Constancy and Change Coexist:

Chinese Filial Piety in the Era of Modernization

Author: Junhua Zhu
Supervisor: Nicholas Loubere

Abstract

The world has witnessed a rapidly aging China and as a result of the social changes, numerous elderly people are living alone in rural and urban areas. No matter how they have been termed, the reality about the contemporary Chinese elders is that their needs for care is unlikely to be met. Previous researches pursing the theme of modernization in the contemporary Chinese society have argued that a weakened filial care system of xiao accounts for the main reason why these elders are suffering. While on the other hand, filial obligation to parents continues to play an important role in Chinese society, despite the fact that old patterns and past structures have been reshaped. Drawing on Dual Filial Piety Framework and Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving, this research explores how the informal elder care system, xiao, has changed in an era of modernization, with an employment of in-depth semi-structure interviews on multiple-generation families. This research argues that in terms of elderly care, stigmatization of elderly people who live alone, aspiration for education, and a consensus on the phased prioritized care constitute the constancies among the three generations while family structure, gender roles and perception of institutional care have significantly changed.

Key words: *Left-behind Elderly; Empty Nester; Filial Piety; xiao; Social Changes*

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Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

China is getting older rapidly. In 2017, the number of people aged over 60 was about 240 million, accounting for 17.3 percent of the whole population and the ratio is predicted to increase to 35.1 percent by 2050, which will make China the most aged society in the world (World Population Prospect, 2017). Within the aged population, in 2016, there were even 15 percent who were at the age of 80 years old or above, and there were 15 percent who were disabled or partially disabled (Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016). Besides, there are also three unique characteristics of the aging process in China that make the situation more challenging. Firstly, the family planning policies have reshaped the family structure in China, produced the intended consequence of a 4-2-1 family structure in which a couple of only children, after marriage, will have to take care of four parents, plus one child of their own. Secondly, China is encountering the aging population at a relatively early stage of its development, unlike most Western aged societies and its other counterparts in East Asia where the aging occurred after industrialization and urbanization. And thirdly, the modern economic reforms has changed China's employment structure from the prevalence of socialist government-owned enterprises and institutions who offers lifetime job security, healthcare and stable retirement pension, to the privatization of the market which brings greater personal and familial responsibilities in terms of job security, healthcare and retirement pension (Zhan, 2013). Aging has occurred wherever in China, from a mountainous village in the innerland province to the center district in coastal city. As the number of the elderly continues to increase and the aging of population accelerates, one big social issue that China faces today in its social development is how to guarentee the care for the elderly.

Moreover, since the reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, the tremendous industrialization and urbanization process has pervasively changed the structure of society in China. Keeping pace with the increasing demand for labor in urban areas of

China that are expanding at a rapid speed, one of the most significant social phenomena in the modern history of China is the internal migration (Huang et al., 2016). The migration contributes to the emergence of peasant workers (*nong min gong*) whose family members were left behind in the rural areas. It is estimated that the number of peasant worker was around 230 million in 2009, and according to the data from the National Bureau of Statistic of China in 2013, the number had reached 269 million, meaning that more than one third of the Chinese peasantry is on the road (Ye et al., 2013). One of the most influential byproducts brought by this large-scale migration is the emergence of *the left-behind populations* (*liu shou ren kou*).

Left-behind elderly (*liu shou lao ren*), in tandem with left-behind women (*liu shou fu nü*) and left-behind children (*liu shou er tong*) makes up of the three well-known left-behind populations in China. From the rural areas, large number of both male and female labor migrated to the urban cities for work when they are young and, they return to the countryside when they reach the age for marriage and/or childbirth. After the childbirth, the husbands will return to the workplace in the cities and send back the remittance for the elderly life expenditure and children's education, while most women remain in the rural areas providing care for the elderly and the children (Jacka, 2012). Under some circumstances, the wives may also follow the husbands to the cities leaving the children with the grandparents. Consequently, the rural parts of China are dominated by split families and a depleted, shifting population of approximately 58 million children, 47 million middle-aged women and 45 million elderly (Ye et al., 2013). In short, China has entered an era of migration. About 9 million people have migrated into cities every year for the past few years and Chinese cities will be home to about 1 billion people by 2030 (The Economist, 2014). However, it is after all a nationwide migration of the young. Numerous elders have had to stay in the rural areas, due to the institutional constraints such as hukou system or mental maladjustment to the city life (He and Ye, 2014). Then, who are taking care of these elders?

China has currently two major forms of elderly care, namely the formal care offered by public social welfare system or enterprise-based pension system and the

informal care provided by adult children and their spouses (Chou, 2011). Due to the urban-oriented socioeconomic development strategies, there has been a great rural-urban gap in formal care. Only 5 percent rural elders 60 years or older receive pension benefits, while 74 percent of their urban counterparts do (China Research Center on Ageing, 2009). In the rural areas, without enough support from institutional care system, the informal family care from the adult children, filial piety has long been the crucial safety net for the rural elders. (Zhan et al., 2006).

The Chinese version of filial piety, *xiao* encompasses a broad range of normative behaviors towards parents, such as respect, obedience, loyalty, material provision and physical care (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003). This social norm is furthermore reinforced by laws and policies in China, such as Article 49 of the Chinese Constitution and Articles 20, 21 and 22 of the Marriage Law, which articulate and stipulate adult children's obligations to support their parents (Cong and Silverstein, 2014) It is believed that elderly parents' dependency on the adult children has kept holding together the elderly care system in the rural areas.

Furthermore, even in the urban areas, the public or enterprise-based pensions for the elderly in the cities have in fact, become less reliable since many state-owned enterprises have been restructured or gone in bankruptcy since the early 1990s (Chou, 2011). In the early 1980s, the ratio of the elderly who were living with their adult children was approximately 80 percent (Lavely and Ren, 1992). Yet, in a recent national study, 70 percent of elderly in big cities were reported to be living either alone or with a spouse (Zhan, 2013). Rather than the left-behind elderly, this group of vulnerable urban elders who live alone or with a spouse has been mainly studied under another rhetorical term, empty nesters (*kong chao lao ren*). Although there is no denying that the elderly, particularly those in urban areas, have become more and more willing to live without children (Zhan et al., 2006), there are still tens of millions of elders who were forced to live by themselves. Even though most of adult children expresses high levels of willingness to provide traditional practice of parental care, they have been actually unavailable to do so because they, as a group of   might live in another city/country, or they, might have received more stress from the rising

costs in the urban areas In fact, 56 percent of the elderly who moved into the caretaking house answered their reason for moving was because they had no children living nearby (Zhan, 2013). These empty nesters, although may have achieved material independency (self-sufficient or children-sponsored or more commonly, both), still struggle with mental issues such as anxiety, loneliness and depression et cetera (Yu et al., 2012).

To sum up, be it rural left-behind elderly or urban empty nesters, no matter how they are named, the reality about the contemporary Chinese elders is that their needs for care is unlikely to be met. Due to the drastic social changes such as aging population and nationwide migration resulted from the modern development strategies, it seems that the society has been stuck in a dilemma where the development of the practice of parental care has not followed the pace of modernization.

1.2 Research Questions

As introduced, it has become increasingly difficult for the Chinese elderly to receive elderly care. Previous researches have shown that comprehensive aging, pervasive migration, and widening generation gap have all weakened the family-based informal care system of *xiao* and made parental support from the children less secure. Taking the issue of left-behind elderly/empty nester as a starting point, this paper is dedicated to elaborating the developmental trajectory of the elder care system of *xiao* in China. The research question is, *when the country has gone through such social changes in the era of modernization, how has the informal elder care system changed in China*? And it is further broken down into three sub questions.

· How is the phenomenon of elderly people living alone in urban and rural areas framed in contemporary China?

What is a left-behind elderly/empty nester? From which perspectives has the topic been researched? What are the similarities and differences between the left-behind elderly and empty nesters?

· How has the concept of filial piety changed over the past three generations? What is filial piety in the Chinese context? How has *xiao* been analyzed domestically and internationally? Have different generations' perceptions of filial obligation changed? In which contexts have these perceptions changed?

· What aspects of filial piety have remained the same, and how has the concept managed to maintain as normative value in contemporary China? Are there any common perceptions of *xiao* among three different generations? In which contexts have these perceptions persisted?

1.3 Roadmap

After this chapter of introduction, Chapter 2 presents three bodies of literature review on three groups of previous research: research on on left-behind elderly and empty nesters, research on the practice of xiao, and research on institutional care. It identifies the gap between the previous research and provides a solid background to the investigation of this research. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical frameworks which are applied to bridge the gap, the Dual Filial Piety Framework and the Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving. Subsequently, Chapter 4 explains the methodological concerns including ontology and epistemology, research strategy and process, limitations, and ethical considerations. The empirical analysis and findings are provided in Chapter 5 and lastly, Chapter 6 draws conclusions and future discussion based on these findings.

2 Literature Review

Below we shall look at three bodies of previous research that are relevant for answering the three sub research questions: literature on the left-behind elderly/empty nester, literature on filial piety, and literature on institutional elder care system.

2.1 Previous Research on Left-behind Elderly and Empty Nesters

The issue of left-behind populations in China has attracted great attention both from domestic academia and international scholars, as it has been regarded as an obstacle encountered in the process of social development in modern China and has become increasingly serious. In line with this trend, one of the premier experts, Professor Jingzhong Ye has pioneered the research on left-behind populations in China in the early 2000s. He and his team conducted the first comprehensive research on left-behind children in 2004,[1] and have extended the focus to left-behind women[2] and left-behind elderly[3] since 2006. His work, both the initial Chinese version and the later English ones, have provided a foundation for the discussion of left-behind populations in China.

Under the developmental framework of migration studies, by taking a generally critical attitude, he and his team has made a lot of significant conclusions concerning the rural outmigration's impacts on the left-behind populations. They have found that the children left behind in the rural areas are lonelier, and generally less happier than non-left-behind children (Ye et al., 2010); the personal well-being of the left-behind women are deteriorated and they are going through a deeper form of female exploitation (Wu and Ye, 2016); the left-behind elderly are in desperate need of support on the ground that their social network has been weakened, daily care and

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[1] Available only in Chinese, *Left Behind Children in Rural China*/关注留守儿童:中国中西部农村地区劳动力外出务工对留守儿童的影响，Ye Jingzhong; Murray, James R.(editors), Social Sciences Academic Press, Beijing, 2005.

[2] Available only in Chinese, Analysis on the Psychological Impacts of Husbands' Migration on the Women Left at home in Rural China/丈夫外出务工对农村留守妇女的心理影响分析，Ye Jingzhong; Wu Huifang, *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou*, 2009.

[3] Available only in Chinese, Rural Labour Outmigration's Impact on the Financial Care for the Elderly Left Behind/农村劳动力外出务工对留守老人经济供养的影响研究，Ye Jingzhong; He Congzhi, *Population Research*, 2009.

emotional support have been reduced, maladjustments to the new values invited by the new generations have appeared in their mentality, and even the welfare has been degraded (He and Ye, 2014).

While Ye has a tendency to focus on the migration as a whole, many other domestic and international scholars have conducted a great number of empirical researches on one specialized group of the left-behind populations. For example, Professor Tamara Jacka's fieldworks on the left-behind women in China have offered more insights on the impact of gendered institutions, including domestic violence and discriminatory gender roles. Professor Rachel Murphy's research on the left-behind children in Jiangxi Province has also discovered the parental migration's negative impact on the children, such as tremendous mental burden (see Jacka, 2012; Murphy, 2014). Although they chose relatively smaller target of research, the findings are in fact supportive to Ye and his group's argument.

In contrast, there exists also research findings argue that migration has positive impacts on the left-behind populations. The life standard and medical care of the elderly parents has been improved by the remittance from their migrant children (Du et al., 2004; Sun, 2006). The remittance can also raise the left-behind elderly's social status among the village and accordingly mitigate their loneliness (Du et al., 2007). And some believe that the outmigration of the younger generation will not change their concept of filial duty so it will not change the elderly's status either (Zhang, Jin, and Feldman, 2007). These positive views have also gained support from international scholars' work on the similar groups of people in other countries. For instance, Baldassar's research on the Italian transnational families provide evidence that technological development in communication and transportation can maintain the elderly care at a long-distance level which eases the sense of abandonment of the elderly (Baldassar, 2007).

Although there is no consensus over the outmigration's impacts on the left-behind elderly being absolute positive or negative, the majority of scholars in the field are inclined to put more weight on the negative ones. The group is, after all, called 'the left-behind', which expresses a sense of abandonment, embarrassment and

underdevelopment.

Speaking of rhetoric, 'empty nester', which is usually used to describe the old urban parents whose adult children have left home, also conveys a feeling of loneliness and weakness. Yet while 'left-behind elderly' is a concept originated from the Chinese context, 'empty nester' is an imported term. Since the term was introduced to China and enter the popular discourse via the media in the late 1990s (Boermel, 2006), the issue of growing empty nesters has drawn much attention from the social specialists. Through quantitative cross-sectional analyses, they have found that empty nesters have a higher prevalence of mental disorders than non-empty ones (Zhao et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2019). One visible feature of the studies on empty nesters is that they are mostly focused on the emotional status of the elderly. Key words such as depression, self-esteem, mental disease and loneliness can be easily found in the abstracts and the discussions usually lead to an appeal for more attention and further research (Boermel, 2006; Zhao et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2019).

Another characteristic of the previous research on the empty nesters is that they are hitherto,[4] mostly published by domestic scholars, journals or institutions, whereas the research on left-behind elderly has attracted relatively more international attention. Why has the 'left-behind elderly' attracted more attention than the 'empty nester'? 'Empty nester' usually refers to the urban elders who have relatively enough support from formal care system in terms of financial provision, while 'left-behind elderly' indicates an inferior social status that is rural-based and victimized. Studies on left-behind elderly, therefore, associate with a larger field of researches including peasant studies, migration studies, and impact studies (see Chen et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2013; He and Ye, 2014; Chen et al., 2016; Connelly and Maurer-Fazio, 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Ye et al., 2017 et cetera) while the ones on empty nester fall into a narrower range. Nonetheless, another possible explanation lies at the heart of the perceptional disparity of the 'empty nester'. International scholars might be less

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[4] The review on the previous literature was finished in April 2019. 'Empty Nester' and 'China' were as key words input in the search bar of LUBsearch for literature collection. Over 50 (out of a total of 55) valid results are authored by Chinese scholars/institutions/journals.

inclined to focus on empty nester because they might take empty nesting as a feature of global urbanization. In addition, *xiao*, is after all an concept grounded in the East Asian context, which might not fit into theoretical frameworks employed by the international scholars. Intrigued by this curiosity, we shall make a more detailed enquiry into the field of filial piety, or *xiao* in the Chinese context.

2.2 Previous Research on Filial Piety

There is a large body of researches focusing on filial piety in the existing literature. Due to the globally growing issue of elderly care, some investigate the force of filial norms stipulating adult children's support for their elderly parents as a mechanism to share the public financial burden of elderly care (see Lowenstein and Daatland, 2006; Gans et al., 2009). Some take a comparative approach (see Schwartz et al., 2010; Fu and Wang, 2015[5]). They find that on the one hand, different filial norms of different cultural origins are proved to share some transcultural dimensions. For example, Schwartz et al. contend that Hispanic familism and Chinese *xiao* resemble in terms of children's normative reactions to satisfying parental demands or expectations (Schwartz et al., 2010). On the other hand, these norms also manifest differently in different societies (Lowenstein and Daatland, 2006; Gans et al., 2009; Fu and Wang, 2015). Through a comparison of filial piety in Chinese and Jewish culture, Fu and Wang find that the filial norms in separate cultures differ in terms of who should be filial, the scope of filial behavior and the social status of filial piety within each society (Fu and Wang, 2015). Nonetheless, it seems like that scholars around the world have reached a consensus that the Chinese version of filial piety, *xiao*, encompasses not only parent-child relations, but also social structure, ethical requirements, and power dynamics (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003; Ikels, 2004; Yan, 2017; Bedford and Yeh, 2019).

In her book, *Filial Piety: Practice and Discourse in Contemporary East Asia*, Professor Charlotte Ikels has systematically introduced the culture of *xiao* in four

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[5] First published in Chinese by Youde Fu and Qiangwei Wang and later translated by Noah Lipkowitz.

steps: what is it; what motivates it; why is it likely to be changing; and how is it changing (or not). She illustrates the idea of *xiao* by explaining the ideographic character which is constituted with an 'elder' on the top and a 'son' on the bottom. She points out that the essence of *xiao* is therefore support, obedience and continuing the family line. More importantly, she has noticed that the practice of *xiao* in the whole East Asian area is not what it used to be (Ikels, 2004).

Among the previous literature, there are three groups of dynamics that scholars commonly emphasize contributing to the change of practice of *xiao*. Firstly, the comprehensive process of aging has resulted in a much larger base of elder; improvements in public health and medical technologies have raised life expectancy; family planning policies have envisioned an inverted demographic pyramid; all these population dynamics has challenged the elderly care practices in China (Ikels, 2004; Zhan, 2013). Secondly, modern industrialization and urbanization have invited new family structure, means of gaining a livelihood, and values, which ends in great intergenerational estrangement between the young and the old, both physically and emotionally (Yang, 1988; Ikels, 2004; Whyte, 2004; He and Ye, 2014; Bedford and Yeh, 2019). Nonetheless, this anti-modernization theory has also received many critiques on the ground that it idealizes the past and overgeneralizes by failing to differentiate among the elderly (Ikels, 2004). Thirdly, the role of the government in supporting or undercutting the practice of *xiao* has been a core dynamic under discussion (Ikels, 2004; Wang, 2004; Whyte, 2004; Bedford and Yeh, 2019). For example, during the Maoist era, particularly during the Cultural Revolution, in order to secure the ultimate loyalty away from kinship networks and firmly place it with the Communist Party, the government directed massive campaigns to uproot traditional cultural values including the notion of xiao (Qi, 2015). Besides, in the post-Mao era, Some examine this governmental role from a perspective of ideology critique, arguing that the indoctrination of *xiao* can be regarded as a means of social control for sustaining the hegemony of rulers (Yan, 2017).

While these arguments are predominantly made from a more public and politico-economic aspects, a macro perspective, researchers also have been studying

the change of practice of *xiao* from a more private and domestic aspects, a micro perspective. For example, Mai, in his doctoral dissertation, used ethnographic interviews with paradigmatic samples of Chinese family trying to demonstrate how traditional views of filial piety has reshaped (Mai, 2015). Also, by adopting qualitative methodology, Liu has tried to add sociological understanding of the relationship between social change and intergenerational intimacy, arguing for investigations in more depth and complexities and dynamics of lived experiences, strategies and expectations (Liu, 2017). This micro perspective is believed to be able to operate an anatomy on the contemporary Chinese families to the extent that a bottom-up approach can offer more clues reflecting the historical contexts and also reveal more missing details about the Chinese parent-child relations (see also Lieber et al., 2004; Li et al., 2012; Zeng et al., 2014).

2.3 Previous Literature on Institutional Care

As said, the practice of *xiao* is already not what is used to be. State reforms and socio-economic development, such as collectivization, land reform, urbanization and marketization, have resulted in a series of structural transformations at the individual and family level, which has changed the practice of informal elderly care in China (Wang, 2004; Xiang, 2006). Yet these changes in the individual ideas and behaviors will in turn form larger changes in life styles and institutional systems as coping mechanisms (Yang, 1998). In consequence of the decreasing dependableness on familial support, the other alternative, institutional care system has gained fast development (Zhan et al., 2006; Yang et al., 2016). However, not until the social welfare reform in 1990s, has the studies on Chinese institutional care risen to the surface (Zhan et al., 2006).

Previous studies have documented the fast growth of institutional care center in China (Zhan et al., 2006; Feng et al., 2011). Former government-sponsored care center have become decentralized after the welfare reform in 1990s and the amount of private care centers is on the rise, mostly in urban cities (Qian et al., 2018). Zhan et al. found that over 80 percent of all institutional care centers were established after 1990

and over half of them were privately owned and operated (Zhan et al., 2011). Moreover, it is reported that the elders, no matter in the urban or rural areas, are more accepting of institutional care than in the past and prefer private institutional care centers than government-sponsored ones (Wu et al., 2009). Yet in spite of the growth, studies also showed that elders who have willingness for institutional care accounted only for a very small rate. Due to the different samples, the rate differs, such as approximately 8.5 percent in Shandong (Qian et al., 2018), 9.69 percent in Zhejiang. Moreover, it is commonly pointed out that there is a great perceptional gap between urban and rural areas. Those in rural areas have less favorable opinions of institutional care center and are more reluctant to live in them (Chou, 2011; Qian, et al., 2018). This discrepancy is reflective to the different use of the rural 'left-behind elderly' and the urban 'empty nesters', as the rural elders are left behind not only physically but also in terms of capability to adapt themselves to the new practice of elderly care.

It is reasonable to assume that Chinese elderly, particularly those in rural areas, still prefer familial care to the institutional care, if both are available. Institutional care is considered as a supplement when familial care is in deficiency. The development of institutional care in China, is consequently, in need of a cultural adaptation from the traditional practice of *xiao* to the institutional alternative. Another aspect that should be taken into consideration is that, not only the elderly parents but often the adult children are also subject to this necessary cultural adaptation, given that fact that many elders are still fully or partially dependent on their adult children.

However, the 'institutional care here' all means the elder care provided in the care house. What about pension system? What about private insurance program? What about public medical insurance? One thing that is missing from the previous literature is a systematic definition of 'institutional care' in the Chinese context. Although it is agreed that the emergence and booming of institutional care have endorsed the change of traditional care system of *xiao* in China, researches on institutional care has in fact, remained as researches on the alternative to traditional care.

2.4 Significance of the Study

In sum, there are three patterns of research existing in the previous literature. Firstly, among the previous researches on left-behind elderly and empty nester, scholars tend to see them as two different groups and study them separately. Secondly, among the previous literature on *xiao*, researchers are inclined to focus mostly on the changes but not the constancies. Thirdly, it seems that there is a consensus that if the elderly care system in China is about to develop, it will be a linear development from the traditional filial family support to the institutional care, namely from the traditional to the modern. This study puts these three patterns in question. Are left-behind elderly and empty nester two different conceptions? Are there any constancies in three generations' perception of *xiao*? And finally, is it true that the development of elderly care system has to set institutional care as a destination?

This study is dedicated to test these three patterns by a critical utilization of two theoretical frameworks: Yeh and Bedford's Dual Filial Piety Model and Cruz-Saco's Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving. Yet in the chapter of analysis and discussion, these two theoretical frameworks will also be criticized for their flaws, namely the objectivist stance of Dual Filial Piety Model and the dichotomy of Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter introduces the applied theories and concepts that are relevant to analyze and interpret the data collected from the interview. The study is primarily relied on two schools of social theories: Dual Filial Piety Model and Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving. Dual Filial Piety Model points out the fact that the previous studies on the Chinese filial piety, *xiao*, are predominantly focused on its repressive, obligatory and hierarchical characteristics, while its connective, cooperative and reciprocal qualities have been overlooked. In addition, Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving is borrowed as it can offer a benchmark to locate the key role of filial piety in different stories.

3.1 Dual Filial Piety Model

How do exactly filial piety work between different generations? Yeh and Bedford has developed the Dual Filial Piety Model (DFPM), which is comprised of two higher-order factors that correspond to the two essential filial piety attributes: reciprocity and authoritarianism (Yeh and Bedford, 2003; Yeh and Bedford, 2019).

Authoritarian filial piety (AFP) is guided by obedience to role obligations based on the family hierarchy, and reciprocal filial piety (RFP) originates from genuine affection that rooted in intimacy and quality of the parent-child relationship (ibid). People who score high on AFP are more likely to suppress his or her own wishes to satisfy parental demands or expectations, while people who score high on RFP tend to make voluntary support behaviors to their parents. The former fulfills the need for social belonging and collective identity while the latter meets the emotional and spiritual need for intergenerational relatedness (ibid). AFP and RFP are not mutually exclusive but coexist within an individual. Both can promote the same outcome such as less parent-child conflict (through reconciliation or inhibition) and more intergenerational support (through affection or obligation) (Yeh and Bedford, 2004; Yeh and Bedford, 2019). Moreover, based on the interaction between AFP and RFP, as Figure 1 shows, the DFPM identifies four possible modes of personal interaction with parents (ibid).
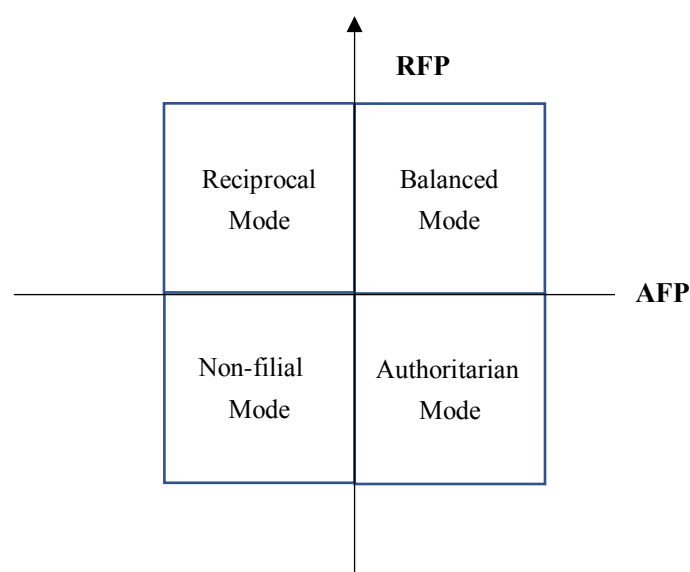

Figure 1: Dual Filial Piety Model

The first quadrant represents people who have high AFP and RFP. They are inclined to be able to consider personal choices and role obligations simultaneously. The second quadrant represents people who have low AFP and high RFP. They are more likely to emphasize personal choices over role obligations and tend to experience filial piety as pure affection rather than self-sacrifice. The third quadrant represents people who score low in both AFP and RFP. It is more possible for them to isolate themselves from their parents. Lastly, the fourth quadrant represents people who have high AFP but low RFP. They are prone to perceive filial piety as self-suppression and self-sacrifice (Yeh and Bedford, 2004). Notwithstanding its lack in empirical evidence, Yeh's DFPM indeed may be an explanation to the conflicting conclusions on filial piety's impact that some found it is repressive and others found it beneficial to the intergenerational relations. These two sets of findings, instead of contradicting each other, in fact represent two fundamental dynamics that should be considered together when studying the role of filial piety. Following this logic, researches on *xiao*, the Chinese version of filial piety, should not and cannot focus on fascination with Confucianism[6] which usually stresses the authoritarian and negative impact of *xiao*. Confucianism makes *xiao* different but does not make it *not* filial piety.

3.2 Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving

This model is a derivation from Bengtson's intergenerational solidarity concepts. Perhaps the simplest definition of intergenerational solidarity is 'social cohesion between generations' (Bengtson et al., 1976). Bengtson was interested in conceptualizing and measuring patterns of cohesiveness among grandparents, parents, and children in the late 1960s and 1970s and he is regarded as the founder of intergenerational solidarity theory (Cruz-Saco, 2010). He measures the level of cohesiveness through six conceptual dimensions: affectional solidarity (feelings of

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[6] A note on the terminology: I have intendedly tried to avoid associating Confucianism with *xiao* and agree with Brandtstädter and Santos' argument that scholars should not support the idea of seeing Confucianism ethics as cultural key to explain China's social changes, at least not in the post-Mao era. (see Chinese Kinship Metamorphoses, in *Chinese Kinship: Contemporary Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Brandtstädter and Santos, 2009)

closeness and reciprocity), associational solidarity (frequency and patterns of contract and interactions), consensual solidarity (agreement in attitudes, values and beliefs), functional solidarity (financial and non-financial exchange), normative solidarity (sense of obligation to care), and structural solidarity (geographic proximity) (Bengtson and Schrader, 1982; Bengtson and Oyama, 2010; Cruz-Saco, 2010). Scholars within this interdisciplinary school believe that a society with a strong sense of morality and/or religious belief seems to embrace the value of elderly care across age, gender and socio-economic backgrounds. Social norms and religion as motivational factors in sustaining the notions of filial duty is an important value that often nurtures intergenerational relationships. Furthermore, power-holders can play an important role in motivating or de-motivating these factors and in such ways, values, beliefs and traditions help shape intergenerational solidarity (Cruz-Saco, 2010).

Following this logic, Cruz-Saco has developed a mode of caregiving, within the framework of intergenerational solidarity theory. As Figure 2 shows below, for simplicity, she proposes a caregiving continuum with 'traditional society' and 'modern society' as the opposite poles. In a traditional society, the family functions through kinship relationships and it is based on marital heterosexual union. Mostly, women are the main provider of care. As society industrialized and modernized, the structure of family will accordingly start to change, fragmenting and leading to a situation where members live without a crucial social network. In a modern society, where the traditional familial system of caregiving has been eroded and the majority of women join the labor market, the provider of care has moved out of the home to a variety of caregiving programs and institutions (ibid.). However, this continuum is merely presented as an idealized representation, since societies do not necessarily move from one pole to the other in a linear manner. And usually, as Cruz-Saco puts it,

> *''they move from the one pole (often the traditional one) to some positions on the continuum where there is a mixed presence of social security programs for a small portion of the population, professional caregiving for a small segment of affluent persons, and the informal community- and family-based caregiving that is unstable and inadequate giving the context of poverty in which care givers live.*

in *Intergenerational Solidarity*, 2010

Again, this model is merely an idealized representation of the swing nature of the way how caregiving, as a kind of intergenerational solidarity, is delivered along with social change. By no means is it able to tell which society is superior and neither does it assert the only direction where societies evolve. Yet it serves as the benchmarks to observe and further, to monitor the process of social change. This model will provide great assistance finding the relations between the elderly care and the social changes happened in the last 30 years of post-Mao modernization, as the 'modern' here in this framework represents individualization and privatization. However, this framework fails to explain the relationship between intergenerational solidarity and social changes before 1976, when 'modern' in the Mao era was based on Marxist-Leninist philosophy and meant centralization and collectivization.

	TRADITIONAL SOCIETY	MODERN SOCIETY
Caregiving from	Family	Market
Function through	Kinship Networks	Institutions
Supported by	Values and Morals	Policies and Programs
Caregiver	Women	Both Women and Men
Social Mobility	Low	High
Sphere	Private	Public
Pushing and Pulling Factors: demographics, social norms, family structure, governmental interventions, advocacy and efforts to address caregiving needs…		

Figure 2: Continuum of Caregiving in Intergenerational Solidarity Theory

As the relevant theoretical frameworks have been introduced, they will be applied to the analysis of development of elderly care system in the Chapter 5. DFPM will be utilized as a supplementary method to comprehensively understand how filial piety works between parents and children. Moreover, IGSMoC will work as a benchmarking mechanism to connect the family with the society, in terms of the level of being traditional or being modern. Besides, both frameworks will also be critically discussed about their flaws.

4. Methodology

This chapter displays how empirical data was collected and analyzed. After initially reflecting my own ontological and epistemological standpoints, the research design and strategy will be introduced. The research process will also be outlined before touching upon the limitations. And lastly the ethical considerations will be discussed.

4.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving (IGSMoC), the applied theoretical framework inherently demands a social constructionist approach. Social constructionists argue that the meanings of a concept must be understood in the social context. This context is the social world of people and this context organizes meanings (Rosenau, 1992; Gubrium, 1997; Zhan et al., 2008). In this research, for instance, the culture of filial piety has been certainly influencing people's action and choice in China. Nonetheless, the meaning and the normative practice of *xiao* have both been reshaped by the society, the government, and even the individual. Sending parents into care center can be perceived as filial or unfilial according to the social context; being filial can also be perceived as 'good' or 'bad' depending on the social context.

DFPM, on the other hand, is inherently objectivist as it deems filial piety as a definitely functioning social relationship in the Chinese society to the extent that people who have more filial piety will act in certain ways and people who have less filial piety will act in certain other ways. No matter the constructionist IGSMoC or the objectivist DFPM, neither of the two approaches can be pushed to the extreme. Objectivism is undoubtedly inadequate to explain all the social interactions while constructivism has to admit the reality that people's behaviors are constrained by organization and culture (Strauss et al., 1973; Becker, 1986; Bryman, 2012). Therefore, these two frameworks are merged in a way that certain aspects of the DFPM are utilized for better understanding of the parent-child relationship while it will also be criticized for being objectivist.

Epistemologically, positivists believe that the social realm can be explained and understood in the same methods as natural science being researched. Namely the social facts or events can and should be considered as the truth that is separate from people's descriptions of it (Bryman, 2012). However, anti-positivists or in another word, interpretivists advocate an alternative to the positivist orthodoxy. Interpretivism argues that truth is culturally and historically situated and also based on people's experiences and their understanding of them (Ryan, 2018). Researchers can never be completely separate from their own values and beliefs and these identical differences will inevitably inform the way how they collect, interpret and analyze data (ibid.).Truth, is therefore subjective. Moreover, it is impossible for the author of a social science research, to avoid the fact that no matter how he or she contends the universalness of applied method, the research remains a product of his or her own interpretation. In fact, what characterizes qualitative research is the step that researchers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively make explicit those values during the research (Creswell, 2007). This default characteristic has kept reminding me of reflecting the position of myself throughout the whole research, from the design to the conclusion. I am here, to re-present, but not represent the stories of the participants.

4.2 Research Design and Strategy

This research is carried out for answering the research questions concerning intergenerational discrepancy, social norms and institutional construction. It is therefore, closely related to tradition, culture and policy-making. For the sake of these intimate associations, semi-structured in-depth interview which aims at finding out the explanation as a comprehensive understanding of historical diversity rather than as functional proposition about patterns of relations among abstract variables, is chosen as the primary method of data collection (Porta, 2008). Following this logic, the process of data analyzing will be done in a case-oriented approach aiming at complexity rather than generalization. Here, the interviewed Chinese families represent the cases and the data will be collected from multiple sources such as

interviews, observations and documents. Moreover, qualitative research entails a bottom-up construction of theoretical information (Creswell, 2007). It is therefore, not necessarily an enquiry into the tight relationships between the cause and the effect, but rather an attempt to draw a holistic picture of the problem or issue under study. In short, under the epistemological assumptions discussed above, this project is accomplished with the employment of semi-structured interview on Chinese families, the value-laden interpretation through theoretical lens of tradition, culture and policy-making, and the sketching of a holistic situation about the elderly care-taking in China.

Max Weber believed that research of social sciences depends on the construction of abstract, hypothetical concepts, what he termed 'ideal type'. Inspired by this Weberian concept of ideal type and Cruz-Saco's IGSMoC, I propose an idealized continuum of Chinese family, with Family Snow[7] at one pole and Family Ink at the other. Although they do not necessarily exist in the reality, they work as the benchmark of the family scope. Targeted families (cases) should be located somewhere on this continuum. Purposive non-random sampling techniques were employed to recruit families into the research, ensuring that a representative spread of family structure, gender and ages are taken into consideration. In total, 4 families[8] participated the research and 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted across all the three generations in each family.

4.3 Research Process

The majority of the data was collected through a fieldwork conducted in Jiangxi Province[9] during Chinese New Year in February 2019. I reached out to my friends

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[7] A note on the terminology: Family Snow represents a family where care is only provided through traditional filial system and Family Ink represents a family where care is only provided through institutional care. The only reason why I use the names of colors to differentiate the families is because the interviewed participants' names imply certain colors (Blue, Red, Yellow, and Green) in Chinese.

[8] see more information in Appendix 1

[9] Jiangxi Province is an agricultural province located in the middle of mainland China with a population of 45.65 million (2015). According to the data from 2015, the rate of the elderly (age 60 and over) was 13.88 percent and the outmigration rate was approximately 5.85-5.94 million per year, amongst the highest in China. see more at (in Chinese) http://www.jxmzw.gov.cn/system/2017/11/06/016539073.shtml The rate of left-behind elderly was 67.1 percent (2011) also amongst the highest in China. see Zou Xiaojuan and He Mei, (in Chinese) *Journal of Huazhong Agricultural University (Social Sciences Edition)* No.96, 2011.

and asked them whether it would be appropriate if I interview their family members about the practice of elderly care within their families. This study employs semi-structured in-depth interview as primary research method in order to draw a more elaborated picture of the changing process of practice of *xiao*. Therefore, I intendedly tried to collect different samples with different backgrounds and after building the contacts with all the targets participants, I visited most of them at the venues with which they feel comfortable when they were available. Few of the interviews were conducted through online chatting software (because the participants were living in another city/country). The interviews were all in Chinese (either in mandarin with the youngest generation or in Jiangxi dialect with the middle and oldest generations) and recorded by my personal equipment with consent. For the sake of data processing, all the records were later translated into English, stored in the analysis software and as showed below, coded with separate code names.[10]

Code	Time	Venue	Length
Blue 1	2019-02-09	Private Home	00:39:00
Blue 2	2019-02-09	Private Home	00:11:29
Blue 3	2019-02-10	Online	00:45:31
Red 1	2019-02-11	Private Home	01:21:23
Red 2	2019-02-11	Private Home	00:52:11
Red 3	2019-02-13	Public Café	00:30:21
Green 1	2019-02-12	Private Home	00:39:40
Green 2	2019-02-12	Private Home	00:22:25
Green 3	2019-02-22	Online	01:11:49
Yellow 1	2019-02-15	Private Home	00:23:58
Yellow 2	2019-02-15	Work Office	01:40:31
Yellow 3	2019-02-17	Online	01:23:22

Figure 3: Information about the Interviews

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[10] For example, the code name of oldest generation from Family Blue is 'Blue 1', and the youngest generation from Family Red is 'Red 3'. see more in Figure 3.

4.4 Limitations

Small Scale

Given the space and diversity of China, the representativeness of this project is limited by its small scale in terms of geographic coverage, ethnic group, and number of cases. Half of the interviewed families are based in Jiangxi Province (depending on the elders' place of living); All of the four families are Han Chinese. Considering the fact that the practice of elderly care differs greatly in different areas and ethnic groups, these limitations constitute the vital limitations of this research. Further research is required to make up for this flaw-by-default. However, the aim of a qualitative research is not to be representative at the first place. Despite these limitations, we can still provide an in-depth understanding of the relations between the target research group and the target social issue.

Beyond Micro or Macro

The famous micro-macro problem that has appeared in social sciences concerns a methodological choice, qualitative method or quantitative method. This study has chosen complexity over generalization, narrative over correlation, and constructivism over objectivism, which certainly fails to investigate the same issue from the opposite perspective. Can we go beyond this unfruitful dichotomy? Although not necessarily focusing only on the parent-child relations, the book, *Chinese Kinship: Contemporary Anthropological Perspectives*, has shed some lights in this respect since it explores Chinese kinship as a *metamorphosis* through a focus on the traditionally marginalized social groups such as women, children, non-standard families and same-sex relations. They apply a 'robust materialism' to the kinship studies, which draws attention to the various materialities (such as blood, memories, rice, labor, property et cetera) involved in the making of kinship. This process helps to bind micro and macro approaches together so as to place the researcher in a wider, historical-political, economic and sociocultural context. The very unique *hukou* system, which is deeply connected to both the family strategy at the micro level and the state policy at the macro level, might be a potential breakthrough point for future studies to be free from this dichotomy.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The whole research process was accomplished in accordance with the ethical guidelines defined by Swedish Research Council. Throughout the interview, participants were fully informed about the intention and purpose of this research as well as how the collected data would be interpreted and disseminated. All information about the participants is made anonymous. To this end, the names of participants have been changed into combinations of the name of colors and a number from 1 to 3 indicating the generation.

Another concern with this research has been to ensure the reliability of the data. The participants are mostly my close friends and their parents and grandparents. These intimate networks offer me the privilege to run the interviews smoothly and I believe there are no major interest conflicts between them and me as we established our relationships on the basis of mutual trust and understanding. However, the participants may to some extent cover some parts of the truth or even deliberately fabricate the information because they want to protect the privacy or maintain the reputation.[11] Notwithstanding, they have all rights to refuse to answer any of the questions, and even to end the interview in case of privacy invasion. I therefore, kept the participants informed that they can say 'no comments' at any time.

5. Analysis and Findings

Now we move to the empirical material. The analysis is divided into two parts in order to answer the three sub research questions. Although it is impossible to discuss the three sub questions completely separately from each other, this sequence is designed for a smoother investigation starting from Chapter 5.1 where I answer the first sub question and analyze the three constancies among three generations, to Chapter 5.2 where how social changes have affected the practice of elderly care is discussed.

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[11] I realize this layer of concern when I heard different types of stories from participants in the same family. One of the participants (as far as I know) actually lied during the interview.

5.1 Constancies

5.1.1 Stigmatization of Left-behind Elderly and Empty Nester

Left-behind elderly is a simplified translation of *liu shou lao ren*. The character *liu* literally means 'to stay' or 'to be left' and *shou* means 'to protect' or 'to waiting for return'. *Kong chao lao ren* is however, an exact translation of empty nester. *Liu shou* indicates a rural-based, remittance-dependent, and under-developmental characteristics while *kong chao* basically represents a metaphor for seeing the urban elderly who live alone as aged birds whose children has flown away. In addition, *liu shou* implies a necessity for the rural elder to stay while *kong chao* has no such certain implications. Hitherto, among the previous literature, these two terms have been predominantly researched separately, causing an illusion that they are two respective concepts. Some even propose a detailed classification on these groups. For instance, Zhou et al. argue that the entire group of empty nester can be categorized as relative empty nesters, who live in the same area with their children but not under the same household; absolute empty nesters, who live in different area with their children; and empty nesters with no children (Zhou et al., 2019). Is this deliberate classification necessary? More importantly, what are the differences distinguishing them from each other and what are the similarities keeping them connected? Based on empirical data collected from the interviews, this chapter attempts to address this first sub research question.

During the interviews, when the participants were asked whether they think their parents or themselves as left-behind elderly or empty nesters, they responded intriguing answers. Blue 1 (74) is widowed and living alone in the city center of Nanchang where two of her children live, which fits in the relative empty nester category very much and she answered:

''Blue 1 (74): I don't think I am a left-behind elderly nor an empty nester. I am not living in the rural area and besides, my big daughter and my son are just one phone call away. I surely wish they could live with me, but they have their own families now, I don't want to add more troubles to them. I have a very healthy lifestyle now. I go to the park in the morning at around 07:15 to perform some square dance with other friends at my age; usually play mahjong in the afternoon; watch some TV before I go to bed very early, at about 21:00. Sometimes I wish my children and my grandchildren could watch TV with me but I they are

too busy.

Yellow 1 (83) has a very similar situation. He is also widowed and lives alone in Shanghai where two of his children live.

''Yellow 1 (83): I hired a housekeeper to take care of my meals since my wife passed away two years ago and everything is very convenient. Every morning, I go to the supermarket to buy the food I want to eat, and she will cook for me. My children always call me. My son sometimes come to stay with me. My grandchildren who are all living abroad also contact me through WeChat quite often. I think my children will eventually immigrant to the countries where their children live. I think it might be a little bit tough in that case. Just wish my wife was still alive. But I still think I am not a left-behind elderly nor an empty nester. I am not that miserable.

Even Red 1 (82), who is 'typically' left-behind, denies his status as a left-behind elderly.

''Red 1 (82): My wife hates me. So, she has moved to the city with our sons in early 1990s when they started to work as nong min gong. Ever since, I am the only one who is still living in the rural area. They will all come back during the Chinese New Year and recently they come back more often. They move to the city to earn more money and settled down there. What is a liu shou lao ren? They didn't leave me behind, they send me money every month. But empty nester? I think I am one. Although I can handle my life myself, sometimes I do feel a little bit lonely because there is not so much to do.

Although three fourth of the participants from generation 1 are seen as left-behind elderly or empty nester from a researcher's perspective, they did not complain too much and did not identify themselves as left-behind elderly nor empty nester. The majority of their children and grandchildren had, on the other hand, expressed different opinions.

''Red 2 (53): I feel terrible to leave my father behind in the rural area, but I had no other options at that time. I had to move to the city to earn more money and also my sons need to receive good education and go to the university. Now my big son is already married and has a son, and my small son is looking for work. I think my task is almost done and I feel like going back to the rural area and build a new house where I can take care of my father and also spend my elderly life. I guess I and my wife will become empty nester in the near future. But left-behind elderly sounds a little too much.

''Red 3 (28): I feel so sorry for my grandfather. It is really dangerous to live alone in the remote rural area. Therefore, I do not want my father to become my grandfather later. But I know my parents are thinking about moving back. My father has already asked somebody to design the house. But [sigh] I can never go back, I have my job here and I have to raise my son in the city. I do not want to leave them behind. I am really worried about this.
''Yellow 3 (24): I am working so hard right now just for my parents. I want them to live with me here, but the immigration policy is very strict. I wish I do not have to leave them behind

(in Shanghai). They raised me up and paid everything for my 24 years life including the huge amount money of tuition fee, now it is my turn. I have to pay back.

No matter where the parents live, in the rural area, in a mid-sized city or in a large city, the children (or grandchildren) have a tendency to think that their parents (or grandparents) are left behind, as long as they are not living in the same area with their parents.

Two important points can be summarized from the answers. Firstly, there is a consensus among the three generations that both left-behind elderly and empty nester are both someone pitiful, with the former being perceived more negatively. Secondly, the urban elders can be seen as left-behind elderly and the rural elders can also be seen as empty nesters, which indicates an inner connection between the two groups. For further discussion, I interpret them respectively into two assumptions: firstly, '*liu shou lao ren*' and '*kong chao lao ren*' are stigmatized.[12] Secondly, they are made through similar patterns.

One may notice the stigmatization of '*liu shou*' or '*kong chao*' in China, even at now. However, by quoting Saussure[13], Ye argues that conceptualization does not equal to stigmatization. The nature of a concept is in fact a reflection of the society and the meaning of a concept is a result of the social construction which keeps being reconstructed as time changes. Any concept can be constructed as stigmatized or eulogized (Ye, 2019). For example, 'rural' and 'peasant' can be constructed as 'conservative' and 'under-development', but they can also be constructed as 'peaceful' and 'diligent'. Following this logic, the constancy of a stigmatized perception on '*liu shou lao ren*' and '*kong chao lao ren*' among the three generation, have in fact reflected a strong filial value that three generations all share. This constancy stands in line with the argument that previous researchers contend: in spite of the enormous social changes, the importance of the filial notion of *xiao* persists today in China (Whyte, 2005; Cong and Silverstein, 2008; Qi, 2015).

In sum, among the three generations, '*liu shou*' or '*kong chao*' are stigmatized

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[12] Here and below in the analysis, I must use the Chinese versions instead of 'the left-behind elderly' and 'empty nester' as to emphasize the contextual meaning of '*liu shou*' and '*kong chao*'.

[13] Saussure, Ferdinand de, a swiss linguist and semiotician. His idea laid a foundation for important development in both semiology and linguistics.

because of the persistent tradition filial value of *xiao* which requires that elderly parents are supposed to be accompanied and taken good care of by their children. Then why is the prevalence of '*liu shou lao ren*' and '*kong chao lao ren*'?

5.1.2 Aspiration for Migration and Education

In the current era of migration, people in China are moving out from rural to urban, small cities to big cities, and sometimes domestic to overseas, for pursuing better living conditions (Ye et al., 2013). As Ye et al argued, rationalists would apply economic theories such as Lewis's Model of unlimited supply of labor, Todaro's theory of expected income and Stark's relative deprivation to interpreting the migration occurring in China. Lewis argued that the rural surplus labor will be attracted by the income difference between rural and urban areas until the surplus has been completely absorbed by the urban sector. Todaro believed that is it the anticipated higher income rather than the actual income that would encourage a laborer to migrate from the rural to the urban. And Stark pointed out that the income gap between the rural and the urban entails that a rural laborer would feel deprived in the village and therefore, migrate to the city (ibid.). They contend that migration is driven by practical considerations for self-interest maximization (Lei, 2001; Xiang, 2007; Ye et al., 2013; He and Ye, 2014). For example, people migrant to the city for higher salary (Lei, 2001) or for receiving better education at the famous universities which are usually located in big cities or even foreign countries (Anderson and Kohler, 2013). However, assertively judging the self-interest maximization as the cause to migration in China seems a bit too arbitrary, since it neglects the social and cultural factors in the Chinese context. In fact, most of the participants who have migration experience explained that they migrated for their children's education.

> ''Red 2 (53): In China, people like me who were born in the countryside, can only success through education. Education changes your life. I didn't go to the university so I can only be a peasant worker, but I don't want my sons to follow my road. So, I had to came to the city, to earn more to cover their tuition fee.

Besides, Blue 2 and Yellow 2 sent their children abroad for better education and they found a job planning to settle down there. Besides, even Red 3, a father to a

newly-born baby, claimed also that he will work harder to prepare the money for his son's future education investment. Blue 3 also said:

''Blue 3 (24): If I get married in the U.S. and my children are born here, they will have much better educational environment. They don't have to attend the National Higher Education Examination. So, even just for the future of my children, I will have to stay here and work harder.

In short, as told by the participants, one of the most important driving forces for migration is their children's education. This obsession with children's education has been under great debate. Some confirm its positive effect that help the students improve their socio-economic status (Jiang, 2013), while others focus on its negative influence. For instance, *nong min gong* decide to work in the city to earn enough money for their children's education, but it is very likely that they have to leave their children behind. Although their parents migrate for their education, the left-behind children, do not necessarily achieve better educational result after parents migrate (Ye, 2013; Murphy, 2014). Nonetheless, even though the migration's impact on education remains uncertain, one can still easily identify the education fever in the Chinese society (Anderson and Kohler, 2013). And this education fever reflects an obsession with being successful, which is believed to be another constancy among the three different generations. Almost all the participants except Green 3 and Yellow 3 claimed that their decisions on place to stay is related to their children's education.

Education has long been the central focus of Chinese family life and the expenses for children represent the top consumption category for Chinese households, exceeding even outlays for housing and pensions (Robinson et al., 2010). Chinese parents generally believe that spending on their children's education potentially has a higher return and also that cultural capital or personal quality (*su zhi*) accumulated from education can also be converted into economic and social capital (Ponzini, 2018). In short, the constant education fever is a result from the belief that investment in next generation's education will increase their economic and social status. Therefore, care for the children, has been mainly focused on the care for their education.

5.1.3 Consensus on Phased Priorities

Driven by the aspiration for next generation's education, rural parents migrate to the city and young graduates settle down in the big cities. Nonetheless, in order to prevent the whole rural population from spontaneously moving to cities and also keep the price of grain low enough to support a high rate of industrialization, the government established the *hukou* system (Xiang, 2007). The *hukou* system directly places obstacles in the way to a complete migration of the whole family (ibid.). Not only family members but usually the migrant workers themselves are not able to get an urban *hukou*. Therefore, if young men migrant out from the rural, mostly they will have to at least leave their parents in the rural areas, such as Red 2. In worse cases, they will even have to leave their children in the countryside, turning them into the left-behind children (Murphy, 2014). Same pattern applies to the young children who migrant to big cities for better education, such as Blue 3 and Yellow 3, except that *hukou* is replaced by residence permit in these cases. On the one hand, they have to migrate for the next generation, while on the other hand, they should stay for the last generation. Can we therefore, conclude: the persistent filial piety to care the parents' generation and the stubborn aspiration for children's education, which have been argued in the previous chapter as two constancies among the three generations in China, are inherently conflictive? Precisely as Yellow 2 put it:

''Yellow 2 (53): I am a mother, as well as a daughter. I have to raise my daughter and meanwhile, I have to look after my parents. There are so many times that I can't handle both. I remember there was a period of time when my dad was sick and lived in the hospital. I was supposed to look after him, but I had to pick my daughter after school. So, I wasn't there for him. Although it's a really tiny thing, I still feel guilty.

How do Chinese families avoid this conflict? The question can be reframed into 'how can one care simultaneously for the young and the old?' and it was raised during the interviews. The story of Family Red revealed a consensus over the three generations.

''Red 2 (53): I don't need to take care of them at the same time. When I migrated to the city, my parents were not old at all. And I am pretty sure that they agreed with me that I should take my children to the city. So, before I turned 50, I basically only focused on my sons. My parents understood their grandchildren come the first. But now my sons can be independent. And my parents are quite old, now it's their turn to enjoy my absolute concentrated care.

There is no denying that the relationship between parents and children remains close throughout the whole life, yet the interdependency is actually a phased conception. Professor Fei Xiaotong has termed this phased interdependency into a Chinese Reciprocal Model (*fan kui mo shi*) and he has also termed the western model of care as Relay Model (*jie li mo shi*). As showed below in Figure 4, '→' represents the care for children, and '←' represents the care for parents. One of the two main mechanisms of Reciprocal Model is apparently the system of *xiao*, the other, which is often neglected and pointed out by Fei, is the phased priorities. In the phase 1 (from 0 to 26[14]), one is taken care of by his parents; in the phase 2 (from 26 to 52), his children are prioritized to receive care; in the phase 3 (from 52 to 78~), his parents are prioritized to receive care. So, '⇆' represents the care obligation to both parents and children, yet they do not necessarily occur at the same period of time.

Generation1   ⇆   Generation2   ⇆   Genetation3

a) Reciprocal Model

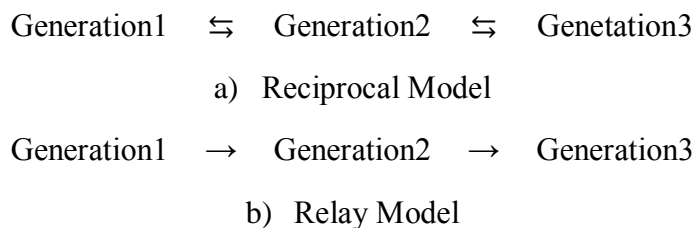Generation1   →   Generation2   →   Generation3

b) Relay Model

Figure 4: Reciprocal Model and Relay Model

This mechanism function as a buffer that subtly delay the time to fulfill the filial obligation. As long as there is a consensus on this mechanism of this phased priorities, the filial obligation to care the parents' generation and the aspiration for children's future development shall not be inherently conflictive. Nonetheless, undoubtedly, situations differ from family to family. There are unfortunate accidents that generation 3 may suffer from severe disease at a relatively early age or generation 1 may be born at a relatively late time. There are also a lot of old Chinese sayings depicting these situations, such as '*zi yu yang er qin bu zai*' (the child is ready to take care of his parents, but they have passed away) and '*yang er fang lao*' (raise children for elderly care). These old sayings in fact imply a major characteristic of Reciprocal Model, that it is highly dependent on a stable family structure and, luck.

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[14] Just an approximate age. The real range differs from family to family. Here I use 26 because it is the average age when all the participants had their first child.

Another noteworthy aspect of this dualist model is that it extremely resembles IGSMoC, except that in the former there are the Chinese and the Western while in the latter there are the traditional and the modern. In this respect, can we accordingly argue that the 'modernization' in the framework of IGSMoC is actually westernization and it has been uncritically depicted as modern in the model? A comparative research from Whyte's on filial support for the elderly in Mainland China and Taiwan has shed some lights on this question. In the mid-1990s, he found that the filial support system was paradoxically, more traditional in urban Taiwan, a much richer and more highly developed than the Mainland China. And he argued that, the central component of modernization is not rising income per capita, industrialization nor urbanization, but the decline in the family as a production unit. Following this logic, the socialist transformation of the mid-1950s in Mainland China had eliminated the family as a production unit and had made family property ownership and inheritance inconsequential while on the other side, Taiwan had been 'held back' by the centrality of family-run companies and assets, and the reliance on family employment and resources (Whyte, 2004). Chinese socialism was the more 'modern' social order than the capitalism in Taiwan (ibid.). However, this was the story before a new state reform was designed to eliminate the state-sponsored 'iron rice bowl' of socialist job and to capitalize labor force in 1990s. Since then, 'modernization' in the Chinese context, has become more or less an obsession with industrialization nor urbanization.

5.2 Changes

5.2.1 Family Structure

One of the most obvious changes among the three generations, as frequently mentioned in the previous researches and also straightforwardly demonstrated in the Appendix 1, happens in the family structure. Inspired by the information from previous literature, two significant historical conjunctures that have great impacts on the family structure, including collectivization (Mao's modernization), and reform and opening up (post-Mao modernization) have been selected as key social contexts.

''Green 1 (73): Back in my age, my parents were living with us and taken care by us. I have 9 siblings and when we used to celebrate the Chinese New Year together, there would be more than 60 people. This family size was definitely seen as a sign of power. More people can surely do more work. But then there were the population-controlling policies. One-child policy was enacted after my smallest daughter was born so I am actually not affected. But it caught my youngest brother who is 16 years below me and gave birth to only one child. Before, President Mao actually believed that any kinds of revolution can happen as long as we have enough people. And I remember that child birth was even subsidized with, not money but 5 kilo fish and 5 kilo meat. However, somehow later, came the 'Three Mas' Population Theories', I bet you have not even heard about it, and the size of the family have become smaller and smaller. So, I feel actually very sorry for the young generation, they have almost no siblings. It must be very lonely. And now they have nobody to share the burden of their parents' elderly care.

Just as Green 1 has recalled, the population policies have changed the family structure in China and further, influenced the practice of *xiao*. Three Mas' Population Theories is hardly mentioned as a systematic joint theory in the previous literature, yet they have attracted much more attention as three separate theories: Malthusian growth model, Marxist theory on population and the father of family planning in China, Yinchu Ma's New Population theory. Malthus argued that population reproduce at a geometrical level while natural resources at an arithmetical level, so people need preventive checks such as birth control, postponement of marriage and celibacy to avoid food deficiency (Malthus, 1798). Although his theory remains highly debated till now, he is regarded as the founder of birth control theory. Karl Marx, however, criticized Malthusian population theory that it overlooks the social, political, and economic structural factors that are the causes of such a demographic structure and processes. He argued that food deficiency and starvation were caused by unequal distribution of the wealth and its accumulation by capitalists, but not any population reasons, which shed some lights on the social change in China during the period of collectivization. Later, Yinchu Ma pointed out that 'the greatest problem in China is that the population grows too fast and the cumulation of funds is too slow' and 'we need to control the quantity and improve the quality of the population' (ibid.) It was under the influence of Ma's New Population Theory that the Chinese government has started family planning in late 1970s, when socialist collectivization was replaced by marketization and capitalization as the goal of modernization.

There is a clear distinction within the Three Ma's Population Theories that Marxist-Maoist perspective on population in the Mao era differs greatly from Malthusian-Ma's demographic theories that dominate later in the post-Mao era. Not only influenced by Marxism, Mao's ideas on population were also conditioned by his views on war which he had come to believe that in wartime a large population is an advantage (Ma, 2001). This respect is reflected to Green 1's '*any kinds of revolution can happen as long as we have enough people.*' During the Great Leap Forward movement in the late 1950s, Ma's population control theory was heavily criticized and he was even labeled as a 'rightist' (Zhang, 2017). We can see that all of the participants from generation 2 have at least 2 siblings, with an average of 4. In fact, the average fertility rate from 1960 to 1970 was even more than 5 (Word Bank, 2017). However, in the late 1970s, after two decades of explicitly encouraging population growth, one child policy was enacted in a context of industrialization and urbanization. The fertility rate sharply fell to 2.63 in 1980, and 1.49 in 2000 (ibid.). This pervasively shrinking family size can be summarized as a 4-2-1 structure, 4 grandparents, 2 parents and 1 child. has resulted in an increasingly child-centered quality of Chinese families. Child-centered, here means that parents direct all their love, resources, expectations to their only children.

> ''Blue 2 (50): I sold an apartment because of my son's tuition fee and living expenses in the U.S. I have only one son. I will do it without hesitation.

This child-centered investment from the parents has been a result from Ma's 'from quantity to the quality' thesis and it entails a significant change in children's reaction: more reciprocal filial obligation.

> ''Blue 3 (24): My parents did everything for me. I know how much they love me. And I will not turn them down and try my best to take good care of them when they are old. I will take them to travel to anywhere they want to go and buy them everything they want.

In short, on the one hand, the previous researchers have argued that increasing 'individualism' and 'egoism' among the younger generations will substantially weakened the family obligation and filial sentiments. The shrinking child-centered family structure on the other hand, has guaranteed more reciprocal filial obligation. DFPM is capable of resolving this seemly paradox. Since China has opened up in

1978 and moved from a collectivized economy to a market-based economy, not only the imported western popular culture but also the structural consequence of market relationships has led to individualism among the younger generation. Therefore, the level of AFP (authoritarian filial piety) which fulfills the need for social belonging and collective identity, has decreased as more and more people from the younger generation have a gradually raising tendency to interact with their parents in terms of the equity rule of deliberate calculation in the principle of market pricing (Fiske, 1992). On the other hand, more love and investment devoted to the children have meanwhile increased the level of RFP (reciprocal filial piety) which meets the emotional and spiritual need for intergenerational relatedness. Given a rising level of RFP and a falling level of AFP, how can one determine the changing trajectory of filial piety in China?

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, one problem about DFPM is that it is a relatively objectivist framework. It is useful to the extent that it points out RFP as another vital component of filial piety which affects intergeneration interactions. Yet at the same time, it is also too ideal in the sense that it aims to generalize a mathematical formula between filial piety and parent-child relations.

5.2.2 Gender Roles

Not only the family structure, but also gender roles in terms of elderly care has changed over the three generations. Green 3's detailed narrative of her family reveals some key points when it comes to the gender roles in filial piety.

> ''Green 3 (24): My parents got divorced when I was at age of two and I have been living
> with my dad ever since. My step-mother moved in when I was 4 and very soon my
> step-brother was born. To be frank, I think if I were a boy, then my parents would have still
> been together. When my mom was pregnant at the first time, they found out it was a girl and
> then she went through with the abortion. And later when she was pregnant with me, my
> paternal grandparents urged her to do it again, but the gynecologist doctor said she might
> lose the ability to bear if she went through again. Then my maternal grandparents and my
> paternal family got into a huge fight, and as a result, my parents got divorced. My maternal
> grandparents are, notwithstanding, not someone nice neither. They actually bought a son at
> the cost of their fourth daughter and some extra money. And they forced his only son to stay
> in Nanchang living with them when he had a chance to achieve his dream as becoming a

firefighter in another city. His parents thought it was too dangerous, so his father wrote a letter to threaten the fire department saying that if his son left, he would kill himself. Later, my uncle became depressed and addicted to drugs. They ended up in really terrible terms and he left home. They don't even know whether he is still alive now and my grandparents have been just pretending that they never had a son.[15] My mother told me this before I went abroad two years ago. Such a tragedy, isn't it? I don't know why they just regard men as superior to women, even my own dad. I hate it! Maybe this is why I am lesbian? [laugh] I miss home, but I don't want to go back. I feel so sorry for my mom though. She has been manipulated so much and I will try my best to take care of my mom even though she has never been by my side, and my dad...he has his son.

The story of Family Green not only directly reflects the patriarchal priority to men over women that exists in the older generations but also conveys a completely different attitude in the younger generation. During the Mao era, as a result of ideological transformation, constitutional changes and institutional reforms, women were liberated from traditional oppressions and prevailing propaganda that stressed their equality with men. As Mao said, 'women hold up half the sky' (*fu nü neng ding ban bian tian*). They were encouraged to work full-time in collective units and became important in the labor force. Given the direct power to contribute to the family resources, their influence within the family consequently grew. As a result, there occurred a decline in parental preference for sons, which increased the gender equality between men and women at that age. Daughters thus became significantly important as a provider for parental care, in both rural and urban areas (Hansen and Pang, 2008).

Moreover, in the post-Mao era, the reform and opening up, in tandem with the policies on population control, the status of women in China has been further enhanced. Firstly, one of the most significant methods to improve gender equality is considered to be education. In China, the National Matriculation Tests Policies (the predecessor of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, or mostly known as *gao kao*) was officially cancelled in 1966 as it was accused of hurting the benefits of the working class (Wei, 2008). Not until after the death of Mao in 1976, had the examination been officially resumed in 1977, which has continued to the present day (ibid). Secondly, Ma's population control theory has been adopted by the

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[15] In fact, this is the lie that Green 2 and Green 3 had told me during the interview.

government, although the theory had been criticized and Ma was also attacked by the government in the Mao era (Ma, 2001). In spite of the negative impacts of one child policy such as human rights violation, unbalanced gender ratio and so forth, women in the cities have unintendedly gained benefits, for instance, more educational investment from the parents (Qi, 2015). And these daughters, have in turn demonstrated that they will fulfill the filial obligations that were once exclusively reserved for sons (Fong, 2002; Qi, 2015).

> ''Yellow 3(24): I am my parents' only child. They have devoted their whole life to me. I know how much they love me and, I love them just as the same amount. They are actually the reason why I am working so hard right now in a foreign country. I have promised myself I will take good care of them when they are old. I will take them to see the Northern Lights and the Mediterranean, anywhere they want to go.

Yellow 3 in fact has also said that she does not want a baby and has ranked her parents as the most important part of her life, exceeding even herself. Although lack in evidence from rural women, this strong filial obligation from the urban daughters, as observed in both Yellow 3 and Green 3, has proved the change in the gender roles in terms of elderly care in China, in a sense that more of them are aware of the inequality and they have more options than just being somebody's wife or somebody's mother. Women's increased social power, as a result of direct participation in the social production and higher education level, leads to a change of their gender roles in performing filial obligation. Instead of looking after parents-in-law, expected as a traditional normative behavior of *xiao*, contemporary daughters have increased capacity to act as daughter caregivers for their natal parents (Xu, 2001).

5.2.3 Institutional Care

The emergence and booming of institutional care have precisely endorsed the change of traditional care system of *xiao*. Therefore, researches on the change of institutional care can in fact, offer another perspective for studying the traditional elder care system of *xiao*. As mentioned before, probably due to its late development, there is no agreed definition hitherto on institutional care in the Chinese context. Before the

empirical discussion on institutional care, we shall firstly clarify the term. There are generally three kinds of institutional care that are virtually known in China now. The pension system (either offered by state-sponsored companies or private companies), social welfare institutions run by the government, and institutional care center run by the private. Currently, there is no national health insurance program in China and the few government-run social welfare institutions serve only mentally retarded, deficient adults without families and childless older adults (Feng et al, 2011). As a result, the actual meaning of institutional care in the Chinese context becomes the pension system and the private institutional care center, which are in fact both private-pay except the former is a compulsory pre-paid deposit while the latter is service for purchasing. In the previous researches, the most discussed institutional care is the latter, elderly care provided in the elder care center, while the pension system in China is hardly studies. In the following discussion on the institutional care, we will first analysis the institutional care in the private care center and later focus on the reform of pension system.

During the interviews, generation 1 were asked whether they will be willing to move to the care center and generation 2 and 3 were asked whether they will send their parents to the care center. The answers were almost all negative.

''Blue 1 (74): If you go to the care center, it's like… you have to wait in line for getting meals, it just like a canteen. And all the dishes are cold. My neighbor and her husband moved there, and she have diarrhea every time she eats the food there. So, she bought her own microwave and rice-cooker and laundry machine. The care center provides only limited amount electricity every day. They are even living in a deluxe room. It costs 3000~4000 RMB per month, which I can't afford. And I don't think it's worth it.

This finding is very similar to Zhan's conclusion: elders who entered institutional care center were stigmatized (Zhan, 2006). Yet there are still some differences. When generation 3 were asked whether they can live in the care center in the future, all of the four replied the positive answer. So, rather than elders the group themselves, but it is the children who send their parents to the care center that have been stigmatized. This result echoes with the discussion on the stigmatization of the left-behind elderly and empty nester in the Chapter 5.1.1. One can argue that the filial obligation to care the parents are still prevalent, even among the young, which can be

partially explained by the rising RFP. Yet another important explanation is believed to be the high cost and bad quality of service provided by the ordinary care center in China.

> *''Blue 3 (24): I would like to have my parents to live here in the U.S. I know there are a lot of care houses run by Chinese and they have much better services. But then I probably will have to get my Green Card first. So, they can come here and stay.*

Nonetheless, a higher level of acceptance of the care center from generation 3 is not only evident here in the empirical interviews, but also commonly recognized in previous literature (Zhan, 2006). This trend is a core contention from the IGSMoC: when a society is going through modernization, the provider of elderly care will move from the family to the institution. As discussed before, modernization, here means capitalization and privatization. Yet what kind of institution is IGSMoC referring to? And more importantly, why do the participants from generation 3 can accept spending their own elderly lives in the care center while meanwhile, they cannot accept sending their parents to the care center?

> *''Yellow 3(24): My parents have me. I will take good care of them, so they don't need to go to the care center. For myself, I am not even sure whether I will have children later. That's really not something to count on. My life will actually be better off without children.*

Not only Yellow 3, but Green 3 also expressed that she does not want to have any children. However, they said that they are not worried about their elderly lives at all, because they are saving up for the future through the pension system. When they grow old, they will be able to pay for the service in a good care center. In other words, the younger generation have been inclined to count more on themselves than children, as they pay the tax for the pension system before and they later use the pension to purchase service at the care center. The concept of '*yang er fang lao*' (raise children for elderly care) has lost its dominance. Institution here therefore, refers to both pension system and care center. This moving from familism to individualism in terms of elderly care fits in IGSMoC's modernization theory. Notwithstanding, we should always be careful when using 'modernization' because it used to be a completely different destination in the China under Mao's era. Given a context of low fertility rate, extended life expectancy, and an absence of national welfare system, the younger generation have nobody else but themselves to rely on in terms of elderly care.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis takes the phenomenon of elderly people living alone in urban and rural areas in contemporary China as a starting point, explores how the informal elder care system, *xiao*, has changed in an era of modernization, with an employment of in-depth semi-structure interviews on multiple-generation families. Under the critical employment of Dual Filial Piety Framework and Intergenerational Solidarity Model of Caregiving, this research conducts an elaborated analysis in the previous chapter.

To summarize the analysis: 1) First of all, the phenomenon of elderly people living alone in urban and rural areas in China is framed into separate researches on '*liu shou lao ren*' (left-behind elderly) and '*kong chao lao ren*' (empty nesters). Although these two terms have been previously researched as separate groups due to their rural/urban roots, the empirical research showed that they are perceived as a common conception by the three generations. 2) Moreover, among the three generations, '*liu shou*' or '*kong chao*' are stigmatized because of the persistent tradition filial value of *xiao* which requires that elderly parents are supposed to be accompanied and taken good care of by their children. It is possible to argue that the traditional elder care system of *xiao*, especially in terms of filial support for the parents, will not atrophy as the proponents of the individualization argument suppose. In fact, filial obligation to care the parents will continue to play a significant role in Chinese society in the near future, considering generation 3's strong will to take care of their parents. 3) However, this is not to say that the old pattern or past structure of filial piety has remained unchanged. The shrinking family structure and the evolving gender roles have resulted in reforms of pension system and an industry of institutional care center in the making, which correspond with IGSMoC's narrative of modernization: when a society are going through the process of modernization, the provider of elderly care will move from the family to the institution.

As a result of modernization reforms, rural people have more opportunities to join the urban labor force and urban individuals have more autonomy to seek

education and employment in other cities or countries (Qi, 2015). Red 2, Blue 3, Green 3, and Yellow 3 are all one of such migrants. Nonetheless, this pervasive migration does not entail that the adult children have an excuse to leave their parents behind. The stigmatization of '*liu shou lao ren*' and '*kong chao lao ren*' has endorsed the fact that even in an era of migration, the filial obligation towards their parents remains a constancy among the three generations. As an adult, the conflict between the care for their parents and the needs of their children was historically eased by a subtle mechanism of phased priority that one receives care from parents at phase one, provides care for children at phase two and provides care for parents at phase three. Yet this balance has been broken by the shrinking family size invited by the population control policies. A 4-2-1 family structure has made younger generation have to choose one over the other. Yellow 3, for example is inclined to choose her parents over her future children. This strong filial obligation to care parents is an important aspect of filial piety that have remained the same. A higher level of reciprocal filial piety under the framework of DFPM is believed to be a main reason for the persistence, which supplements the research on the Chinese filial piety to the extent that it is much more than a Confucian ideology. However, the objectivist characteristic of DFPM makes it seem too ambitious to construct a mathematical relationship between the level of filial piety and people's behavior.

A tendency toward separate residence of parents and their adult children, increasingly important role of daughters over sons, and adult children's more accepting dependency on institutional care have all supported the theme of 'individualization' of Chinese society, which further lends weight to the credibility of the framework of IGSMoC. However, the 'modern society' in the IGSMoC, as criticized before, is a destination of privatization, marketization and capitalization while it falls short of including the socialist modernization under the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Notwithstanding the flaws, these two theoretical frameworks have provided great assistance to the comprehensive understanding of the development of filial piety in the context of modernization, which is presented as a coexistence of constancy and change.

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Appendices

Family Trees

Tree of Family Blue
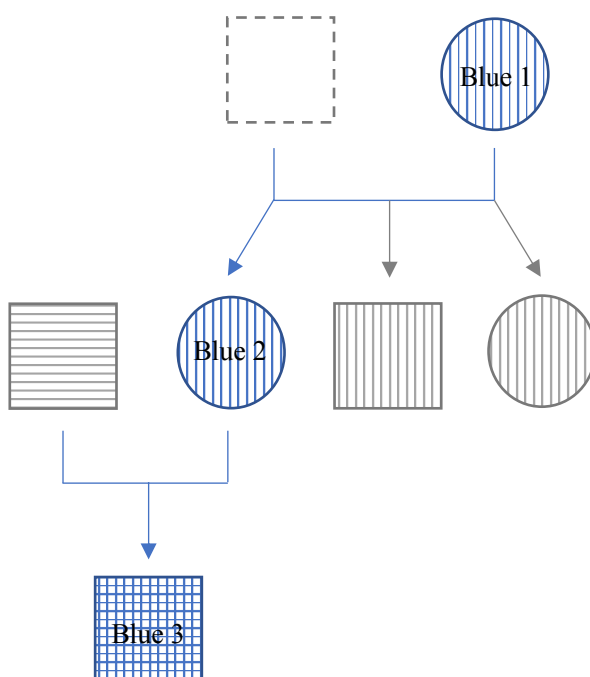
Blue 1: female, born in 1945, widowed, retired with pension, uneducated, live alone at home in Nanchang,[16] mother to 2 daughters and 1 son.

Blue 2: female, born in 1969, married, pre-retired, graduated from college, live with spouse in Nanchang, mother to a single-child son, elder sister to 2 siblings.

Blue 3: male, born in 1994, single, employee, live and work abroad, master student graduated from foreign university.

[16] The capital city of Jiangxi Province

Tree of Family Red
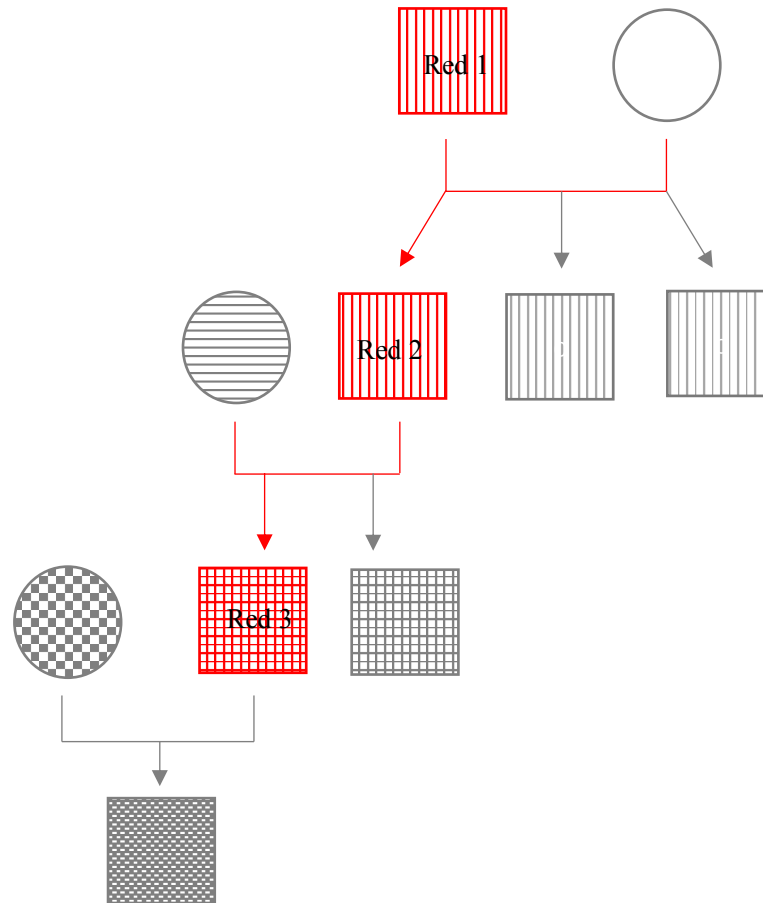
Red 1: male, born in 1937, married, peasant without pension, uneducated, live alone at home in the countryside, father to 3 sons.

Red 2: male, born in 1966, married, self-employed, graduated from secondary school, live with spouse and elder son's family in Nanchang, father to 2 sons, elder brother to 2 siblings.

Red 3: male, born in 1991, married, employee, graduated from college, live with own family and parents, father to 1 son, elder brother to 1 sibling.

Tree of Family Green
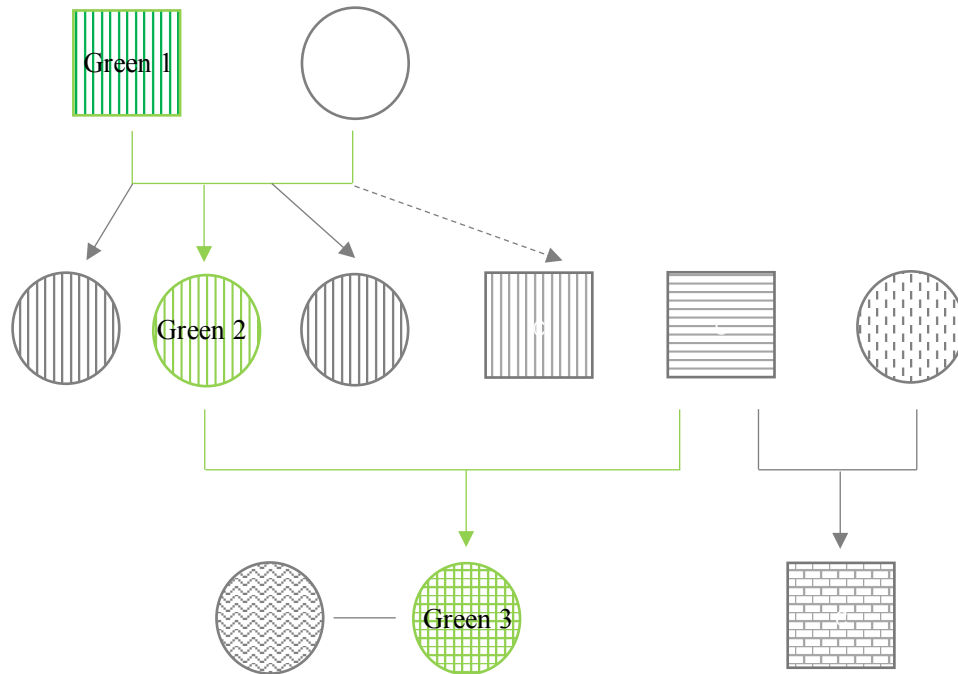
Green 1: male, born in 1946, married, retired with pension, graduated from secondary school, live with spouse and 2 daughters at home in Nanchang, father to 3 daughters and 1 son (not related, bought at the cost of a related daughter and extra money).

Green 2: female, born in 1971, divorced, employed, graduated from secondary school; live with parents and sister at home in Nanchang, mother to a single-child daughter, second eldest among the siblings.

Green 3: female, born in1994, cohabitant, employee, master student graduated from foreign university, live with girlfriend and work abroad, elder sister to a step-brother.

Tree of Family Yellow
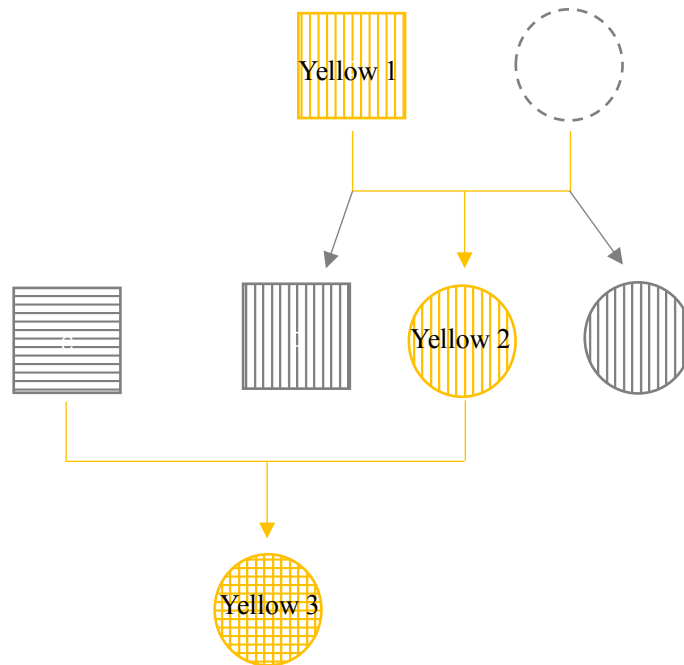
Yellow 1: male, born in 1936, widowed, retired with pension, graduated from university, live alone at home in Shanghai, father to 2 daughters and 1 son.

Yellow 2: female, born in 1966, married, employed, graduated from university, live with spouse in Shanghai, mother to a single-child daughter, second eldest among the siblings.

Yellow 3: female, born in 1995, single, employee, master student graduated from foreign university, live alone and work abroad.