同住：是\_\_；否\_\_。其他
6. 退休后希望继续参加工作：是\_\_；否\_\_。
7. 退休后希望照顾孙子/孙女：是\_\_；否\_\_。
8. 积极参加活动：是\_\_；否\_\_。包括：继续学习（书法，摄影，合唱等）\_\_；旅游\_\_；其他\_\_。
9. 如果老人生病，需要长期护理，您会选择：a. 雇人；b. 自己护理；c. 送护理机构；d.其他\_\_\_\_\_。
10. 如何获取信息（如：雇人，护理机构信息）：a. 熟人介绍；b. 中介介绍；c. 电视广告；d.网络搜索；e.其他\_\_\_\_\_。
11. 如果重新选择住房，主要考虑因素：a. 孩子上学；b. 照顾老人；c. 医疗便捷；d. 工作方便；e.生活方便（如买菜逛街）；f.其他
12. 注重自身保养：锻炼\_\_；养生节目\_\_；保健食品\_\_。
13. 发生紧急情况第一个要通知的人：子女\_\_；邻居\_\_；父母\_\_；亲属\_\_。

14. 下面各项资源都假定是 100%，您将如何分配？

	体力分配	时间分配	经费分配	社会关系
父母				
自己及配偶				
儿女				
孙子孙女				

讨论：

1. 您希望的老年生活是什么样的？
2. 如果再次购房，您会选择什么样的小区居住？最想跟谁住在一起？
3. 您觉得最影响您老年生活的因素是什么？您最关心的是什么？为什么？

## **Appendix D: Samples of interview questions**

The researcher had planned to ask interviewees some questions about the themes below.

### **Start questions:**

Since when have you lived in this community? How do you feel about living in this community?

Could you please draw your family tree for me? Have you or your parents retired? When?

**Theme 1:** what the later life means to you (G2 older parents and G1 grandparents)

1. What would you imagine in a good later life?
2. Who would you like to live with and why?
3. What would you think the most important factor is that influences your lifestyle in later life? For what purpose do you care for yourself?
4. If you had the last chance to move home, where would you like to live? Why?

**Theme 2:** relationships within generations (G3 adult children or G2 older parents)

1. Who takes care of older family members?
2. How will older people live a good life in later life?
3. How will they source care if needed?
4. How do you feel about filial piety? Do you think that you fulfil filial duties?
5. How often do you visit your parents?
6. Do you have any experiences of facing multiple transitions, such as retirement, illness of your spouse, the birth of your (grand)children, or something else? Did the emergency situations happen at the same time? How could you manage that situation? How could you balance that?
7. Imagine one of your parents becomes frail, or you become frail or you need long-term care; how would you manage it?
8. If an emergency happens, whom would you want to contact first of all? Why?

**Theme 3:** interviewing generations together: if one family member needs care, could you tell me how resources flow in this table? Or if it happened previously, how did your family manage that?

- Picture 1: key words ‘people resources flow’

- Picture 2: key words ‘how practical care flow’
- Picture 3: key words ‘space, house and move’
- Picture 4: key words ‘time’
- Picture 5: money  
Grandparents (pension, welfare benefit per month)  
Older parents (may or may not have income, medical insurance)  
Adult children (income)
- Picture 6: know-how

Generations	G1: Grandparents around 80s	G2: Older parents 55–79 (sandwich generation)	G3: Young adults 30s–40s	G4: Young children
Know-how (Information resources)	Newspaper, TV? Relatives? Friends? Children?	Social media, TV, newspaper? Neighbours? Ex-colleagues? Friends?	Social media, online news? Friends? colleagues?	Online? Classmates? Parents? Relatives?

***Follow-up questions:***

- How does care flow across the family?
- How do people shift their expectations on care?
- What is the way that people use time and money?
- Where are the conflicts in your family?

***Values, views and feelings:***

- How did you respond when...?
- What did you feel when...?
- Why did you think it was important to you?

***Exploring impacts, effects and consequences:***

- What effect did that have on you? Did that help you in any way?
- How did your approach change when you found that out? (Ritchie et al., 2013, pp. 150-151).

## **Appendix E: Everyday diaries, examples**

The researcher wrote daily study diaries to record participants' routines after interviews. For example, in the Ye family, Mrs Ye (G2-D1) asked the researcher to visit her parents' home with her. In detail, the author recorded the following.

Table A.1: Family timetable for Ye family from author's observation

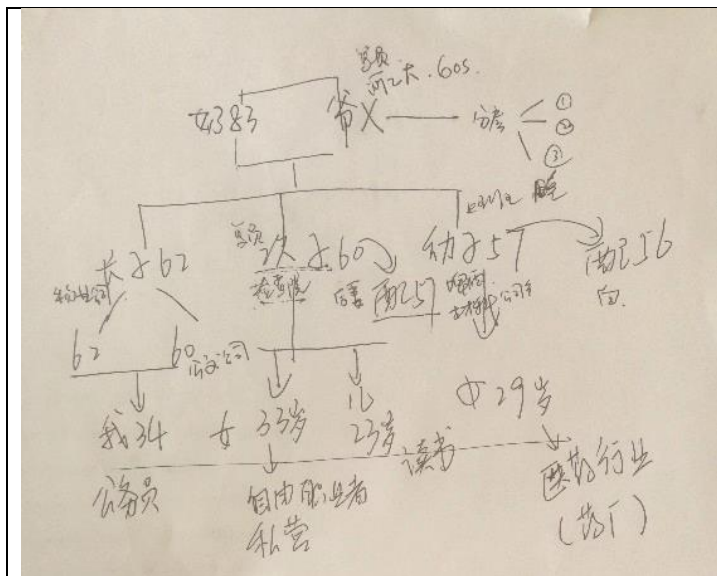
Time period	Daily practices
9am–9.45am	From G2 to G1's home by bus or being driven by her husband.
9.45–10.15am	Chat with helper: during the night Mrs. Ye's little sister (G2-D3) looks after their parents, so the helper took over duty at about 8am, then told Mrs. Ye (G2-D1) what was happening.
10.15–10.30am	Snack for G1-father, helping mother to the toilet (helper and G2-Mrs.Ye).
10.30–11.30am	Helper looked after older parents and Mrs. Ye guided her or gave her some support, such as water for toileting, cutting or washing hair and massaging, etc.
About 11.45am	Lunch is delivered around 12pm from institution to their home.
12–2pm	Lunch was delivered by institutional staff which include helper and older couple's meal, but Mrs. Ye (G2) shared the lunch with her parents (G1). Because the lunch was prepared for two people, Mrs. G1 ate very little. Had lunch and had a little rest.

Similarly, in the Wang family, Mr. Wang (G2-S1) described their family practice to the researcher. But it was delivered by the domestic helper whom G2 had hired.

Table A.2: Wang family practice on eldercare

Timetable	Tasks
6am~	Mrs. G1 wakes up herself, carer helps G1 to wash
7am~	Prepare breakfast, help G1 to take medicines
9~10am	Clean the kitchen and rooms
10–11am	Have a rest
12pm	Lunchtime
1–3pm	Have a rest
4–5pm	Go to market or have a break
5pm	Prepare dinner
6–9pm	Prepare G1 for bed and chat
During night	Need to get up twice to help

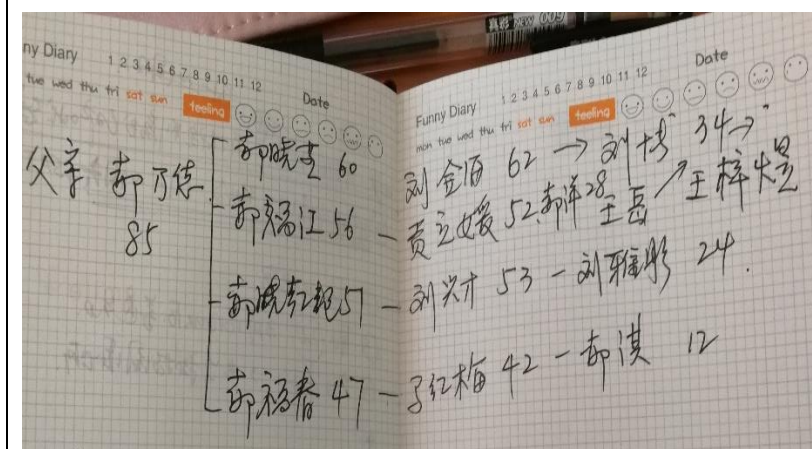
Another example is that some interviewees were willing to share their family situations with the researcher. For example, there were family trees handwritten by participants.



One-page note to show the example that interviewee made to researcher:

G3-Mrs. Xing drew their family tree and G2-Mr. Xing explained their family practices to the researcher






G3- Mrs. Xing introduced their family situations to the researcher and drew it out on paper



G2-Mrs. Hao drew their family tree and spoke about their family members' situations

## **Appendix F: A summary of each action that the researcher carried out in the field**

In total, ten families were visited and interviewed during this fieldwork, including seven families with three generations, and three families with two generations. The table below shows the four focus groups, and the volunteer group of retirement people from Hebei District, Tianjin, which the researcher joined. Moreover, the researcher also visited institutions that supported different groups.

Fieldwork type	Date	Photos	Participants	Comments
Focus group 1	08-01-19		8 persons	Neighbours and friends of my parents who were contacted to join a focus group on ageing-related research
Focus group 2	09-01-19		6 persons	My father's friends: he helped me get in touch with the participants. In their office, I conducted a focus group
Focus group 3	04-04-19		6 persons	After a singing lesson, a discussion group was held to recruit more interviewees
Focus group 4	Photo taken on 15-05-19; between March and May, I joined the Tai Chi team.		8 persons	Informal focus group (discussing the expectations of children taking on the obligations of eldercare)
Older people's volunteer team	12-01-19; 19-01-19		Older people's volunteer team that has been running for six years	Helping older people in institutions with cutting hair; notice the volunteer team from website on internet

Visit to Song He institution (Community service)	22-02-19		With Mrs. Ye; deliver help to home.	This was the day that G2-Mrs. Ye was signing the contract with the care home. The manager invited me to observe
Visit to Jinghai institution (Service to Jinghai district)	05-04-19		5800 (CNY) per person including bed and all bills.	A chain institution was supported by local government. An interviewee was considering it and asked me to visit
Visit to Jingwan elderly people's home (service to Tianjin, Beijing)	15-06-19		6000 (CNY) per bed; Caregiver fee: 500-9,000; meals: 2000 per person; total: 8,500-17,000 per person	Developer is Yuanyang real estate, which is a high-quality and city-centre location institution
G2-Mrs. Ye and Mr. Zhang	17-01-19; 19~24-02-19; 26~28-02-19; 21-06-19	Their home-G2; Parents' home-G1; Via WeChat chat to G3		Took notes, photos; interviews with G1-G2-G3
G2-Mrs. Hao's family	04-03-19; 18-03-19; 25-03-19; 16-06-19	Yicheng tingtang-G2 home; Qingchun nanli-G1/G3 home	Questionnaire	Took notes, photos; interviews with G1-G2-G3
G2-Mr. Li & Mrs. Li	01-02-19; 06/13/20-03-19; 03-04-19; 21-06-19	Their home-G2 home; Litai community-G1 home; Fuyuan community-G3 home	Questionnaire	Looked at their holiday photos; took notes, photos; interviews with G1-G2-G3
G3-Mrs. Xing	26-01-19; 28-02-2019; 24-03-19	Shopping mall. G3-Xingjing's home ( <i>lingshi soho</i> ); Anyue li-G2/G1 home		Took notes, photos; interviews with G2-G3
G2-Mrs. Dai and Mr. Wang's family	05~12-02-19; 10-04-19; 06/09-06-19	Teacher's community in Hebei University of Technology (G2 home), Tianjin. Baihua community (G1 home), Shenyang. G3-rented a room in Beijing	Questionnaire	Took notes, photos; interviews with G1-G2-G3

G2-Mrs. Zhao and Mr. Jia	10-01-19; 16-02-19; 13-06-19	Their home-G2; talked to G1 via WeChat	Questionnaire	Took notes, photos; interviews with G1-G2-G3
G2-Mrs. Xu and Mr. Huo	14-02-19; 06-05-19; 20-06-19	Their home-G2		Took notes, photos; interviews with G1-G2-G3
G3-Mrs. Kong song	08-01-19; 27-02-19	Shopping mall. her home		Took notes, photos; interviews with G2-G3
Mrs. Fu & Mr. Wang	28-03-19; 29-03-19; 30-03-19	Hai er dong cheng guo ji (海尔东城国际), Qingdao-G2/G3 home; Teacher's community in Hebei University of Technology (G2 home), Tianjin		Migrated to Qingdao from Tianjin (two adult generations)
G3-Mrs. Dong Jun	03-02-19; 10-04-19; 21-04-19	Her office. her home		Took notes, photos; interviews with G2-G3