5

Support of Ageing Parents

Review of Support and Introduction to the Chapter

Support is the first stage of the typology, requiring the least investment of time, emotional resources, and instrumental help. Financial subsidies and companionship are the most common expressions of support, accompanied by the intermittent performance of commonplace tasks. All are undertaken for healthy parents and include meals, visits, phone calls, shopping, outings and vacations, supervision of domestic helpers and the occasional medical intervention (Table 4.1).

In this sample 64 daughters provided support to 156 support recipients. The comparison of parents and in-laws reveals a clear distinction in that 65% of support was provided to parents, 28% was provided to in-laws, and 7% to others.

The aim of this chapter is **to understand why daughters are willing or unwilling to offer support to parents who are able to take care of themselves, and to determine how they manage the difficulties encountered in doing so**. Relying on the interviews, the processes underlying motivation for support, limitations on the willingness to provide

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support and differences in the support provided are examined in the context of the changing roles and status of Chinese daughters and contemporary Chinese cultural norms.

The examples presented in the previous chapter, illustrate the three kinds of motivation emerging from the data and the literature: structural norms of filial obligation, ['*I have to*',] relational norms of affection, gratitude, and reciprocity ['*I want to*',] and combined structural and relational norms ['*I have to* + *I want to*']. These serve as departure points for discussing what is underpinning present day support motivation. In this chapter, narratives are further used as analytical tools to facilitate the identification and discussion of the research questions through a range of individuals and circumstances. Additionally, they allow us to highlight prominent themes emerging from the data.

How Structural and Relational Norms Are Motivating Filial Support Among Daughters

The breakdown of support motivation for parents and in-laws among the 156 support recipients is shown below in Table 5.1.

Among the 64 daughters providing support, the majority (43.5%) were motivated by structural norms of filial obligation followed by structural and relational norms of gratitude, affection and reciprocity combined (41.5%) and relational norms (15%) alone. Nine daughters cited religion as a reason for providing support, although always in conjunction with one of the three main analytical categories. Six daughters referred to lack of affection as a reason for not providing support.

Table 5.1 Motivation driving support for parents and in-laws

Motivation type	Mother	Father	Mother in law	Father in law	Other[a]	Total
Structural	12	14	26	14	2	68
Relational	14	8	0	0	1	23
Structural + relational	30	23	2	2	8	65
Total	56	45	28	16	11	156

[a]4 grandmothers, 4 aunts, 1 uncle, 2 adopted parents

Forces Underpinning Structural Filial Support Motivation

This section explores how structural norms are learned and internalised, how and why they have changed from the past, and why they are still driving support among these daughters.

Daughters Following Parental Role Modelling

Bo's outlook in the previous chapter was an example of structural obligation (duty) in which she was compelled to follow her father's example, learned through role modelling. As she explained, 'Because he does it like this and I follow his example' (Bo).

Role modelling has been portrayed in the literature and among these daughters as a powerful tool for the transmission of filial obligation norms within Chinese communities. As Ning, a Hong Kong Baby Boomer, elaborated, 'they are taking care of their parents and when I look at them I will be seeing that this is the way that we will do…. Whatever they do I will be doing the same thing'.

Statements similar to Ning's such as, 'My mother…will never tell me.... But, I learn from her behaviour, how she takes care of her mother' (Yet Kwai) and, 'What my parents do, I do', (Ah Kum), were heard frequently in the interviews. As seen with Huiqing in Chap. 4, childhood conversations between the daughters and their parents could be sparse. Learning moral values through observation under such circumstances would have been essential.

Today dual working parents, universal compulsory education, declining intergenerational households and ubiquitous Internet and telephonic communication could be driving further change in the transmission of traditional values. Because there is wider access to information and less time spent interacting with parents, some scholars have observed that the importance of the family, as the vehicle for the transmission of values, has been diminishing. The daughters also projected that it would be more difficult to educate children at home in the future.

Gender Specific Taught Responsibility

Unlike their male siblings, the daughters interviewed for this book were often taught to undertake gender specific tasks when they were barely toddlers. Because their mothers were busy and many families were still large, as youngsters these women learned to multitask. They helped with domestic chores, worked in the family business, ran errands, and supervised their siblings outside the home. Bo, for example, said she did housework and was required to watch over her sisters during school recess. Daughters, especially if they were the oldest, also tutored younger siblings because some parents were not sufficiently educated to do so. All the while, these girls imposed the obligation on themselves to do well in school.

The imposition of these multiple obligations on young female family members could effectively cultivate in them a predisposition to internalise duty, responsibility and gender specific behaviour, especially with respect to their parents and siblings. The young daughter became a substitute for or an assistant to her mother, understanding her subservient role in relationship to the male members of the household. Lihua, a Hong Kong Baby Boomer, was brought up in this manner and offered a glimpse into how it influenced her belief system:

> Girls…need to work hard and...do everything in the family…. I [will] give you an example. If…my father and the sons…go for [a] movie…the girls …will stay home taking care of other things.…and [when they come] home after the movie they [will] need to have some delicious food for entertainment [which] you need to prepare. (Lihua)

When asked how she felt about the gender division within her family, Lihua replied, 'If you find there is no…difference than the others next door… you feel it's alright'.

The Importance of Domestic Helpers to Sustaining Traditional Gender Roles

As Lihua's situation showed, just as it existed in childhood, gender stereotyping carried over into adulthood for many of the daughters. They were

neither relieved of domestic responsibilities, nor expected to be relieved, even though many had become working professionals. Most of the daughters claimed their husbands declined to help with housework, cooking or caring for children.

Meeting the demands of these assorted commitments has produced important normative change in Singapore and Hong Kong, where the employment of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) in the home has become the single most important factor keeping women in the workplace. Over half the Hong Kong and Singapore daughters interviewed for this book employed FDHs and those who did not expected to. This was slightly different in Kunming, where domestic helpers were neither commonplace nor foreign. As Yuet, a Kunming, Gen X explained, FDHs were more likely to be found in the tier one cities such as Shanghai and Beijing, especially among the wealthy. In the smaller cities, helpers who were not family members were mostly uneducated Chinese women from the rural areas (CDHs), and even then language could be a barrier to employment:

> Most of the people here locally, unless they are educated they don't speak English at all. They speak a local dialect. They don't even speak Mandarin. (Yuet)

Additionally, in Kunming there was resistance to hiring helpers. Many of the daughters there said their parents did not want a 'stranger' living in their home. Luli, a Kunming Gen X, explained:

> I don't think my parents would support this kind of idea. A lot of friends around me their parents don't like the so-called nursing worker. They think it's inconvenient as they're not familiar with each other. They may feel shy or timid when facing a stranger who takes care of you. (Luli)

Luli indicated, she would take care of her parents because that would make them feel more comfortable. Similar expressions were heard from most of the Kunming daughters. Otherwise, when a CDH was hired, there appeared to be a protocol. Wenling, a Gen X from Kunming, described how she understood the process:

> If we need to look for a housekeeper, first we will choose the one we know something about this person's background. So, they will ask their friends or our not very remote relatives. Someone will recommend and it will be more safe for the family…. If we cannot find one we just go to the company. (Wenling)

In the future, dependence on domestic helpers is likely to grow if women continue to work. Especially in mainland China, recently coming out of 35 years of the One Child Policy, working women sandwiched between children and elderly parents may be unable to fulfil their obligations to both their family and employer without them.

Oral Transmission of Traditional Family Obligations

For centuries devotion to the family has been part of Chinese cultural ideology, tied to traditional notions of filial piety and Confucian values. Although the hierarchal system that gave rise to it might no longer exist, the importance of the family has remained intact. Regardless of the extent to which attitudes have been reframed to reflect the exigencies of contemporary life, in this group of Chinese women, traditional normative expectations regarding one's family obligations continued to be subtly transmitted through what might appear to be casual remarks, but which had deeper meanings. Lihwa, a Hong Kong Baby Boomer, provided an example of how this happened:

> You will listen to my grandmother saying…who is good to his grandmother, who is not good to his mother... his mother is so and so. And the son is so and so. You know this is [a] casual remark, [but] then you will know what she is expecting. (Lihwa)

Whether it was subtle or direct, the transmission of traditional Chinese values to these daughters from their parents was ubiquitous, regardless of where they lived or how old they were. Those who were the recipients of these messages often verbalised sentiments similar to Ai's, a Singaporean

Baby Boomer reflecting on how the importance of the family was transmitted to her:

> Essentially, when I was young we were always taught that family was the most important thing. And, I have always felt that basically…So, whatever we do, at least for me, they will always come first. (Ai)

The primacy of the family and how it has underpinned support motivation is illustrated by Huiliang, who said the obligation to put family first was 'ingrained in us when young'. She remarked, 'We just knew that we have people that we have to take care of' because this was 'passed down through the ages as an obligation…. It's something you have to do it, like it or not'.

As a young adult, Huiliang studied and then worked in Europe for several years. Her mother had died, and Huiliang was residing in France when she decided to go home to look after her father and grandmother. She said this decision 'was a big struggle' because 'obviously, I wanted to get on with my life', adding that 'I still look at it sometimes as a sacrifice… I gave up something because of this obligation'.

When Huiliang returned home and moved in with her grandmother and father, both were healthy and mobile, requiring no care. She indicated she could have sent money to fulfil the obligation to support them. She felt more was owed. Huiliang, however, was not immune from the influence of contemporary filial norms. Upon returning to Singapore, she hired an FDH to look after her family, went back to work and immediately began construction of her own home. Within three years she had moved out of her father's house, leaving the two older people with the FDH. When asked why, Huiliang responded that the nagging she received from the old folks upset her and she wanted to remove herself from a potential situation where she would raise her voice and later feel guilty.

Although Huiliang's 'ingrained' traditional duty to her family generated an expectation in her as to what her behaviour should be, the nature and extent of her duty was no longer automatically accepted. Rather, it was weighed against her own needs to achieve an acceptable balance. This is discussed in greater detail below.

Family Obligation Distinguished from Filial Piety

Although parental support has historically been linked to Confucianism and filial piety (Cook and Dong 2011) there is evidence to suggest that in the minds of some of the daughters, commitment to family might have been distinct from these ideologies. Ai explained:

> I don't think I do all this because I'm filial, to be very honest. That's why I don't put much weight in the word because to me it's worth nothing.… Some people just provide financial needs to their parents and nothing else. And, it is very often these days in Singapore we do that… So, to me what is it really to be filial? But, it's more important that they are my family and that's why I am doing what I'm doing. (Ai)

Huiliang's reasoning for returning to Singapore could be interpreted as familism rather than filial piety. Further support for this view can be seen in the comments of Weici, a Singaporean Gen X:

> So, maybe it's not a filial piety anymore, it's more like, where [are] all [the] responsibilities now that…they don't have this Confucianist thing?... We are all cremated anyway, so nowadays there is no need to clean [the] gravestone so the filial piety part is not even physically possible anymore. (Weici)

Finally, several Hong Kong and some mainland daughters, like Chunhua, did not know the terms filial piety or *xiao*.[1]

Structural Obligation Mediated by Contemporary Norms

Perhaps the perseverance of family obligation and traditional gender norms has been surprising, given the modern lifestyles of the women interviewed for this book. However, even though their beliefs had a foot in the past, these women also regarded themselves as being different from their mothers in both attitude and lifestyle:

> I didn't want to live like my parents, you know, I wanted to be financially independent, I wanted to be sure that I can take care of myself. I didn't want to be dependent on anybody. (Huiliang)

> We are also taught the old values because you know it is from my Mom's side and all that, and yet on the other hand, you get to also learn to think for yourself because of education. (Ai)

In the past, one of the historical justifications for son favouritism was that the son was expected to support the family financially when the parents became old. A daughter's value was derived from carrying out her husband's filial obligation, or if unmarried, caring for her natal family at home. In contemporary Asia, however, many Chinese daughters contribute financially to the family, the same as sons, and in some cases seen among these women, instead of sons:

> [My parents] told me, I don't have [a] son, so you as my daughter and your sister, both of you have to take care of me when I'm old. (Ah Kum, Singapore Baby Boomer)

> My brother [is] not taking care of my parents, so [it was] left to me…. So, I look at myself more like a man now. (Jaihui, Hong Kong, Gen X)

> Yes, if I have two daughters, I must make a daughter to be a son. (Yan, Kunming Gen X)

In this critical way, the roles and status of daughters have changed, and their families have derived substantial economic benefits from it. Parents have acquired a potentially greater reservoir of long-term financial security and more resources to invest in their other children. The potential burden of supporting an unmarried adult daughter has also virtually disappeared. Yet even though they are generating stable incomes to be enjoyed by their parents rather than being financial liabilities, daughters are still obliged to be the providers of emotional and instrumental support to their parents. This is a net increase in their filial obligation. The only appreciable difference is that the obligation has shifted. All of the

daughters in this book who were providing financial support, whether married or not, did so for their own parents, not their in-laws. Thus, the seminal question remains, why do daughters agree to take on so much responsibility?

Are the learned behaviours and inherited family obligations so strong among these women that filial beliefs are preserved despite conflicting evidence that the structural elements of filial piety are waning? Is commitment to the family so resolute that it supersedes competing demands on contemporary Chinese women's time and resources? Among these daughters, opinions varied, but most tried to find a balance. Consider the following comments by two Singaporeans, the first one a Baby Boomer and the second from Gen X:

> From my parents' generation, especially my mom, she live[s] for the family, whereas for me, yeah, I do care about the family but I also live for myself. (Huian)

> Family is important, but I think first and foremost it's self. Because, like I said, if you can't look after yourself, you can't look after anybody else. (Nuo)

Self-sufficiency has given modern Chinese daughters greater bargaining power, which has affected several aspects of family life, particularly marriage. The following statements are expository, made by a Hong Kong Baby Boomer, Hong Kong Gen X, and a Kunming Gen X daughter respectively:

> It's like we're going to hold out. If we don't get what we want then forget it. We don't care. (Tao)

> Maybe [you] cannot find the Mr Right…. You know [he is] very difficult to find and you know now you can earn the money. No need to get the money from other people. Like my mother. They need to stay at home as a housewife. For the financial supporting [it] need[s] to come from my father or from my brother or my sister. [For me] up to now [there is] no need to [get married] because I'm ok. The financial? For me [it] all is from me…. Yeah just take care of [it] by yourself. Also, if I have Mr Right it's a burden. (Sying)

> The first thing is financial independence. So, if he disagrees I will do it with my own money. That means the economic is the baseline for the decision-making power. (Yuet)

This state of mind has appeared to carry over into the decision to live with one's in-laws. Granting that housing size in Asian cities today has not inspired intergenerational living, daughters-in-law have also been declining to co-reside, as this Gen X Singaporean explained:

> My Mother-in-law articulated that she expects him [her son] to look after them…And so, we lived under the same roof for half a year. Yeah, I couldn't manage that…. I was horrified…. I had a very bad experience so [we] moved out… (Zhenzhen)

Like Zhenzhen, after their marriage, Qingzhao (Chap. 4) and her husband also lived with his family, which lasted only six months. When the newlyweds moved out and contacts with his parents dwindled, Qingzhao's husband attempted to initiate more. Qingzhao helped him understand why they should not do this:

> And then I calmly talk to him that you must understand that the marriage is between two people: you and me. I just marry you...And I have nothing to do with [your] family because they don't like me and not because I don't like them. So, [from] this moment maybe we just live together…and [have no] concern about the other persons. (Qingzhao)

In mainland China, young married couples have very often continued to live with the husband's parents after childbirth, remaining together until the child begins kindergarten at age three. I asked one Kunming daughter living with her in-laws if she would rather live with them or not, to which she replied, 'not with them, of course'. I then asked if she was looking forward to moving out, to which she responded, 'Yes! I am very much looking forward to that day' (Xiaoli). Other Kunming daughters replied similarly. Even when they were fond of their in-laws, they said living apart was viewed as a way to avoid conflict. Older women, who were already in-laws, expressed the same sentiment.

As mentioned previously, duty has been the primary motivation driving the daughters in this book to support their in-laws. However, among

most of the married daughters, the husband-sons were motivated by the same duty as their wives. Some, like Qingzhao's husband, did not especially like their mothers and supported their wives against them. Other husbands intervened between the daughter and the in-laws. Yuet, for example, remarked that, 'that's the tricky part about the Chinese husband. They always stay in the middle. They prefer the role of mediator … for both women. The war is always between women.' For still others, their husbands were apathetic, as Lihwa articulated:

> He really does not care. His road to his mother is quite similar to my road to my family. That means he is supportive financially and then he [is] also the brain to them. (Lihwa)

In a reinterpretation of filial obligation, the interviewed daughters were not only choosing to live apart from their in-laws, they were seeing them less. Although many of them were visiting their own parents at least once a week, others saw their in-laws once or twice a month or only during festivals or holidays. Some of the daughters said they had agreements with in-laws to see their grandchildren, but might not spend time with them themselves. It was far more common among these women to see financial arrangements made for in-laws rather than commitments of time.

One can speculate that being relieved of the duty to contribute all but financial support to in-laws (which their husbands provided) has allowed adult daughters to focus on their families of origin, which is a more natural relationship. For example:

> Many girls, that is married girls, try to hide some money, some things for their parents' family, behind their husband….So, nowadays, we would rather give birth to a girl instead of a boy. (Wen, Kunming Baby Boomer)

> You talk to these mothers nowadays they'll say they prefer to have daughters rather than sons, you know? Things have changed a lot… daughters tend to be closer to their mothers than the sons are. (Huiliang)

This is a major shift away from traditional filial piety and Chinese values. Additionally, although the duty to provide support has not vanished,

there appears to have been notable change. Whereas the ideological belief in filial obligation has remained deeply internalised, executing it has achieved an element of voluntariness. For example:

> My parents, the way that they are brought up is whatever the parents say, that's the final decision and no arguments also. But, I'm kind of caught in between, because for me it's always about reasoning. It's about logic. It's about convincing. (Te')

As seen with Huiliang, Chinese daughters might now be considering their personal desires more, deciding what they are willing and unwilling to do in light of how they have interpreted filial obligation.

Daughters Desire Independence But Not Necessarily Individualism

Most of the daughters' parents had encouraged them to be independent. Luli recalled how she grew up in Kunming:

> Maybe because my father was a college graduate 40 years ago, he may [have] received some of new opinion or value different from the traditional Chinese. He just told me you can do what you want. You can go where you want and just do as you like. From when I was a very little child, my father just told me this. (Luli)

There are several considerations underpinning this. Ning explained one of the most important factors:

> The life has changed...I have many relatives. But come to my level now, they [daughters] don't have that many close relatives. Even [if] they have them…they are far away…So, they can't depend on us…they have to be trained to be independent, on their own. (Ning)

Independence, however, has come with a caveat that conveys the paradoxical situation of modern Chinese women. Although they desire independence, most of the daughters distinguished it from Western style individualism. For example:

> I feel that being independent means I can do things on my own. I don't have to rely on a person or don't have to be dependent on a person…. But… I equate [being] individualistic more to self-centeredness. Yes, but I don't think being independent is being self-centered…. They are different. (Huizhong)

Jai, a Gen X Singaporean, explained how these seemingly conflicting norms may be accommodated:

> How do I reconcile? I think maybe it's a very Asian thing or Chinese thing; you tend to be a little bit more self-sacrificial than others… (Jai)

Jun, a Singaporean Baby Boomer added, 'that you are not alone. You need to… consider others in things that you do'.

These comments are representative of how the women in this book thought. Even though they said they wanted independence, traditional Chinese collectivism appears to have remained an integral part of their internalised values.

Proceeding Cautiously in a Time of Changing Norms

Understanding that they were charting new territory, and given their traditional childhoods, perhaps these daughters were simply proceeding cautiously. Comments such as the following suggest this might have been the case:

> We will also want our own way, maybe not so much as the Gen Y because maybe during our time it's like we are slowly *testing the waters*…. Ok, maybe I want to do this. [I'm] not sure what it's like, [or] would society accept [it] or whatever. (Meifeng, Singapore Gen X; *Emphasis added*)

> I don't think my generation is the sort to complain because we realise *we can't have our cake and eat it*. We will want to continue to work but at the same time we will have to raise the family. So, we take it in our own stride. (Shu, Singapore Baby Boomer; *Emphasis added*)

By balancing their own needs with those of their parents, daughters showed traditional respect, even though in most cases they said respect must be earned:

> I respect my parents' generation for what they have done, but respect is not an automatic thing, at least for me. It must be earned, regardless of whether you are older than me or not…. Filial piety cannot be like default. (Nuo)

Face was also preserved, and for both parents and daughters it has continued to silently traverse the entire ensemble of Chinese cultural norms:

> My Mom, she just explained…to me…about Face, losing Face and this traditional thing that we have to do because we have to maintain our connection with the extended family. And we do not want others to look down on us. (Rou, Hong Kong Baby Boomer)

Daughters Declining to Transmit Filial Obligation to Their Children

Nearly all the daughters reported that they neither expected nor wanted their children to take care of them in old age. They were aware they would likely live longer than their parents, and that their families were smaller, so there would be fewer children to 'share the load' (Weici). However, more than anything else, it was the perceived burden, which almost none of the daughters wished to see imposed on their children. Weici explained:

> Because firstly, it's a burden on them. I feel sometimes the burden not so much financially, the feeling is…ok yes your parents have raised you and you owe them something, but is it right to feel that you have to repay? I don't want the repay part, you do it out of love. So that's why I [would] rather you not do it to me unless you are doing it because you really want to. So, don't repay me for what I did for you… that's not measurable in the first sense and it's [a] mother's duty anyway. (Weici)

Similar remarks were made by most of the daughters, evincing the growing momentum away from structural to combined motivations, and especially to relational norms, as the impetus and rationale for providing care to older parents. In the following statement one can also see how this shift in motivations to provide care has driven movement away from the unconditional care previously required for in-laws:

> So that duty thing that I had to suffer because I married into that family [is] something that I don't want to force on someone else…I did it because I had to…I'm married to the family. What else can I do?... You see that was the thinking then, 30 years ago, 40 years ago… And even [though] I was educated enough to find my own job and I was working, I mean there's still that lingering [thought]…you always have to wear two hats. You are working with the [one] hat [and then when] you are at home with…the [other] hat… She [mother-in-law] never fails to remind you that … 'you are liable to me, never run away'. That's why I don't want to put that poster on my daughter-in-law's head…I felt chained or locked in and I don't want to give that feeling to someone else. (Weici)

The influence of education and employment were also seen. Contemporary Chinese women, accustomed to having power and authority in the work environment, might be reluctant to forfeit such status at home:

> These women, when they are at work, they make decisions for millions of dollars. They manage people and when they are back [home] they have to listen to this mom in-law who has barely any education and she has to do things the [mother-in-law's] way…And she comes back [home] stressed and she still want to, you know, to agree to all these [things], so I think it makes it, very difficult for the women. (Jun)

Many of the daughters' mothers had no choice but to accept traditional norms of filial obligation. Although the daughters interviewed for this book had greater choice than their mothers, most were still unwilling to completely sever themselves from the traditional Chinese values transmitted to them in childhood. Nonetheless, they intended for caregiving to end with them. As Weici observed: 'That [is] my duty. [It] is my life, ok, but it's not one I want to pass on to my children. So, I've cut the line'.

Forces Underpinning Relational Models of Support Motivation (Affection, Reciprocity and Gratitude)

Chunhua's story (Chap. 4) exemplified how relationships are featured in motivating support. She and her mother had always been close. Chunhua's parents earned her respect by keeping the family together and supporting their children's dreams.

Respect was often pivotal to the relationships with parents among these daughters and a condition precedent to affection and gratitude. If one parent was an abuser, respect for that individual could be lost. Alternatively, the recipient of abuse might gain respect by not abandoning the children. Likewise, hardships suffered by one or both parents could earn respect, especially if it was perceived as being a sacrifice for the sake of the children. Huizhong expanded on her parents' sacrifice:

> I feel that, yes, they sacrificed a lot of time for the family. And… I find that they are really, very fantastic…They give a lot of support to us as kids…. (Huizhong)

There were many different scenarios found in the interviews in which respect was implicated in the quality of a daughter-parent relationship. It is hard to imagine a situation in which affection and gratitude could drive support motivation without it.

Gratitude for Education

The vast majority of the daughters interviewed for this book expressed prodigious gratitude for the ability to attend school. For example:

> Because of her then I can have good life for myself. Because she give me [a] good education. Because on her theory she said the children if they want to study she will pay for them and never reject unless they don't want to study. (Changying, Hong Kong Baby Boomer)

> When I was a child, I hope that my parents would support, really my education. They've done it well. They support all of my education, my sisters and my brothers. They are really great. In China, you know about 20 years ago it's not easy for parents to support all of their children to get higher education. But my parents they did it. So, I'm really grateful for them. (Luli)

Most of the daughters recalled how their mothers had been denied access to education. Statements similar to the following were repeatedly heard in the interviews:

> We looked at my parents' generation. Then the daughters never went to school, only the sons; Whereas, for my generation, my parents sent all of us to school. Whether you are a daughter or son, it doesn't matter. So…I think it boils down to the fact that because of the education level… we are able to achieve quite a lot. (Xiurong, Singapore Baby Boomer)

Among the women in this book, the desire to learn was instilled in most of them by their parents at a very early age.

> I think they maybe keep on saying that you must receive [a] good education. You must be capable to manage yourself, your own life. And if you have no good education you have no future. (Lihwa)

Some daughters hoped to fulfil their parents' 'unfinished business' because the parents regretted not having the opportunity to study. Bo, for example, noted how her family valued education, saying 'the only thing that no-one can take away from you is your knowledge. So, if you want to be respected, if you want to be someone good, you have to study hard'.

Education was also the pathway to a good job, which could equate with copious personal benefits. Niu from Singapore and Wen from Kunming reflected on this:

> In China, there is a saying that knowledge can change your fortune. Many people from the poor family in the countryside, if they study very hard and they enter the university, after graduation they become white collar, or they become leaders or they have a chance to do business, they become rich. They can support their family. (Wen)

> Without an education, I would not be able to work. I would not be able to be financially independent. I would not be able to be what I am today. (Niu)

More than any other factor, the importance of education to the daughters in this book should not be minimised. Parents who supported their daughter's education almost always created an irredeemable obligation on the part of their female offspring (Berman 1987).

Gratitude for One's Upbringing

In addition to education, gratitude for the care, encouragement and support received in childhood drove feelings of reciprocity among these daughters, and this was linked with both duty and affection. The daughters were grateful to their mothers for giving up their jobs and staying home with the children, for remaining in bad marriages and for supporting the family without any help from their husbands. They were grateful to their parents for the gift of life, for their hard work and sacrifice, for allowing them to pursue their goals and for shaping them into who they were. Expressions of gratitude such as, 'they allowed me to become what I am today' and 'it is the least I can do' were frequently heard from these daughters. Jai explained how gratitude factored into her motivation to support her parents, saying, 'Yes, I think it's time for me to take care of them given that they did their part when I was younger and fully dependent on them'.

Jai's words were not new. Probably women of her mother's generation had made similar statements. The difference was context. Parents' obligations and children's expectations have changed. It might be that it is no longer enough for parents just to provide food and shelter.

Gratitude for Help as an Adult

Mutual obligations and exchanges between parents and children carrying over into adulthood can form a special type of reciprocity (Croll 1995; Ng et al. 2002). Parents perform services for adult children such as babysitting, cooking meals and helping with housework. Whether intended

or not, the effect is to strengthen the incentive motive of adult children to care for their parents, either as payback or when parents are in need.

Among these women, one daughter each from Singapore and Hong Kong, and three daughters from the mainland received help with their children from their own parents. In each case, it was part of an overall pattern of reciprocity extending from childhood. However, for the women in this book in general, the decline in intergenerational households and greater geographic distance between the households of the adult children and their parents contributed to a dearth of on-going exchanges of this kind. Further, as previously mentioned, in some instances the introduction of domestic helpers deprived parents of opportunities to perform services for their children.

Although traditional models of adult reciprocity have diminished, new forms of adult exchange have been forthcoming. Yuet related a story that exemplifies this:

> I travel a lot. [In] one month I travel to northern China, and then down to Guangzhou, the southern part, then I travel back to Xinjiang and then I travel to India then Bangkok…. My dad accompany me to the airport every time. Sometimes we have early birds flight… But because he worry that I'm a girl and security and safety matter, he accompany me every time to the airport and pick [me] up...every time. I really appreciate that. Even I tell my husband, I expect you to love my daughter as much as my dad love me. (Yuet)

The Need to Feel Loved and Give Love to Parents

The giving and receiving of love was strongly implicated in support motivation among these daughters. Arguably, it was only natural that they wanted to feel loved by their parents, even as adults. For those, like Chunhua, who felt genuine affection from their parents, the desire to reciprocate that affection could be one possible outcome.

However, among the daughters who did not feel loved *by* a parent, as the story of Qingzhao demonstrated, a strong compulsion could also exist to feel love *for* a parent even in the face of conflicting evidence that it was not merited. Both Bo and Huiqing mitigated negative feelings for

their mothers when the latter exhibited signs of vulnerability. In each case, there was no prior history of affection, closeness or interdependence to justify such a change in feeling. Similarly, Sheu-Fuh generated feelings of love for her father even though he had abandoned her.

Love has been recognised in the literature as having an historical linkage with filial piety (Wong and Chau 2006). However, without trying to further explain why the need for reciprocal parental love was so prevalent among the women interviewed, we can look at how affection can be generated to bolster support arising out of filial obligation.

Forces Underpinning Combined Structural and Relational Motivation to Provide Support

Creating Love to Support Duty

As a female, Yet Kwai said she had no status within her family. Although she was a highly accomplished professional woman, all of her achievements could not elevate her position:

> You know, my father told me that it's too bad you are not a son. He likes the kind of social status that I've got. He always carries my name card with him, but it's too bad I'm not a son. (Yet Kwai, Hong Kong Baby Boomer)

During her interview, Yet Kwai related a series of incidents over the course of her life in which she felt rejected by her father. These hurt her deeply, however, her attempts to make her grievances known over these and other affronts had been ignored. Proclamations of love for her father had similarly been met with impassivity and lack of emotion.

Despite her self-perceived status as a 'second class citizen', Yet Kwai proclaimed her unconditional love for her family and a strong sense of filial obligation, especially toward her father. To generate a belief that her father was worthy of the love and attention she bestowed on him, she excused her long and unsuccessful history of trying to be good enough, and disregarded the perceived injustice, mistreatment and rejection he had inflicted on her and other members of the family. Comments such

as, 'I don't think he meant it', and 'even though so much he also love us', were repeatedly made. Yet Kwai also reminded herself of the good things her father had done for her, reining in her expectations:

> I'm grateful…I don't know if I always [felt] bad about myself in my earliest years but I still… have a father. But, different fathers will have different relationships with their children. It's not like…I'm from…a broken family... My father is always there …Of course I know my limits. I will not ask for more than I…am allowed. (Yet Kwai)

Yet Kwai claimed she felt appreciated by her father. However, it was not her father but her mother telling her that he appreciated the things she did for him. In truth, Yet Kwai was closest to her mother and felt protective of her because 'I think she will be hurt by my father emotionally'. She also appeared to have modelled her own feelings and behaviour on her mother's:

> Emotionally, whatever I can do for my parents' family, I will try my best to do so because I'm the oldest. Like my mother, she's the oldest in her family; she's taking care of her family and I have to take care of my mother's family. And, I have to be good and work so I have the ability to take care of them. (Yet Kwai)

After commenting that obedience and respect were expected from and given to her father, 'even though you don't get respect in return', Yet Kwai explained how her belief in God had helped her to compensate for what was lacking in her life. In her words, '[when] I [was] growing up, I have a father, but I don't receive the love… But, I have a father, God in heaven'.

Equally important to her were three men she referred to as 'mentors'. As a young adult, they gave her attention, acceptance and encouragement, allowing her to see 'what is missing in my family'. Supported and empowered, Yet Kwai generalised the positive feelings she had for these men and gave herself permission to love her father.

Yet Kwai's reasons for supporting her elderly father appeared to be rooted in an Asian cultural model of filial responsibility. She seemed to have internalised what was considered right and what ought to be done (Holroyd 2001). However, Yet Kwai also showed how obligation could

be linked with affection and how affection could be used to justify support that might not be deserved.

Yet Kwai's relationship with her father was not a loving one in the classic sense. However, even among the daughters in this book who said they felt loved, demonstrations of affection from their parents were extremely uncommon. That said, norms have been changing. All the daughters who were asked said they hugged and kissed their children and told them they loved them. Perhaps this change in behaviour reflected something that had been lacking in these women's childhoods, which they were attempting to compensate for; or perhaps love was tied to something entirely different, for example gratitude.

Why Love, Gratitude and Duty Were Inseparable Among This Group of Chinese Women

In conducting the interviews, every daughter was asked to explain why she was willing or unwilling to provide support or care for her parents, whether she was actually doing it, had done it in the past, or had not done it at all. Probing beyond this, the daughters were asked if they could distinguish between love, gratitude and duty as a reason for providing support or care for their parents. Many could articulate which of these motivating concepts underpinning filial obligation was the most important or the least important. However, there was a general disinclination to eliminate any of them, and most of the daughters were hesitant to separate them at all. Luli's response illustrates the prevailing point of view:

> As a child, yes it's my obligation to take care of the parents. I must do this for them…. And, I think, even though, if this is not my obligation, my responsibility, I should take care of them as I love them, they love me. Yes? And another grateful, yes, too. My parents, they raised me up and they taught me to be a person of this kind. Yes, I think I'm really grateful for them. Sure, I need to take care of them. Actually, I don't think I need to divide the three separately. I think they are just some kind of combination. We cannot say I take care of my parents because of grateful, because of my obligation, because of love. I think they are the same. They are together. (Luli)

To understand this, it is important to remember that in the Chinese culture, feelings of love, gratitude and family obligation have historically been interrelated in a way that has been different from contemporary relational norms in the West. As discussed earlier, overt expressions or demonstrations of affection were not prevalent among these women and their parents. Inquiries into this were repeatedly met with responses such as: 'No. Not the Chinese culture' (Juan, Hong Kong Baby Boomer). Rather, it was the repeated small acts of kindness that the daughters remembered. Zhaohui, a Gen X woman from Hong Kong, told a story from her childhood that illustrates this.

One time, when Zhaohui was overseas at a retreat, her father sent her a letter. The letter contained a drawing of a heart with hands and feet. To her this meant: 'love is action'. She said this had remained with her ever since, and added, 'It also means that you don't have to say it all the time but you need to do it. You have to show it'.

The daughters interviewed for this book recited many tender and unselfish gestures gifted to them by their parents, like preparing their favourite foods when they were sick, talking to them and sharing their feelings, buying them special things, showing concern for them, sacrificing for them and guiding them to become good human beings. They cited practical reasons such as providing shelter and clothing, and allowing them to become educated. Not all the women felt loved, but most did. As Sying remarked, 'Chinese people never say love. But, maybe they do something'. Qiaohui, a Singaporean Baby Boomer added, 'I think in my generation particularly in the Asian culture, you know, we don't speak of love. When my parents care for me…I know they love me'.

The performance of good deeds for the daughters in this book generated both love and gratitude that were inextricably intertwined with traditional Chinese cultural norms such as duty. These were generally indistinguishable except when negative feelings for a parent were found. In these instances, limitations or conditions on parent support could apply. This is discussed later in this chapter.

Christianity as Combined Structural and Relational Motivation to Provide Support

Traditional Chinese religious beliefs are an inchoate composite of Buddhism, Taoism, indigenous practices and superstition (Goh 2009; Liu 2003). Temple visitations and family shrines focused on ancestor worship are tied to filial piety, which instructs the living to revere their elders in life and their ancestors after death. As can be seen from the following statement, ancestor worship particularly operates as a structural norm of filial obligation, grounded in obedience and devotion to parents:

> The traditional Chinese will worship their ancestors because they believe that they will be blessed in their life if their ancestors are happy people… So that is why, this filial piety came into [being]…it's a belief that if you are a bad son or a bad daughter…your parents are going to…make your life very difficult…when they die. So, it's kind of like, a belief that they have that if you don't look after your parents, if you don't worship them or if you don't pray to them after they are gone then you are going to be in a lot of deep trouble, your life is going to be a big mess, you are going to be very unlucky and stuff like that. (Huiliang)

However, it can also be viewed as a very enjoyable practice, as Xiaoli explained:

> Every year twice, the winter and the summer we will [go] to the graves and clean them up and take some food and take some flowers and say something to them. It's the culture. It is a part of my culture, not a duty. We are very glad to do that. And at that time, we can see our other families. Another kind of celebration. (Xiaoli)

In either case, the strength of these beliefs among the 64 Baby Boom and Gen X daughters appeared to be waning. Only three subscribed to any form of traditional 'religious' practices; 28 claimed to have no religious belief; one identified as a Muslim and 32 called themselves Christian. Among the Christians, few came from Christian families. For

one thing, in mainland China 'religion' had been officially banned for many years after 1949, and so few of these women had participated in any religious practices until recently. In Hong Kong and Singapore many of the daughters had been required to observe traditional Chinese rituals during childhood. However, the deeper meaning of these activities had not necessarily been internalised:

> When my grandfather passed on, we had to lug our stuff… to his gravestone and do all that gravestone stuff, which I could never figure out what they were doing … It was something we had to do and so we just went along with it even though we didn't see any point in it …because father said, 'go' so we go. Father said, 'do', we do. (Weici)

It could be that for these daughters, Christianity answered some of the questions unexplained by traditional Chinese religious practices or the absence of value transmission by parents. Meirong, a Hong Kong Baby Boomer, articulated a sentiment heard elsewhere:

> I think I know how to live my life and the values and the order, all the things that I have learned. [But,] …my own life is from the Bible, not from my parents. (Meirong)

There was also an element of accountability to Christianity that was consistent with the upbringing of these Chinese daughters. The similarities can be seen in the following remarks:

> I still believe there is a God. So, whenever I do anything I trust someone is watching. So, doing something good, righteous [like] be fair, be true to others and yourself, these are the core messages, I believe, because I do believe one day, if you've done something wrong, you will pay in a different way. (Bo, who attended Catholic school but did not convert to Christianity out of respect for her parents)

> In Chinese…we also believe every person has god watching you. Some god, maybe you don't know who it is, just watching you and you do everything. That's the Chinese way. (Xiaoli, who observed traditional Chinese practices)

Christianity was also compatible with many of these women's Chinese values, as Zhenzhen's statement reflected:

> There are some…religious teachings [that go] hand in hand with the traditional values I've been brought up with as well; things like respecting your parents, you know, that sort of thing, loving your neighbours. …. I think what is the most difficult was like, for example, perhaps we should put God first before anything else. (Zhenzhen)

As seen with Yet Kwai, the 'love of God' could also have drawn some of these Chinese daughters to Christianity if they had been born into families where they felt unloved or treated unfairly. Together, Christian love and obligation might have constituted a reason to offer support to parents that otherwise might not have existed if the parent-child relationship lacked warmth or was distant.

For some of the Christian daughters, their relationship with God motivated support for a parent. For others, religious beliefs did not factor into their support decisions, or Christianity was combined with traditional Chinese values. However, for these Chinese women and perhaps for Chinese women generally, parent care motivated by Christian values could represent a new normative trend.

Conditions, Qualifications, and Limitations on Support Motivations for Older Parents

Regardless of whether support was motivated by structural norms of filial obligation or relational norms or both, qualifications and limitations on providing support to older parents appeared in several ways among this group of Chinese women. First, only conditional or reduced support was offered to parents who did not fulfil what their daughters perceived their parental obligations to be in childhood. Second, some adult daughters who professed a willingness or an expectancy to support their parents made themselves unavailable to do so. Third, some daughters were willing to provide only the most basic, minimal support for their in-laws. Fourth, structural

impediments such as the distance between households could limit parent support. Finally, in one instance a husband would not allow his wife to see her own mother.

Conditional or Reduced Support

The first limitation on support motivation was seen with Qingzhao, who forced herself to dine with her mother, but would do no more. In these cases, the relationship between the parent and the daughter was strained from abuse or rejection. A more common scenario was where a father had abandoned the family or the parents had divorced. Ah Cy, a Singapore Gen X, explained the difficulty she had deciding what, if anything, to do for her father, who had remarried:

> It's my mom's wish that…we should be wary of what…the motive [was] behind him [father] wanting to contact us …So out of respect of her wishes, I don't contact him…But I'm wondering, if she's not around … I sometimes struggle… (Ah Cy)

The second limitation on support motivation, often referred to as the gap between filial belief and filial behaviour, is seen in the story of Qiaohui.

Unavailability

Qiaohui was the eldest child in a traditional family with one son and four daughters. Her father had died and her mother had lived alone ever since. Fortunately, Qiaohui's mother was in good health and able to take care of herself. Qiaohui supported her financially. She also loved her mother and wanted what was best for her. However, she was conflicted. On one hand, she believed in 'looking after our parents' and said, 'sometimes I feel that if I'm not…caring for her [mom]… I'm not a filial child'. She added that she depended on her 'mother's approval'. On the other hand, Qiaohui was a modern, unmarried working woman who enjoyed her lifestyle, and had spent many years working abroad. When contemplating the dis-

charge of filial obligation, she wondered whether she could be a caregiver if called upon:

> It's a very scary thought. Would I be prepared to do it? Yes, I would, although I don't think I'm going to be very good at that. I don't think she's going to be an easy patient. (Qiaohui)

Qiaohui tried to explain why she felt this tension and conflict:

> I ask myself, am I trying to get a job overseas so I can get away from her? So that's where I think the conflict and the feeling comes in, that on the one hand I think it is good for me to go and good for us to have that space. On the other hand, I feel so guilty for leaving her alone, you know, 83-year-old-mom is alone at home. (Qiaohui)

The problem was that when Qiaohui returned home, after three days, 'it goes downhill'. She related how her mother monitored her activities so that if she went out she felt guilty. She said she did not understand why she had such a sense of obligation: Was it expected of her or did she expect it of herself? Was it love or duty that motivated her?

Qiaohui claimed she was 'in [a] dilemma' and felt 'a bit lost'. If she remained at home she would have to live with her mother. The family owned a large flat and Qiaohui said people would wonder if she, a single daughter, did not live there when there was so much space. Besides, she said, she did not 'want her [mother] to be miserable'. However, Qiaohui's mother got on her nerves:

> Every time I come back, I go off feeling so angry…because she will be upset with what I said… And she'll say, 'yeah you guys don't care about me. All you care about is your father'…. I'll go back [overseas] and tell myself, why do I want to live that way because it's so unpleasant …although of course, you know, Sunday comes, I call her and still [it is] like nothing has happened. (Qiaohui)

Ultimately Qiaohui concluded that she would look after her mom if she had to, 'but that's probably not my strength …I think my capabilities [are] to go and earn the money to be able to afford to do that'.

Shortly after her interview, Qiaohui took another job overseas. With that in mind, some points should be made. Because her mother was still healthy, Qiaohui was only required to provide support, not care, to be 'filial'. She met this obligation by paying her mother's bills, making occasional visits home and calling her mother every Sunday night. This was the compromise she had reached with herself to balance her traditional values and personal needs. Nonetheless, Qiaohui felt guilty. She wanted her mother's approval; however, making her mother happy required Qiaohui to sacrifice much of what she enjoyed in her own life. This was a very common dilemma among the women interviewed for this book. The same expressions of conflict and feelings of guilt were repeatedly conveyed to me. Moreover, the same could be said for the myriad Chinese women I have met and known over the years.

When Qiaohui is finally faced with the decision of whether to move home to undertake the hands-on caregiving of her mother, it is likely to be challenging, given that in the past her mother has rejected the services of an FDH. Meanwhile, perhaps it can be said that there is safety in removing herself from the source of her conflict and postponing the decision.

Minimal In-Law Support

The third limitation on support motivation pertained to the Chinese daughters' provision of support to their in-laws. As noted previously, in-laws received less commitment of time from the daughters than did their parents. If relations became strained contact could even be severed altogether or limited to infrequent polite exchanges. The daughters were also generally unwilling to take time off work or to leave employment for their in-laws, particularly at the support stage. Some deliberately moved great distances from in-laws to minimise contacts. One daughter made sure the FDH she hired did not speak Chinese so that her mother-in-law could not give her instructions.

Structural Impediments

Some of the daughters also lived far from their own parents due to work and other commitments that could not be avoided. This was particularly

so in mainland China. Although this could be a barrier to daily physical contact, the daughters compensated through regular telephone calls and attendance at meals, birthdays or holidays like the spring and autumn festivals and Chinese New Year. It should also be noted that distance had no negative effect on the financial support the daughters provided to their parents.

Husband's Objection

The final limitation on support motivation was unique among this group of women. During ten years of marriage Ah Cy was only permitted by her husband to see her own mother on birthdays and holidays because he did not like her.

Except for geographic distance, all of the qualifications and limitations discussed above had a single source: the quality of the relationship. In assessing the point at which the quality of a relationship intersected with support, the daughters' expectations of themselves were higher for parents than for in-laws.

Managing Tension and Conflict in the Discharge of Filial Support

The daughters have shown that the motivation to support their parents was not clear- cut, but rather, was often entangled with emotion. One's emotional state might be even more vulnerable in the actual discharge of filial support.

This section explores the relevance of 'appropriate' feelings related to the quality and quantity of support provided by the daughters to their ageing parents. As Hochschild (1983) suggested, 'appropriate' feelings are prescribed by framing rules that define and give meaning to situations. In the context of this book, the framing rules of these daughters can be viewed as being synonymous with Chinese cultural norms, and their interpretations of them. As discussed earlier, the literature suggests that in traditional Chinese culture there has been a gender driven role that women have been expected to fulfil. This ideological mandate could be deeply embedded in a daughter's mind from an early age, defining or

'framing' her obligations. Feeling rules would have then prescribed how she *should* feel about these obligations. However, if there was a discrepancy between what she actually felt and what she believed she *should* feel, emotion work might have been necessary to reconcile the contradictions and create a culturally acceptable display, or even to change a daughter's feelings to align with her normative values. The story of Jaihui below illustrates how emotion work can be implicated in parental support.

Emotion Work to Generate a Willingness to Support Parents

Jaihui was the eldest child in a traditional family that also included three sons. When she was one year old she was given away to a family friend. Rejoining her family at age five, she quickly learned of her low status in the family hierarchy. As she described it:

> They don't care about [the] daughter. When I was young I was brought up in this situation. They pamper the son so well. Everything they gave my eldest brother. (Jaihui)

Jaihui explained that during childhood she only saw her father once a week and seldom saw her mother. She related how her mother never looked at her homework, and the only value transmitted to her was the difference between right and wrong. According to Jaihui, she and her parents rarely conversed. When they did, she said she 'never answered back' even if she knew they were wrong.

Jaihui recalled several instances of her parents' injustice. For example, at age 13 she developed a fungus and needed to go to the hospital. Her mother sent her there in a taxi, telling her to look for her uncle who was a doctor. After being examined, Jaihui was told she had a very serious condition requiring surgery and she would need signed parental permission for anaesthesia. When neither of her parents could be located, she underwent the operation without it. This hurt Jaihui deeply because just before it happened her brother had undergone a tooth extraction and the entire family had been in attendance for support.

Years later, after completing high school, Jaihui expressed her desire to study abroad, to which her father responded, 'Why [do] you want to study so much? Just go find a husband and get married'. Persevering, Jaihui applied for and was accepted to college in New Zealand, where all three brothers soon followed. Upon graduating, each child was asked to come home. Only Jaihui agreed, observing that, 'they can't force my brothers to come back, and they don't care about him [dad]'. However, as soon as Jaihui returned to Hong Kong her parents sold the family home and moved to New Zealand to be with their sons. Jaihui was forced to live with a friend.

A year after they left, Jaihui's parents migrated back to Hong Kong, but having sold their home had no place to live. Jaihui rented and paid for a separate flat for them, with neither her parents nor her brothers contributing to the rent. Ultimately, burdened by the expense, she bought her own flat, and her parents moved in with her.

At the time of her interview, Jaihui was divorced and living with her father. Her mother lived in mainland China, but returned to Hong Kong for two days each month. According to Jaihui, her mother suffered from chronic depression caused by separation from her sons. Whenever she saw her, Jaihui's mother tearfully recounted how much she loved and missed them. However, it was Jaihui, not the sons, who was the sole support of both parents.

Jaihui's Coping Strategies Although she did not know it, Jaihui used emotion work to cope with supporting her family. Her framing rules were heavily influenced by traditional Chinese values:

> I will accept the fact this is life…. [The way] I [was] brought up; like my godmother might tell me yeah, yeah, they like boys. You're a girl, too bad, you're a girl. You have to look after them. I mean… I've been educated [in such a way that] …. I just think this is a life traditional…Now I'm ok. (Jaihui)

If Jaihui's framing rules instilled in her a need to support her parents, her feeling rules created an expectation in her to love them. Jaihui insisted

she did love her parents, however, as seen in the following statement, she was conflicted:

> I'm not saying that I don't have love with my parents. Of course, …I love them. I'm not the person who speaks out, but I love them … Even though they didn't treat me very well when I was young. (Jaihui)

As she continued to speak, it was clear that a discrepancy existed between what Jaihui really felt and what she believed she *should* feel:

> I don't feel anything. I guess it's like because of this kind of environment growing up… maybe I lost the love or passion thing from people. I mean that is like I don't get my passion or love from my family. (Jaihui)

To change the quality of her feelings, Jaihui attempted to suppress her unwanted memories by replacing them with pity:

> I know I have a very bad feeling. But when I look at them I [feel] pity. I'm sorry [for] them. They're getting old. My mom is…alone, by herself. And then my brothers [are] not taking care of her. *So, all this feeling cover all my memories.* [Jaihui; *Emphasis added.*]

Jaihui said she tried to keep herself busy to avoid having to think. She admonished herself. But neither action could change what she felt:

> Not much feeling. It's like I need to look after them, take care of them. That's it. Spend some time with them. But when I sometimes look at them, getting old, then I will go and scold myself, why don't you spend more time. You [would] rather stay outside with your friend[s]… don't go back home…It's like…I don't really have much feeling on them honestly…But every time when I see them, then I will feel… pity about them getting old [and think] I should have done better on that. (Jaihui)

Jaihui reminded herself she was the 'glue' that held the family together. The message, heard from so many of the daughters, was that if she did not attend to her parents' needs, who would? She reinforced this emotion

work with a rule reminder from her mother: approval and praise. Jaihui recalled:

> But my mom…did mention once to me… nowadays you are the only person who supports my life. She told me this…. Then she says how 'I wish I have four daughters or three daughters and one son rather [than] one daughter three sons'. (Jaihui)

Jaihui moved back to Hong Kong at her parents' request, lived with her father, and supported both parents financially. However, she was unable to generate a desire to spend more time with them. Jaihui was also unwilling to care for her parents if they became disabled, a position she legitimised on the ground that she had to work. She stated she would hire a nurse and if things got too bad she would send her parents to a nursing home. According to Jaihui, it would be a 'family decision', made by Jaihui and her brothers.

Through Jaihui's story we can see how important feelings are in providing support for parents, and how potentially important emotion work can be when there are seemingly irreconcilable tensions. As will become evident moving through the typology, there appears to be a direct correlation between feelings and the quality and quantity of support and care. Successful emotion work can positively alter feelings and display between daughters and their parents. However, emotion work is not always successful.

Refusal to Provide Support: Poor Relational Quality

The literature suggests that parents' misconduct, emotional remoteness, and other adverse behaviour when their children are young can have negative consequences for parental support and care when the children reach adulthood. As seen with Qingzhao, adult children may lack genuine feeling for parents' well-being, or experience relationship strain, as witnessed in the narrative of Huiqing.

Among the daughters in this book, declining to provide *any* support for a parent was rare. Four refused to support their fathers, even financially, because the parents divorced or the father deserted the family. In each of these cases there was little or no contact between the daughter and father over the life course. Furthermore, the fathers were blamed for the mothers' suffering and hard lives, caused by raising the family on their own. The other two instances in which support was refused involved abuse of daughters by mothers. The beatings Sheu-Fuh received from her mother were discussed in Chap. 4. The other was the emotional abuse of Bik, a Hong Kong Baby Boomer.

Bik's mother was a concubine, whose status in the family was tied to her ability to bear sons. Bik was an unwanted daughter, given away when she was three years old to family friends. At age 12, she was returned to her birth mother following the death of her natural father; however, her mother was a stranger to her, and she was cruel. She informed Bik that if she did not help with the housework she would not be fed, and she refused to pay Bik's school fees. Bik was not permitted to study at home or even to bathe. After passing her O level exams at age 17, Bik left school, and went to work. She walked out of her mother's house and never saw or spoke to her again.

Conclusion

Support is the first stage of the typology and there was very little interference with the daughters' daily lives. Possibly for this reason, all of the women provided some form of support to their parents or in-laws. Support can assume different forms, as shown in Table 4.1. However, the standard among these daughters was financial aid and visiting or having meals with family members.

Structural norms of filial obligation, individually and in combination with relational norms of affection and gratitude, motivated support among these women. For parents, combined support motivation was more prevalent than the individual motivational models, whereas structural norms motivated most of the support for in-laws.

Teasing out the processes underlying support and the elements driving it, role modelling of parents during childhood was found to still be a common method for teaching children how to provide support for others. Role modelling has long been associated with the transmission of Chinese cultural norms and intergenerational transmission processes more generally. Among the women in this book, it was especially important when parents had little time to spend with their children. By observing their parents, the daughters learned respect and what they should do when their own parents became elderly.

As young Chinese girls, the women in this book were particularly receptive to supporting others, because they were indoctrinated into traditional gender roles at an early age. Being assigned childhood responsibility for the household and siblings often translated into an irredeemable sense of obligation and accountability to the family in adulthood. This could result in excessive burden being placed on these contemporary daughters who were working and taking care of the home. Some changes in traditional filial norms, however, were revealed and more women were employing domestic helpers to manage their household chores. Nonetheless, stress and exhaustion were implicated.

Feelings of obligation were also reinforced through family members' subtler modelling and transmission of family obligation or beliefs about the centrality of the family. The subjugation of self to the family was seen in the story of Huiliang, a woman who sacrificed a promising career abroad to return home to support her father and grandmother. Huiliang's story also raised the question of whether family obligation originated with filial piety or familism.

These daughters, however, were different from their mothers because education and employment had made them more self-sufficient. They were providing financial support for their parents equal to that of their brothers, and in some cases, instead of their brothers. This engendered further normative change within the family, and the daughters gained greater bargaining power and control over their own decisions. Notably, this manifested in marriage negotiations, the refusal to reside with in-laws, and increased exchanges with their own parents. The daughters had

become more independent, although they distinguished this from individualism, which was not always viewed positively.

Structural obligations were mediated by contemporary filial norms; however, these daughters were proceeding cautiously. Although filial obligation could be a matter of individual interpretation, many of the daughters retained the internalised values transmitted by their parents. As a result, they were likely to balance their own needs with those of their parents, and in the process, show respect and maintain Face for the family. They were, nonetheless, declining to transmit traditional filial obligation norms to their own children.

Respect that was earned was the core of relational motivation, whether it was based on gratitude or affection. Gratitude was expressed for one's birth, upbringing and later life exchanges, although the latter could be affected by geographic distance or domestic helpers. However, by far, the greatest effect on gratitude was education. Nothing meant more to these Chinese women than the education they received and the independence, status and financial security they had derived from it. They were universally and deeply grateful to their parents for the education they had been allowed to undertake.

In addition to gratitude, the relevance of love and affection to relational motivation was immeasurable. The giving and receiving of love with one's parents was widely desired among these daughters, and it also combined with both gratitude and duty. To highlight the importance of love to filial obligation the narrative of Yet Kwai was presented. Yet Kwai was a woman of great achievement with strongly internalised familistic values. Her story demonstrated the lengths to which a daughter would go to gain her father's love and generate love for him in return. It further emphasised how love and duty drive support for one's parents. However, Yet Kwai's account also epitomised the conflict between contemporary norms and traditional values and how one may need to go outside the family to fulfil one's needs as a precondition to offering support. Further, it raised the question of a daughter's traditional place within the family, when demonstrations of love have historically been denied to her, and what that meant.

The paucity of overt expressions of love in Chinese families led to an examination of the relationship between love, gratitude and duty as

motivators for parental support. Unlike in the West, perceived parent love resulted from the parents' actions, particularly acts of kindness and generosity, for which their children were grateful. Feelings of love and gratitude were often inseparable given that both originated from the same source. Feelings of love and gratitude could also generate a sense of duty, because loving and grateful children might believe they 'owed' their parents for what they had been given. Where feelings of love in the parent-child relationship were absent, Christianity could provide an alternative source for generating positive feelings for parents.

Several limitations, qualifications and conditions on support were found among these women. Conditional, reduced or minimal support might be all that was offered to parents who had not provided for a daughter in childhood; or to parents-in-law who were either disliked or not cared about. Geographical barriers resulting from family members living far apart could hinder instrumental, but not necessarily emotional or financial support. One daughter was prohibited from seeing her mother because her husband disallowed it. Occasionally, there were also gaps between filial belief and filial behaviour. The latter was depicted in the story of Qiaohui who professed to love her mother and wanted to support her, but continued to seek overseas employment. Qiaohui's story also allowed us to see the tension and conflict some daughters experienced between internalised norms of filial obligation and contemporary norms of self-fulfilment.

Conflict and tension between traditional and contemporary norms was common among these daughters, who could be torn between what they felt and what they believed they *should* feel. The story of Jaihui, showed how one daughter attempted to bridge this gap and reconcile her feelings through emotion work. Jaihui grew up the sole daughter in a household where son favouritism prevailed. After a childhood characterised by emotional abuse and neglect, she was obliged to support her parents when her three brothers refused to. Even though she provided a home and paid her parents' expenses, Jaihui struggled to convince herself she should spend more time with them, when she really did not want to. She tried to generate feelings for her parents by pitying them. Her emotion work, however, was unsuccessful, and her story illustrated how important positive feelings are, even at the support stage.

In extreme cases, support could be refused due to negative motivation. Divorced fathers could especially be excluded from it, but so could mothers. Sheu-Fuh, who was beaten by her mother, and Bik, who was emotionally abused by hers, could not generate a willingness to support them.

The next chapter moves the discussion from support, the first stage in the typology, to the second stage, where some actual hands-on caregiving was required and where the demands on the daughters were greater.

Notes

1. In Mainland China, filial piety is referred to as xiàoshùn (孝 順).

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