

Support for Migrant Workers' Older Parents in Rural China

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Abstract

China is experiencing massive rural-urban migration. The departure of young adults from rural areas poses challenges to traditional old age support arrangements in rural China. Concerning the practice of Confucian filial piety within the context of rural-urban migration, this study aims to explore the extent and dynamics of support among migrant workers' older parents in rural China. By employing a qualitative approach, this study carried out 29 semi-structured interviews in two rural villages and revealed the changing nature of filial piety in modern rural China in the context of rural-urban migration. First, it found that in the wake of rural adult children's migration, an increasing number of rural older parents have begun to spend their old age co-residing with their migrant children in cities. Second, the study reshapes our understanding of the relationship between the land and rural older people's need for physical support. Besides, the study casts light on rural older parents' help-seeking behaviour, revealing the dynamics of their efforts to seek support both from their families and their local communities. findings provide insights for policy makers into ways of improving rural older people's well-being. Further, given China's special social and economic characteristics, this study contributes to enhancing our understanding of support for older people in the context of children's immigration.

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Introduction

Old age support is an issue of increasing importance. This is because the world population is ageing and people live longer than ever. As a result, people require more care and support, either from formal or informal sources (Swartz 2009). However, demographic and social changes, including declining birth rates and increasing geographic distances between family members, have resulted in increasing financial burdens being placed on governments to provide old age care services, as well as fewer family carers for older parents to rely on (Lye 1996). Finally, it raises a question: how are older people supported?

China, as a developing country, is also facing the challenge of supporting its older population, because its unprecedented scale of rural-urban migration and population ageing is taking place simultaneously. The aged population of China in 2016 was equivalent to the total population of German, France, and UK combined in 2016. And the number of people who were 60 years old and over in China had reached 212 million by this date, amounting to 15.5% of its total population. More importantly, when it entered ageing society in 1999, the GDP per capita was only about USD \$1,000, whereas some other developed countries had completed the industrialisation process when they were entering an ageing society and their GDP per capita had reached US \$5,000 to 10,000 (Chen 2016). In other words, it was not just the Chinese government, but also individuals involved in the economy, who were less well financially prepared.

What made China different, and the challenges more acute, was that approximately 48% of older people were living in rural areas of China with limited state welfare provisions. The situation of these rural older parents was complicated by rural-urban differences resulting from the household registration system launched in the 1950s, which divided personal social

status into two categories based on place of residence: agricultural *hukou* in rural areas and non-agricultural *hukou* in urban areas. It also determined the socio-economic eligibility of rural and urban residents. As a result, and since its introduction, rural residents have had little choice but to continue with a long-established system of informal familial support.

Traditionally, the Chinese family system has functioned as a welfare unit providing care and support for its older people based on mutual obligation between children and their older parents. This traditional practice is facilitated by a set of interpersonal relationships based on the concept of filial piety that is a core value of Confucian ideology (Chan, Ngok and Phillips 2008). In particular, it obligates children to fulfil a complex series of duties for their parents, including providing them with food and emotional comfort; they must also obey their parents as well as prioritise their parents' and their family's interests over their own. In its deepest form, filial piety stresses the need for duty and devotion by children, especially sons, to their older parents, in all circumstances (Hamilton 1990).

However, this traditional support system in rural China has been significantly affected by the large scale of internal migration, because the younger adult children, who are key informal support providers for rural parents, are the dominant population in the internal migration. Based on the Sixth National Population Census in 2010, there were about 2.6 million internal migrants, accounting for 19.5% of its total population. These figures increased about 81% from 2000 to 2010, from only about 1.4% to 11.4% (Qiao and Huang 2013). The separation between the migrants and their older parents has led to a growing concern over the support for and well-being of parents who stay behind.

Unanswered questions regarding support for migrant workers' older parents

The impact of the massive rural-urban migration on rural older people has attracted much

scholarly attention. Some studies have reported that rural-urban migration has had generally positive effects, such as improving the rural economy, decreasing rural-urban inequality, and increasing family financial support for older people (Du et al. 2004). Other studies, however, have stressed the negative impacts of adult children's migration on their parents left behind.

One of the most direct effects of rural-urban migration is a decrease in physical and natural capital in the remaining households, which increases the labour burden on left-behind older people (Li et al. 2012; Chang, Dong and MacPhail 2011). Based on China's 2006 Health and Nutrition Survey, Li and Song (2009) found that the annual working time of left-behind older people increases by about 181 hours for every migrant child who leaves them. Furthermore, more and more left-behind older parents are taking on the role of childcare providers as a result of the increased female labour-force participation. The proportions of left-behind older parents responsible for taking care of grandchildren, housework, and labour are 36.7%, 79.5% and 60.3% respectively: all are higher than the proportions of older people whose adult children live in the same village, at 29%, 60%, and 41.1% respectively (Sun and Wang 2013). It has also been found that, due to their increased working hours and care-giving responsibilities, older parents with migrant children generally exhibit poorer health than older people without migrant children (Luo et al. 2011).

The children's migration also has a negative effect on the psychological well-being of left-behind older parents. Due to the physical distance between migrant children and their older parents, traditional face-to-face communication is rarely possible. Studies have shown that older parents interact and communicate less with others after their children's migration. Based on a questionnaire administered to 275 and 375 older people living in empty-nest and non-empty-nest households respectively, Liu and Guo (2008) found that 13.1% of the older

people in the empty-nest group reported poor or very poor relationships with their children; the equivalent figure for the non-empty-nest group was only 4.8%. The authors also noted that, compared with the older people living in non-empty-nest households, the empty-nest older people more frequently reported that they lacked friends, were not close to others and were rarely happy. Some staying-behind older parents in another study reported higher levels of depression and loneliness than the general older population (Su et al. 2012). In the majority of existing studies, surveys have been used to examine the effects of rural-urban migration on older people's financial, practical and emotional well-being, and the conclusion has been drawn that migration has a tremendous impact on elderly people, who are frequently left with the combined 'burden of housework, children, and farming' (Murphy 2002, p. 64). Lin, Yin and Loubere (2014) compared the living situations of older people with migrant children and those without migrant children in a survey of 166 rural older people, and concluded that those with migrant children have fewer resources to mobilise.

Though these studies have helped us to understand the differences between the support received by older people with migrant children and that received by older people without migrant children, they have shed little light on how these older people perceive and articulate their own experiences of receiving support from their children, as studies have shown that older people's worldviews may change as a result of their children's migration (Toyota, Yeoh and Nguyen 2007). In Chinese tradition, children were held responsible for supporting their older parents within the system of Confucian filial piety. Meanwhile, authority was conferred on parents, along with a sense of privilege and pride. This value system favoured older parents and positioned them at the centre of the family. Adult children's interests were subordinate to their older parents'. In general, it pre-set adult children's support behaviours as well as

older parents' perceptions of their children's support. In the context of adult children's migration, it is still not clear whether or not their older parents change their perception toward the traditional practice of filial piety.

Because older people with migrant children do not form a homogeneous group, existing studies have not sufficiently distinguished between older people living independently with partners and older people living alone, and the literature conducted in Chinese contexts has yielded mixed findings regarding this concept and how to measure it (Gong and Zhang 2014). In the present study, rural older people who live alone are defined as single or widowed older people with migrant children who live in one-person rural households. Some studies in urban areas have shown that, compared with older people living with their spouses, older people living alone usually have lower financial income, despite similar living costs, along with a higher rate of disease, a high probability of reporting loneliness (Peng and Wang 2010), and lower scores for psychological well-being and social support (Zhang et al. 2010). Studies in Hong Kong and the UK have also indicated that living alone increases older people's risk of impoverishment (Chou and Chi 2000; Rolls et al. 2011), and that such individuals receive less emotional and instrumental support, with smaller social networks and reduced life satisfaction (Chou and Chi 2000). Compared with their urban counterparts, rural older people living alone encounter more challenges. Most rural older people living alone are widowed, and their depression rate is three times higher than that of the minority who are not widowed (Gui, Wang and Lan 2010). The death of a spouse is one of the four most common causes of suicide among rural older people (Liu and Wang 2014). However, the effects of the difference in household composition caused by children's migration on rural older people's interaction with others remains unexplored.

Moreover, support from outside the family setting also plays an important role in older people's daily lives, enabling them to maintain a positive ageing experience and a good quality of life (Buonfino and Hilder 2006; Wei 2010). Comparison of the support networks of older people living in Liverpool and Beijing revealed that in both cases, family, community members, friends, and neighbours all played significant roles in providing support in later life (Wenger and Liu 1999). Older people who interacted more with others outside the family usually reported higher life satisfaction (Zhang 2001). Indeed, Mencius said that within village communities, people 'aid one another in keeping watch and ward, and sustain one another in sickness' (cited in Fung 1983, p. 117). In other words, it is traditional for people in the same village to help each other.

Accordingly, rural villages are usually formed by a group of people who share the same family name, all somehow connected to each other. The village can be seen as a special case of a large, extended family (Fei 1992). However, existing studies have yielded conflicting findings. Some studies have suggested that rural older people are increasingly seeking support and care from non-family members (Zhang 2001), and that the amount of expected and received emotional support for older people with migrant children increases after their children's migration (Fang 2009). However, others have found that older parents with migrant children interact less with their neighbours (Lin, Yin and Loubere 2014). In the context of rural-urban migration, several questions remained unanswered: why does elderly people's interaction with neighbours change after the migration of their children? What barriers do they encounter to seeking help from each other? What roles do neighbours play in older people's everyday lives?

In addition, scholars recently investigating migrant workers' parents seem to have assumed

that older people fail to ask for support even when help is needed, as none have reported patterns and behaviours of aged parents' in requesting support. The underlying assumption is that older rural parents in China still hold dominant roles, and passively wait for other people to provide support. The argument of this study, however, is that rural older parents have already started to actively seek support from others when in need. Only a few studies have focused on older people's help-seeking behaviour. Based on three sets of survey data in Beijing, Yao (2009) suggested that urban older people in Beijing seek support based on 'consanguinity values'. Consanguinity here refers to kinship deriving from blood relationships and marriage. A related study was carried out by Cong and Silverstein (2014), who used a longitudinal analysis to examine the effects of intergenerational exchange on rural older parents' choice of caregivers. They reported that both parents favoured sons, and that migrant children were less likely to be chosen as caregivers. However, detailed analysis of the patterns of and rules governing the help-seeking behaviour of migrant workers' aged parents is still lacking.

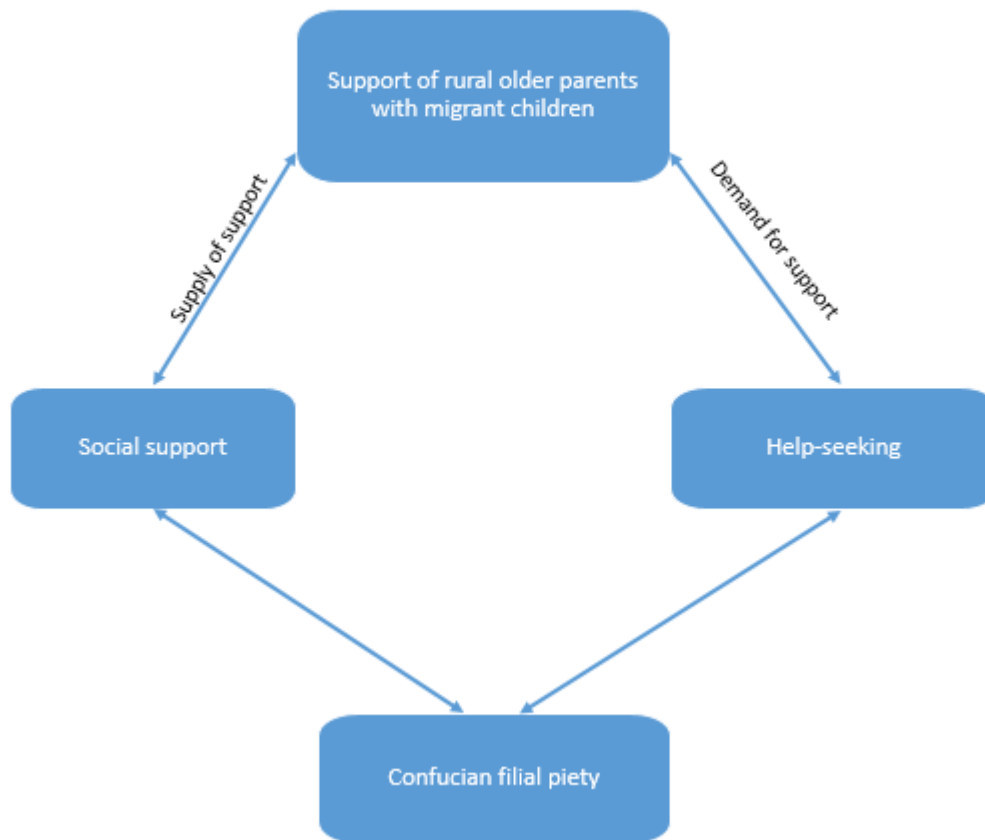
In sum, old age support in rural China is a pressing issue that has attracted much attention. However, existing studies have mainly focused on exploring the positive or negative impact of adult children's immigration on their older parents. Due to the nature of quantitative methods, they were insufficiently able to articulate older people's feelings and experience of being supported, or to explore the process and quality of support; and they paid less attention to the older people's household composition as well as the role played by other sources of support. This study intends to conduct a comprehensive exploration by using the following framework.

Proposed framework for understanding the support of older parents

The existing studies reported here add to our current understanding of how adult children's out-migration affects their older people's well-being in rural China. We know that those older parents have less access to other support resources, such as relatives, neighbours, and friends. However, there are still some questions regarding older parents' perceptions of their children's support, as well as those older parents' use of such support, which have not been fully addressed, and therefore the existing studies cannot present a complete picture of the support given to older parents with migrant children in rural China.

In order to comprehensively explore the support provided to migrant workers' older parents in rural China, this study proposes that the issue should be considered from two aspects: the supply of support and demand for support (See diagram 1). On the one hand, it refers to the sources and nature of the support available for those older parents. On the other hand, it refers to where, why, and how those older parents seek support in time of need. This approach was adopted from Baker (2007), who carried out a study on adolescents and believed that this framework can provide an interactive understanding of participants' help-seeking behaviour and use of social supports.

Diagram 1: Proposed framework for understanding support of older parents



A support network can provide individuals with many types of support, such as financial support, physical support, and emotional support. Such support comes from one's formal or informal networks, including government services organisations, and recipients' kin, relatives, friends, and neighbours. They can all help recipients overcome various difficulties and improve their well-being (Cantor and Little 1985).

However, when talking about either formal or informal support in Chinese society, we should take Confucian filial piety into consideration. This has played a complex role in shaping the structure and content of older people's support network. Filial piety refers to a range of behavioural rules that include showing respect, being obedient, and providing appropriate support to older people. When one compares the content of filial piety in Chinese culture to

the western notion of social support, filial piety seems to encompass all types of social support (discussed in chapter two), though it occurs only in the interaction between parents and children or children's spouse(s), as opposed to other possible sources of social support such as close friends, spouses, and relatives. Filial piety can be seen as a specific category of informal social support in Chinese society, for older parents who have needs in times of illness and difficulties, limited to parents and their children and children's spouse(s) (Cheng and Chan 2006).

More importantly, the Confucian idea of filial piety not only prescribes providing and receiving patterns of support between adult children and their older parents, but also pre-sets the relationship between formal and informal support. That is, it defines the government's responsibility to supervise and require adult children to support their older parents, as well as guarantee older people's entitlement to claim this support. In other words, filial piety influences both adult children's provision of support and older parents' attitudes, as well as their behaviour toward help-seeking. In the context of children's out-migration, fewer existing studies have fully investigated the practice of filial piety from older people's perspective in rural China. This study intends to fill this gap by exploring the sources and nature of support available for immigrants' older parents, and where, why, and how those older parents seek support within their support networks when they are in need of help. Altogether, this study can fully explore the extent and dynamics of social support among migrant workers' older parents in rural China, and achieve the following objectives and questions.

Research objectives:

To study the practice of filial piety in contemporary rural China;

To explore older people's views on their support network;

To investigate the social support of respondents with different physical conditions and family composition;

To explore the older respondents' decision-making process in the process of seeking help, and their feedback on their social networks;

To identify the patterns of help-seeking behaviours among this group of older people;

To explore issues around what policy changes are required to meet the needs of migrant workers' older parents.

Research questions:

The aim of this study is to examine how rural-urban migration has affected the practices of old age support in rural China. Particular attention is given to exploring how rural older parents with migrant children are supported, and what their help-seeking behaviours are. In order to achieve the objectives, the following questions are asked.

How far has internal migration in China shaped the practice of filial piety?

Internal migration has brought structural changes in terms of family structures that challenge traditional old age support arrangements. This question aims to explore how the practice of filial piety has been reshaped in rural China in the context of adult children's immigration.

What is the caring relationship between migrant workers' older parents and their children?

This study primarily focuses on support for older people. Parent-children support is a very important part of the traditional filial piety that strongly prescribes the roles of adult children and parents in a caring relationship. Therefore, the second question is to explore how the support relationship evolves when adult children are far away from their older parents.

What is the caring relationship between rural older people and their other support networks?

Support from outside the family system plays an important role in older people's daily lives, and enables them to maintain a positive ageing experience and a good quality of life (Buonfino and Hilder 2006). Together with the second question, these two questions can present a full picture of rural older people's informal support network.

What are the main social support differences between older people with different physical conditions and family composition?

Rural older people with migrant children are not a homogeneous group. The needs of older people can be affected both by their physical condition and family composition (Rolls et al. 2011). Living with different physical conditions and in diverse household compositions, what support arrangements do these older people have? How are their needs met?

What are the main factors that older people take into consideration when seeking support?

This study proposes that support should be considered from two aspects: supply of support and demand for support. This question refers to the demand aspect, and explores where, why, and how those older parents seek support in times of need. In doing so, it can provide an interactive understanding of participants' help-seeking behaviour and use of social support (Baker 2007). How do government policies shape the contents of social support among older people in rural areas?

It is assumed that there is a complex, interactive relationship between formal support and informal support. Recently, several new services and support policies have benefited rural older people and undoubtedly improved their living conditions. These changes may affect the

existing informal support resources and the need for them in old age. Therefore, it is useful to explore to what extent informal support has been reshaped.

In sum, all these questions relate to a central concern: how rural older people with immigrant children are supported in the context of rural-urban migration. Particularly, it explores the issue of support for those older people both from supply and demand aspects and by considering several potential factors, including physical condition, household composition, formal support, and relations with all potential helpers. As a result, it comprehensively studies how existing social support addresses the needs of migrant workers' older parents.

The importance of this study

This study enhances our understanding of how migrant workers' rural older parents are supported in the context of massive rural-urban migration. Its contributions are mainly in the following two areas.

First, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of rural older people's support needs. With limited state welfare provision, rural older people have to rely on their children to meet their financial, physical, and emotional support needs. However, the geographical separation caused by rural-urban migration has challenged traditional filial support. The majority of the previous studies employed survey data to measure the positive or negative effect of adult children's migration, with less attention being paid to older people's own feelings and experience of being supported or under what conditions they seek support while their adult children are away. By exploring these neglected points, this study can discover differences between traditional and current practices of filial piety and present an in-depth understanding of how older people's support needs are met in contemporary rural China.

Second, this study provides valuable information and evidence on rural old age welfare policy development. Current old age support policies and programmes mainly focus on the urban older population, while the rural older population is neglected and the dynamics of the traditional family support system in the context of massive immigration still remains insufficiently explored. Therefore, updated knowledge regarding the long-established informal support system can inform those who are responsible for developing programmes to solve old-age support problems, helping them to design and deliver more practical and effective support policies or services.

Thesis organisation

To answer these questions, this study employed a qualitative research approach and targeted those who were aged 60 and over with migrant children in the Zhangcun and Peiying villages in Dengzhou County, carrying out 29 semi-structured interviews. Before presenting the findings of this study, it first provides an overview of adult children's migration worldwide and the patterns of their provision of support for staying-behind older parents in chapter one. Besides this, it discusses the unique social, economic, and political contexts of these phenomena in China. It also points out that the *hukou* system, the economic system, and the transformation of social policy within a unitary political system have differentiated China from other developing countries. Examining these differences may offer insights into the social-support networks of left-behind older people.

Following that, the second chapter establishes a conceptual understanding of older people's social support and help-seeking behaviour. It discusses the nature of support networks, the interaction between formal and informal support, and the different kinds of support provided by different sources. It also shows how people seek support from others, and reviews the

factors potentially influencing the help-seeking behaviour of older people.

Given these theoretical discussions, the next chapter goes on to review patterns of rural old age support in China from a historical perspective. Three distinct and relevant periods are identified: before 1949; during China's communist era; and after the 1979 economic reform. In each period, the development of and changes in the tradition of filial piety, the social and economic conditions of rural areas, formal old age support, and the status of older parents within the family are examined in detail. Accordingly, it finds that adult children in traditional China held responsibilities for supporting and caring for their older parents from birth. This required children to put their parents' interests above their own. The power and control of older people over the younger generation were secured and strengthened by Confucian ideology, imperial laws, the economic system, and village structure. Consequently, it was vital for adult children to provide support for the elderly under all circumstances. A review of the traditional support mechanisms revealed that culture alone is unable to maintain children's obligations to respect and provide support and care for their older parents.

The study then goes on to discuss rural old age support between 1949 and 1978. It reviews several distinctive social and economic reforms which were carried out in rural China from 1949 to 1978. Those changes were heavily influenced by the Chinese Communist Party's socialist ideology, which emphasised freedom, equal rights, and a just society. Key developments in this period include the land-reform movement, the collectivisation movement, the implementation of the *hukou* system and the Cultural Revolution. It finds that certain practical difficulties forced adult children to remain at home and rely on their older relatives. Due to the household-registration system, everyone had to live where they were registered. Accordingly, this policy facilitated the delivery of support to parents by keeping the

generations physically close together. A housing shortage and low incomes at this time also forced adult children to rely on their parents financially before marriage; even after marriage, many children continued to live with their parents.

Following this, the study moves focus from Mao's era to the economic reforms in the 1970s. From 1978, several social policies countering Mao's reforms were implemented to develop China's market economy, with implications for every aspect of society. The key social and economic policies implemented in rural China at this time were the household-responsibility system and a relaxation of the restrictions on mobility. As a result, they again brought changes to rural older people's welfare arrangements through the abolishment of the collective economy and rural-welfare programmes, including the Five Guarantees scheme and the cooperative medical service. Meanwhile, policy changes at this time have had significant and far-reaching consequences in rural China. Almost all of them have led to unprecedented progress in rural welfare development. Although widespread deficiencies remain, such as a lack of available benefits and limited coverage, welfare-related policies have undoubtedly improved the living conditions and status of rural older people in China. The provision of an old-age pension, the *dibao* system, and agricultural reforms have all increased older people's financial independence. In addition, access to medical insurance and the development of related legislation have indirectly relieved the burden on families to support elderly dependents, while strengthening children's responsibility to provide support for their older parents. Given the changing social context of China, characterised by a shift away from tradition towards autonomy and individualism, the study stresses that it is essential to explore both the support process and the strategies used by rural older parents to mobilise family support.

Following that is a methodology chapter, which discusses why a qualitative approach is employed and explains how the fieldwork was carried out in detail. Two findings chapters are then presented. Finally, there is a discussion and concluding chapter that links the most important findings with those of the earlier theoretical chapters; the discussion provides both theoretical connections and contextual explanations. Further, some other topics, such as the contributions of the study, policy implications, and limitations of the study, as well as directions for future studies, are presented.

Chapter 1: Young adults' migration and their left-behind older parents in contemporary Chinese society

This chapter has two sections. The principal purpose of the first section is to provide an overview of adult children's migration worldwide and the patterns of their provision of support for staying-behind older parents. The second section mainly discusses the unique social, economic and political contexts of these phenomena in China.

Labour-related migration is a worldwide phenomenon and has been ongoing for a long time. There are two kinds of labour migration: international migration and internal migration. According to the International Organisation for Migration, one in seven people today are migrants: 232 million are international migrants and 740 million are internal migrants (Rango 2014). Based on the 2013 World Migration Report, there are four broad migration patterns: South to North, South to South, North to South and North to North. Here, 'South' refers to less developed or developing countries, while 'North' describes more developed countries characterised by a higher income. From 1990 to 2014, the number of international migrants increased by 65% in the global North and by 34% in the global South (Rango 2014). The dominant pattern of international migration, accounting for 40% of all migration, is from South to North. Next, approximately a third of all migrants move from South to South, and 22% move from North to North. The least common trajectory is from North to South, accounting for only 5% of all migration (Laczko and Anich 2013). These international migration patterns indicate that most migrants wish to move to areas with a higher income. Internal migration follows the same rule: people migrate from poorer areas to more affluent areas. Some economics scholars have argued that rural-urban migration is predicated by economic differences between rural and urban areas that lead rural residents to feel deprived and inspire them to pursue employment in areas offering greater financial remuneration (Lewis

1954, Stark and Taylor 1991).

The majority of both international migrants and internal migrants are working-age adults. About 74% of international migrants are of working age (Rango 2014). Countries with internal migration, such as China, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Vietnam, all show a similar pattern (Deshingkar and Grimm 2005). However, the relationship between the migration of young adults and the wellbeing of their staying-behind older parents has attracted different levels of attention in developed countries and developing countries. For example, migrants from developed countries are generally perceived only to negatively affect local community development; in less developed countries, scholars have much more vigorously investigated the consequences of young adults' migration for older people's welfare arrangements (Rigg 2007). This discrepancy in the literature reflects differences in perceptions of, attitudes toward, and expectations of support from children arising from differences in cultural and institutional backgrounds (Isengard 2013). In the Netherlands, for example, due to the presence of a well-developed formal system of old-age support and a tradition of intergenerational independence, elderly people have little or even no expectation of or need for material and practical support from their migrant children. Even elderly Dutch people whose children live locally rarely depend on their children for care or wish to live with them (Baldock 2003). High-quality state support enables elderly parents to continue actively providing financial and practical support for their children rather than being the recipients of such support (Albertini, Kohli and Vogel 2007, Deindl and Brandt 2011). A study in Sweden revealed that 'young-old' people were more likely than 'old-old' people to move close to their children to maintain contact between generations and provide assistance for their children. However, the respondents also believed that it was the government's responsibility to provide them with

support and care when in need (Pettersson and Malmberg 2009). Accordingly, the migration of young adults in developed countries such as Sweden poses little threat to their older parents back home. In most developing countries, however, there is neither a well-developed formal support system nor a tradition of intergenerational independence. Rather, children's provision of support and care for their parents is a cultural imperative. For example, the importance of filial support is reflected in the language of some Asian countries, with terms and concepts such as *xiao* (China), *bunghun* (Thailand), and *utang na loob* (Philippines) (Hamon and Whitney no date).

Impact of young adults' migration

The following observations were made in a report by the United Nations.

In many developing countries and countries with economies in transition, the ageing population is marked in rural areas, owing to the exodus of young adults. Older persons may be left behind without traditional family support and even without adequate financial resources. (United Nations 2002, p.13)

This statement has found support in some empirical studies. The most obvious and direct effect of family separation is an increase in physical distance between migrant adult children and left-behind older parents. Family separation decreases the possibility of face-to-face interaction between migrants and their parents, as well as the opportunity to provide hands-on support such as assistance with household chores or cooking (Mason 1992, Knodel and Saengtienchai 2007). For example, Qin and his colleague (2008) analysed panel data from the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System in Thailand from 2000 to 2004, and found that labour migration has led to a shift in older people's living arrangements from co-

residence to living alone, with adverse effects on intra-household old age care. Based on nationally representative panel data obtained in Mexico in 2001 and 2003, Antman (2013) explored the impact of migration on left-behind family members such as children, spouses and older parents. He revealed that left-behind older parents with one migrant child received the least physical assistance from their children. Vullnetari and King (2008) used the term 'care drain' to describe the consequences of young adults' migration in Albania. They observed that the left-behind older parents usually experienced loneliness and a sense of abandonment.

According to the new economics of labour migration theory, young adults' migration is a form of whole-household risk-sharing behaviour undertaken to minimise economic risk and maximise financial benefit for both non-migrant and migrant family members. It is also an investment, enabling households to acquire higher returns in the future (Lucas and Stark 1985). In some impoverished rural communities, migration means 'one less mouth to feed' (Rigg 2007, p. 175). A qualitative study carried out in 2004 in Thailand focused on left-behind older parents aged 60 and over, and provided evidence that adult children's departure from home was a source of financial relief for families that possessed little or no farmland (Knodel and Saengtienchai 2007). Focusing on political and social rather than economic concerns, a study conducted in a politically insecure setting in Afghanistan showed that adult children's migration provided an escape route for staying-behind family members threatened by social unrest (Loschmann and Siegel 2015). This research, in contrast with studies of the negative effects of children's migration, indicates that adult children's migration not only brings benefits for the migrants themselves but offers new opportunities for their staying-behind families. However, Toyota and his colleague (2007) argued that literature in this vein sheds light only on decision-making mechanisms before migration, providing less concrete evidence

of the support mechanisms in place between migrants and their left-behind family members. The following section draws on the literature on international and internal migration and old-age care to illustrate the support and care provided by migrant children for their older parents.

Financial support

Remittance is a widely acknowledged means of channelling financial support from migrant children to left-behind family members. Studies have shown that money is sent home by migrants in Thailand (Knodel, et al. 2010), Moldova (Piracha and Saraogi 2011), Ecuador (Morán 2013), Afghanistan (Loschmann and Siegel 2015), Peru (Bruine, et al. 2013) and Cambodia (Zimmer and Knodel 2013). This plays a significant role in reducing poverty in labour-sending areas (Adams and Page 2005). Lucas and Stark (1985) identified three theoretical models of migrants' motivations for sending remittances home: pure self-interest, pure altruism, and tempered altruism or enlightened self-interest. There are three reasons for the remittance behaviour of purely self-interested migrants. First, they provide financial support to maintain their right to inherit family property in their home areas. Second, they send money home to ensure that their assets are properly looked after. Finally, remittance behaviour is closely related to migrants' intention to return home. Remittances may be regarded as an investment to maintain or enhance one's fixed capital, such as livestock, houses or land; public assets, such as political influence or social prestige; or social assets, such as relationships with family and friends. For altruistically motivated migrants, the amount of remittance is positively correlated with remittance senders' income and negatively correlated with the existing financial income of left-behind families. In addition to the motivations of pure altruism and self-interest, Lucas and Stark suggested that the act of remittance is a 'mutually beneficial contractual arrangement between migrant and home' (Lucas and Stark 1985, p. 904). From this point of view, remittance constitutes a repayment

for previous investment in migrants' education. In addition, remittance has been regarded as a family risk-spreading strategy to avoid bankruptcy due to price fluctuation, crop failure, livestock disease and so on in the areas of origin, where capital and insurance markets are insecure (Lucas and Stark 1985).

Apart from the abovementioned theories of the motivations for sending remittance payments, other variables may affect an individual's decision to remit. Glytsos (1988) showed that Greek migrants who moved to Australia and the United States provided less remittance than their counterparts in Germany. In addition, Ecuadorian migrants in Spain offered less remittance than those in the United States (Morán 2013). Studies have yielded mixed findings regarding remittance and the number of immigrants within households. Based on a survey of 1,147 parents aged 60 and above in rural Thailand, Abas et al. (2009) revealed that parents whose children were all immigrants received more financial aid than parents whose children lived locally. In contrast, however, a study in Afghanistan indicated that remittance behaviour is negatively correlated with the number of migrants in a household (Loschmann and Siegel 2015). Remittance behaviour has also been shown to follow an inverted U-curve over time (Carling 2008, Loschmann and Siegel 2015); that is, it increases in the early stages of migration and then declines over time. In other words, the amount of financial remittance is negatively related to the time migrants spend in their host countries. Among Latino immigrants in the United States, the probability of sending remittances home decreases by 2% with every 1% increase in time spent in the host country (Lowell and Garza 2000). In addition, household income and the economic status of the origin community both affect remittance behaviour (King and Vullnetari 2006, Piracha and Saraogi 2011).

Visits and communication

As well as sending remittances home, migrants remain part of their parents' support networks through visits and telephone calls, providing practical support and maintaining emotional closeness. Baldassar and Baldock (2007) stated that migrants' return visits have several important implications. First, they enable migrants to provide hands-on support and care for their parents, relieving the burden on local siblings. Second, such visits confirm the success of migrants' emigration. Third, they help to reduce migrants' homesickness. The frequency of return visits is closely associated with migrants' working occupation. For example, migrants working as academic staff in Australia have regular opportunities to visit home through conference travel and study leave (Baldock 2000). In contrast, return visits may be stressful and difficult for unauthorised migrants. Alternatively, migrants' parents may travel to their children's migration destinations. However, this trend is much less common, and such visits usually have specific purposes. Knodel and Saengtienchai (2007) found that older parents' health problems and issues with caring for their grandchildren are two common motives for older parents to visit their migrant children in host areas. The authors also reported several concerns expressed by older people about travelling to their children's host cities. First, it is physically difficult for older people to travel long distances. Second, it is difficult if not impossible for rural older people to even temporarily give up their responsibility for caring for their grandchildren or tending their animals, fields and houses. Such visits are also impeded by a sense of unfamiliarity with urban life, limited living space in the host city and concerns about disturbing their children's lives. Baldock reported similar findings from the perspective of migrants, and added that the older people under study 'had close, well-established networks of friends and neighbours at home whom they would not want to leave' (Baldock 2000, p. 216). Factors such as language and visa barriers and travel costs also discourage

parents from visiting their children (Vullnetari and King 2008).

With the development of technology, it is becoming more and more convenient for people to maintain active and instant contact with each other. Baldock (2000) provided a historical review of the shift in communication between international immigrants and their family members from letters and postcards to telephone calls. Falicov (2007) examined the role of modern technology in constructing a 'psychological family' or 'virtual family' following adult children's migration.

In general, migration is a widespread trend in modern society, in both developed and less developed countries. However, due to differences in social-welfare arrangements and cultural expectations of child support, the phenomenon of adult children's migration affects their older parents' well-being in a range of ways. In developing countries, where there are usually less sophisticated formal arrangements for supporting older people, traditional family support systems are emphasised. Studies of long-distance care and support provisions have shown that migrant children remain part of older people's support networks: they provide financial support via remittance, hands-on support during visits, and emotional support over the telephone. Indeed, existing studies have shown that geographical mobility and distance between family members does not lead to the abandonment of older people. However, I argue that the existing literature sheds light only on migrant children's support behaviour, with a lack of systematic exploration of older parents' support systems (comprising their own income and support from non-migrant children, relatives, neighbours, and government and/or non-government organisations). This study examines this issue in a Chinese setting, which has many unique characteristics.

‘Internationalised’ internal migration

As a result of China’s household-registration (*hukou*) system, rural-urban migration in China is fundamentally similar to international migration. The *hukou* system is, in short, an internal passport system derived from a system developed in the former Soviet Union called *propiska*. The only equivalent systems in effect are in Vietnam (the *ho khau* system) and North Korea (the *hoju* system). However, they are less elaborate than China’s *hukou* system (Chan 2009). The *hukou* system was launched in the 1950s and divided personal social status into two categories based on place of residence: agricultural *hukou* in rural areas and non-agricultural *hukou* in urban areas. Although the initial purpose of the system was to monitor population movement, it subsequently became a mechanism for controlling population mobility (Chan and Zhang 1999). It also determined the socio-economic eligibility of rural and urban residents, especially during China’s planned-economy era. At that time, people with non-agricultural *hukou* in urban areas were entitled to several benefits directly provided by the state, such as employment, health care, subsidised food and housing. Most remarkably, urban workers were guaranteed jobs in state-owned enterprises (the ‘iron rice-bowl’) and benefited from a ‘cradle to grave’ welfare system (Ding, Goodall and Warner 2000). In contrast, rural people with agricultural *hukou* were outside the remit of state support (Chan and Zhang 1999). They had to rely on ‘self-reliant rural communities (villages) or their collective sub-units (production teams)’ (Cheng and Selden 1994, p. 645) and family members (Chan, Ngok and Phillips 2008). Following China’s economic reform in the 1980s, when the restriction on rural-urban movement was abolished, the *hukou* system was no longer a barrier to free movement within China. Nevertheless, the inherent difference between the two kinds of *hukou* persists in terms of access to welfare benefits such as housing, pensions, medical insurance and education. For example, rural residents are usually excluded from city health systems. They are only eligible

for full health insurance in designated hospitals in the location of their *hukou*. Although they are permitted to use medical services outside their home areas, they are given lower reimbursement rates in such cases (Qiu, et al. 2011). As a result, there are invisible borders within China's national boundary. Due not only to China's large territory but also to its *hukou* system, internal migration in China is comparable with intra-migration within the European Union (EU) (Cheng, et al. 2014).

Mixed economic system

China's economy has steadily improved since the country's economic reform. Its gross domestic product (GDP) increased from US \$202.46 billion in 1980 to US \$11,779 billion in 2016 (Guardian 2016). It has recently surpassed Japan to become the world's second largest economy, after the US (Dickie 2011). It is thus necessary to mention the underlying economic system established in the 1980s, when the term 'socialist market economy' first appeared. This system was advocated and implemented by Deng Xiaoping, who is regarded as the originator of China's economic reform. Deng believed that a market economy could exist under socialism as well as capitalism. He stated that 'while maintaining a planned economy as the mainstay of our economic system, we are also introducing a market economy' (Deng 1979). His ideas were practised in China after the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in December 1978; and after 26 years, the Minister of the National Development and Reform Commission, Ma Kai, opined that 'China has basically completed the transition to [a] socialist market economy from [a] highly centralized planning economy' (People's Daily Online 2005). Robins (2010) examined several elements of the transformation of China's socialist command economy into a capitalist market economy, such as deregulation and privatisation in the domestic economy, the liberalisation of international business and the development of a legal system to protect property rights. Based on the findings, Robins (2010)

suggested that market forces in China are gaining ground along with non-market influences.

China's mixed economic system has numerous unique characteristics. Wu (2009) regarded China's economic transition as a two-stage process akin to the transition of Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union, which also moved in two stages from a centrally planned economy to a market economy (in 1968, 1980 and 1985, respectively). However, the latter countries implemented the transition process at the cost of political revolution, whereas the equivalent process occurred smoothly in China (Qian 1999). Among other communist states, Vietnam claims to have a 'socialist market economy' (Collins, Zhu and Warner 2012). Indeed, as China and Vietnam share a border, their economic systems show some similarities. However, in terms of economic development, Vietnam is about ten years behind China (The Economist 2011). In other words, China's past is Vietnam's present. Therefore, China's mixed economic environment is unique to the country.

However, this economic system has also generated inequalities and social exclusion. Compared with local urban workers, rural-urban migrant workers receive considerably worse treatment, with lower incomes, longer working hours, worse living environments and lower welfare benefits (Li and Li 2007). Based on a large-scale survey with 7,063 participants from 28 provinces of China, Li and Li (2007) found that migrant workers earned an average of only £102 (¥921) per month, representing just 68.4% of the average income of urban workers. More than 80% of the migrant workers surveyed received less than £111 (¥1,000) per month. This income difference was also observed in another study, which reported that the proportion of the income received by migrant workers relative to that of their urban counterparts decreased from 64% in 2002 to 51% in 2007 (Zhu and Ma 2009). In addition to lower salaries, migrant workers normally have longer working hours. On average, migrant

workers work for 56.6 hours per week more than their urban counterparts. There is also a huge gap between migrant and urban workers in terms of access to old-age pensions, unemployment insurance and reimbursement for medical costs, as well as the coverage of medical insurance and access to other benefits (Li and Li 2007).

Changing social-policy orientation and central-local government relations

China is a unitary political system in which the central government has absolute power over policy making and implementation. However, in practice, and especially since the economic reform of the 1980s, China's political system has been regarded as 'federalism, Chinese style' due to administrative decentralisation (Li 2010). During the reform era, the state significantly retreated from its welfare responsibility and shifted this responsibility to local authorities, especially county-level governments. As a result, local governments gained greater autonomy in implementing social policies. However, the effectiveness of policy implementation was in question, because the capacity and willingness of local governments to implement social policies were limited by financial constraints and a national obsession with GDP data. The tax reform in 1994 reallocated a larger share of tax revenue to the central government while leaving province-level governments with insufficient income to finance social programmes. Most importantly, the reform neglected the interests of lower-level governments. As many as 50-60% and 75% respectively of county and township governments experienced difficulty in paying salaries (Chan, Ngok and Phillips 2008). Meanwhile, local officials' performance was evaluated merely by their achievement of assigned quantitative economic targets. Non-compliance with social policy and the failure to promote social policy rarely incurred serious punishments (Shi 2014). Due to a lack of financial resources and incentives, policy implementation was largely determined by and depended mainly on local officials' enthusiasm, and social policies were only passively implemented, 'subservient to GDP growth'

(Ngok and Huang 2014, p. 253).

Recently, there have been a series of policy reforms that reflect changes in central-local relations and the role of the state in making and implementing social policy. On the one hand, the state has shifted its economic policy focus to 'inclusive growth'. The terms 'people's wellbeing' and 'people's livelihood' appeared in a government report for the first time in 2003. The state has also shifted the emphases of its social welfare development strategy from 'wide coverage' and 'low benefits' to 'full coverage' and 'moderate benefits'. Another remarkable change has occurred in government spending on social policy, which increased from 4.8% of GDP in 2001 to 8% of GDP in 2011 (Ngok and Huang 2014). In addition, the financial and administrative power of lower-level governments has been shifted to provincial governments. Two measures have been implemented to achieve this goal. First, there has been a 'soft centralisation', which refers to the centralisation of lower-level governments' financial and administrative power by relocating it with provincial governments (Mertha 2005). Mertha (2005, p. 791) stated that the purpose of this approach is 'to regulate and discipline local government agents in their management of the economy and the implementation of policy more generally'. Second, the central government eliminated agricultural tax in 2006, significantly decreasing town/township governments' autonomy (Kennedy 2007). Compared with its role in the economic-reform period, the central government is now adopting a more actively engaged approach to social policy.

Together, the *hukou* system, the economic system and the transformation of social policy within a unitary political system have differentiated China from other developing countries. Examining these external differences may offer insights into the social-support networks of left-behind older people. More importantly, the internal cultural differences in relation to

supporting older parents in Chinese societies makes China a more interesting case to explore how the traditional practise and concept of filial piety is changing in the context of adult children's migration. In the next two chapters, western construction of old age support and help-seeking is reviewed, and the concept of filial piety that can be seen as a specific category of social support in Chinese societies that is for older people who have needs in times of difficulties and illness is introduced.

Chapter 2: Social support and help-seeking

In chapter one, it was shown that labour-related immigration occurs all over the world. It has significantly affected staying-behind older people in receiving all kinds of support from their migrant children in developing countries especially where there is little state support provision. Adult children's immigration certainly changes family structure. Indeed, adult children's migration reduces their older parent's support network composition. It might further change the dynamics and interactions among support providers and recipients. This chapter goes to establish a conceptual understanding of the sources of and nature of support available to older people and where and how older people seek support. In other words, it reviews two sides of support: supply of support and demand for this support (Baker 2007). Particularly, this chapter firstly reviews the commonly accepted definition of social support and the relationship between formal and informal support; and, most importantly, it addresses the scope and functions of informal support, which is the focus of this study. Finally, the process of help-seeking and the factors that influence people's decision to seek support are reviewed.

Social support

Social support is a difficult concept to pin down; no consensus has yet been reached on a definition (Williams, Barclay and Schmied 2004). Some scholars have explained social support as the belief that 'one is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligations' (Viitanen 2007, p. 300). Differences in the definition of social support are mainly due to variation in the measures used (Williams, Barclay and Schmied 2004). In the current study, I define social support in three dimensions: structural, functional and perceived. These three dimensions correspond respectively to Vaux's (1990) metaconstruct of three conceptual components of social support: support-network resources, supportive behaviour and subjective appraisal of support. Vaux argued that the use of this

metaconstruct considerably reduces the difficulties involved in defining social support (Vaux 1990).

First, structural social support is closely related to the construct of the social network. According to social-network theory, social support is the potential of a social network to provide help. 'A support system is a social network: a set of nodes connected by a set of ties. Yet a support system is an analytically constricted social network which only takes into account supportive ties' (Wellman 1981, cited in Wenger 1991, p. 148). Structural social support is also known as social embeddedness. It is the most basic structural element, 'from which these functional components emerge' (Norris, et al. 2005, p. 16). Studies conducted in this area have focused on measuring the size and density of support networks. Network size refers to the number of people in one's network. Network density refers to the proportion of a certain type of tie in one's network, such as the proportion of family members, friends, relatives or neighbours. Factors such as social-network composition, social-network stability, contact frequency and network intimacy or closeness are also widely used to assess the quality of structural social support.

Functional social support refers to the type(s) of support actually received; therefore, it is also known as received support or enacted support (Norris, et al. 2005). There are many forms of functional support, such as material assistance, help with managing emotional problems, sharing tasks and advice or suggestions on a particularly stressful event. Barrera's (1986) Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviours is the most popular measure of all forms of social support. Barrera argued that functional social support is by far a more accurate measure of actual social support than structural support or perceived support, as it requires participants to recall past experiences rather than to convey their general perceptions or use their

imaginings (Barrera 1986). In general, studies in this area have mainly focused on determining the amount and type(s) of support received.

Finally, perceived social support refers to one's estimation of the amount of support available when needed. This is also known as anticipated support. When measuring perceived support, some studies have focused on exploring sources of support, while others have focused on identifying types of support. In other words, studies in this area have tended to measure the perceived availability and adequacy of support. Scholars have found that factors such as personal characteristics, social environment and interaction between support providers and recipients all have a considerable influence on perceived social support.

In summary, these three aspects of social support together provide a holistic picture of an individual's support network. No single dimension is sufficient to convey the meaning of social support. Structural social support determines the sources of support, functional social support concerns support behaviour that has actually occurred, and perceived social support reflects one's perception of future available support, which is influenced by several internal and external factors. In addition, these three dimensions are not static. From an ecological perspective, Vaux (1990) argued that a dynamic process of transaction occurs between support resources, support behaviour and support appraisal, which are influenced by both the person involved and the social context.

[Relationship between formal and informal support](#)

The growth of formal support systems in developed countries has led to much discussion of the interaction between formal support and existing informal support. This section discusses two important theses: that of the substitution effect and that of the complementary/supplementary effect.

The substitution theory suggests that increased formal support can supplement and eventually become a substitute for informal support (Green 1983). Stabile, Laporte and Coyte (2006) examined interprovincial survey data obtained in Canada from 1991 to 1998 and confirmed that the increased availability of publicly financed home care is associated with a decline in informal caregiving. Similar findings were also reported among white older people in the United States (Miner 1995) and cognitively impaired older people in England (Schneider et al. 2003). However, little evidence has been provided for the substitutive capacity of formal support. Even in advanced welfare countries with comprehensive public or market-based old age care services, formal support is only limitedly able to meet older people's care needs. This point is highlighted by Larsson and Silverstein (2004), who conducted a population-based longitudinal study in Stockholm, Sweden, and found that the care needs of childless older people cannot be satisfied by formal support, arguing as a result that children are necessary support sources for this group.

The substitution effect has been argued to vary according to the duration of formal support, the circumstances of the older people receiving support, and the sources of such support. In another 3-year longitudinal study, Li (2005) studied 888 older participants in Michigan's Home- and Community-based Medicaid Waiver Program, and found that the amount of informal care declined immediately after publicly paid home care was first received, and then stabilised. Li (2005) concluded that changes in formal support do not affect the amount of support from the informal sector. In another longitudinal study, based on data from the Massachusetts Elder Health Project between 1984 and 1991, Tennstedt, Crawford and McKinlay (1993) reported that the substitution effect was initially significant but declined in subsequent periods. In addition, factors such as the availability of informal care, changes in

caregiving arrangements, the change or loss of the primary caregiver, and changes in older people's living arrangements are all related to the capacity of formal support to substitute for informal support. Using data from the 1994-2001 European Community Household Panel survey collected in 12 EU member states, Viitanen (2007) examined the relationship between formal and informal support and found that formal support substitutes for support from outside recipients' own households, but cannot replace support from individuals living with them. In other words, with an increase in formal support, support interaction between recipients and relatives or friends who do not live with them tends to decline.

Comparative literature in this field has indicated that the relationship between formal and informal support is likely to be both complementary and supplementary. The two hypotheses share the assumption that formal and informal support are interrelated. However, there are still some differences between the two. According to the complementary hypothesis, formal and informal support providers share the responsibility for supporting older people and thus complement each other (Chappell and Blandford 1991). In contrast, the supplementary hypothesis suggests that formal support systems supplement informal carers' efforts to meet older people's needs, particularly when these needs exceed the capacity and scope of informal care (Stoller 1989). Both hypotheses have been empirically supported. For example, Litwin and Attias-Donfut (2009) analysed data from a survey on health, ageing and retirement administered to older people (aged 75 and above) in France and Israel, and reported that formal and informal support are often complementary. Similar findings were reported in Sweden (Davey, et al. 2005). Meanwhile, the supplementary thesis has been supported by findings in the United States (Davey, et al. 2005).

However, it is difficult to evaluate the relative accuracy of the substitution hypothesis and the

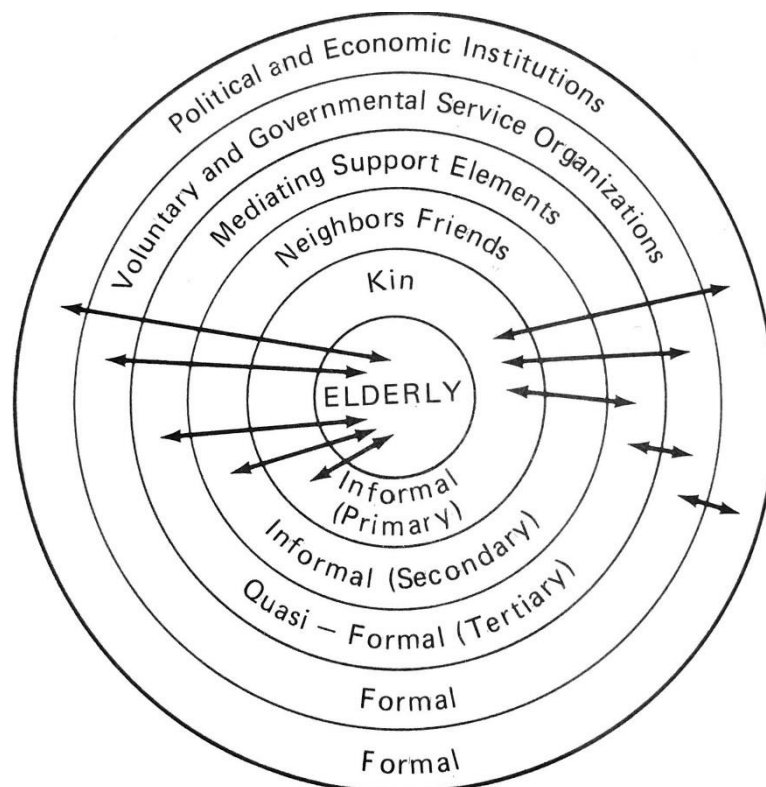
complementary/supplementary hypothesis based on the existing literature, as different measures of formal support have been used. In several studies, entering a residential facility has been used as the indicator of formal support (Davey, et al. 2005). However, Litwin and Attias-Donfut (2009, p. 74) argued that these studies fail to 'capture the dynamics of the formal and informal interactions where it most often occurs, of the care provided in people's own homes'; moreover, the transition from home to a residential care facility is relatively uncommon.

Studies of the interaction between formal and informal support in China are limited, and most of the research in this area has been carried out in urban China. For example, Zhang and Sun (2011) examined the relationship between old-age pensions and intergenerational financial support using a 2003 Shanghai survey on old people's living conditions covering 2,604 people aged 60 and above, and found that increased pension payments have crowded out the effect of intergenerational financial support. Another study added medical insurance to its analysis and revealed that the crowding-out effect is more obvious among urban older people who live alone than those who live with partners in Zhejiang Province and Gansu Province (Liu 2015). However, this crowding-out effect was questioned by Hu et al. (2012), who suggested that the effect is more closely related to older people's economic status. A PhD researcher analysed data from two waves of a nationally representative survey conducted in 20 provinces in urban and rural China, and found that a gradual increase in formal support did not crowd out informal economic support (Chen 2013). However, as this thesis was quantitative, it did not address the effects of a gradual increase in public support on older people's perceptions and utilisation of resources, or on their approach to seeking support from informal support networks.

Informal support

Depending on its source, social support can be defined as formal, informal (Cantor and Little 1985) or 'natural' (Hirsch 1980). Taking a system-oriented approach, Cantor and Little (1985, p. 748) highlighted the interaction between support providers in a support network and grouped them into three categories: formal, quasi-formal, and informal (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Support system



Older people are located in the centre of this system, surrounded by many concentric circles that represent different sources of support. The two outer circles comprise formal support. The farthestmost one covers entities such as political and economic institutions that determine what older people are entitled to receive and significantly affect all aspects of old people's welfare, such as housing, health, safety, transportation and financial support. The next circle comprises voluntary and government service organisations, which execute social and economic policies or programmes established by public laws. Between the formal and

informal support circles, there are quasi-formal organisations such as neighbourhood groups and religious organisations, as well as individuals such as shopkeepers, postmen and bartenders. The remaining two inner circles represent informal support networks, comprising children and other relatives, who constitute the primary support network, and neighbours and friends, who constitute the secondary support network. Informal support providers are the 'significant others' who provide both instrumental and affective support and interact most frequently with the recipient (Cantor and Little 1985).

Formal and informal support are distinct in several respects. First, support providers in formal networks are equipped with technical knowledge and professional skills. Their commitment to providing support is limited and mainly based on their technical knowledge. In contrast, informal support providers are recruited via marriage, birth or friendship with little or no reference to technical skills, and the commitment is for life or at least long-term. Support from informal sources is less scheduled or organised than formal support. In addition, the motivation to provide support is mainly impersonal and economic for formal support providers, whereas informal support providers are motivated by the internalised commitments arising from love and/or a sense of duty (Litwak, Jessop and Moulton 1994, p. 99). Compared with formal support, informal support has been found to play a far more significant role in maintaining older people's physical and mental well-being and providing tailored assistance when unpredictable events occur (Cantor and Little 1985). Informal support is considered to be less bureaucratised, more personalised and more accessible to support seekers (Hernández-Plaza, Alonso-Morillejo and Pozo-Muoz 2006).

Some studies have compared the efficacy of various sources of informal support for older people. First, the family is considered as a very important source of assistance and support for

older people. For example, based on the 2002 Health and Retirement Study in the United States, Johnson and Schaner (2005) reported that 40% of older people (aged 55 and above) spent time caring for a spouse. They also found that spousal support increased with age: 5.6% of older people aged between 55 and 64 spent time caring for their spouses, and this figure reached 10% among those aged 75 and above, who are more likely to have disabilities. A study carried out in Bangladesh also indicated that spouses provide emotional support for both men and women aged 60 and over (Kabir, Szebehely and Tishelman 2002). The role of children in providing their parents with support and help varies according to social and welfare policies. For example, Blomgren and his colleague (2012) examined the role of children in helping older parents (aged 70 and above) with functional limitations in England and Finland, and found that in a liberal market-led state, children may be primarily responsible for helping parents who live alone and lack financial resources. In a generous welfare state, however, children's support may function more actively in bridging the gap between recipients (parents) and formal services.

Some scholars have found that family structural changes affect the composition of support providers. Bengtson (2001) summarised four hypotheses regarding family changes over the 20th century in the United States. First, family patterns changed from extended to nuclear as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The second suggests that due to high divorce rates, the functions of the modern nuclear family have diminished. The third hypothesis suggests that with increasing rates of divorce and remarriage, families are becoming increasingly heterogeneous. In other words, the relationships between children and their parents exceed conjugal or biological relationship boundaries. The last hypothesis, which is closely related to the third, suggests that multi-generational relationships have become more prevalent in the

21st century, not only because increased longevity allows grandparents and grandchildren to share their lives for longer, but also due to the demands of childcare, as many single parents cannot care for their children while working and thus request help from the children's grandparents. This indicates that as family structure changes, grandchildren become more closely involved in grandparents' later lives, and may provide another source of support for older people.

Following family members, non-relatives such as neighbours and friends are 'third in line' in providing support for older adults (Cantor 1979). They are the "others" who are often referred to, yet rarely explained, in social networks and social support research' (Gardner 2011, p. 269). The importance of these 'others' has recently grown due to the decreased participation of females in informal support networks, changes in family structure and proximity, and increased life expectancy (Nocon and Pearson 2000, Gardner 2011). Relationships with neighbours are regarded as a significant local factor promoting the well-being of older people (Greenfield and Reyes 2015). Several scholars have interviewed older people and found that neighbours are regarded as significant support providers in times of emergency, capable of increasing older people's sense of safety and helping them to remain independent (Walker and Hiller 2007, Lau, Machizawa and Doi 2012). They provide a back-up for family support by helping older people with issues such as transportation, paying bills and in some cases personal care (Nocon and Pearson 2000). In addition to these types of instrumental support, Gardner (2011) discovered from interviews and observations that spontaneous interaction between neighbours in 'third places' such as public parks, restaurants or small grocery stores can provide humour and friendship and even create a sense of community. Kin and non-relatives provide different kinds of support, but both groups play a

significant role in helping to meet the needs of elderly people. The question of how these supportive relationships are maintained is discussed in subsequent sections.

Wenger (1989, 1991) recognised five types of support network: family-dependent, locally integrated, local and self-contained, wider community oriented, and private and restricted. Each of those support-network types has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, Hirsch (1980) suggested that locally integrated and wider community oriented networks are larger and associated with higher morale and lower levels of isolation than the other three networks, which are more vulnerable due to their smaller size, lower intensity and narrower scope of support (Wenger 1991). Wenger (1991) further claimed that support networks are not static. Population stability is a significant determinant of support-network type. With increasing population mobility, network types have broadly shifted from more robust to more vulnerable.

Population mobility certainly reduces the size of social networks. This is especially noticeable in rural areas of China, as most of the primary support providers for elderly people in these areas – sons, daughters-in-law and daughters – work in cities. In the absence of these crucial supporters, how do each of the remaining support mechanisms operate to provide assistance for older people? Narrowing this general question to the context of the current study, it is important to consider how the absence of children due to rural-urban migration affects their older parents' support networks. Previous scholars have developed several models to explain the operation of informal support networks (Cantor 1979). The first is an additive model, suggesting that no prescribed rules or guidelines are followed by each support source. Rather, they provide support and assistance randomly. This model may indicate that the larger the network, the more support or assistance individuals receive. The second is an asymmetrical

model, presuming that only one support element is capable of providing appropriate support. Instead of highlighting network size, this model shows how a particular support element can meet all of the needs of a support recipient. According to Cantor (1979), however, little empirical evidence of the additive or the asymmetrical model has been obtained. The third model, derived from Litwak's theory of shared functions (Litwak 1985), is task-specific. It suggests that support elements offer distinct resources and abilities. For example, sons and daughters are capable of providing different kinds of support, and the particular support they provide is neither interchangeable nor substitutable. Next is the hierarchical-compensatory model proposed by Cantor (1979). Instead of emphasising the nature of tasks, this model is based on the assumption that the provision of support by informal caregivers follows a particular order – from primary caregivers, such as spouses, children and relatives, to secondary caregivers, such as friends, neighbours and other potential supporters. The model also suggests that different kinds of support can substitute for each other. When one support element is unavailable, other supporters step in to compensate.

Another two models provide more dynamic and diverse explanations of informal support networks. Simons (1983) proposed a model of the functional specificity of relationships, which differs from the task-specific model in suggesting that a particular support source is capable of providing various kinds of support based on how the specific relationship is negotiated. For example, one person's sibling may be very supportive whereas another's is not. In other words, one support element can have several functions; the nature of support is not dependent on particular relationships. This view of the dynamism of informal support networks was shared by Kahn and Antonucci (1980) who posited a convoy model suggesting that the structure of one's support network and the supportive functions of each support element do not remain

the same over one's life course. This model also encompasses the notion of hierarchy, but the position of a particular support element is not relationship-fixed; rather, it varies based on emotional closeness.

This section discussed that support networks can provide individuals with many types of support including financial support, physical support and emotional support. This support comes from one's formal or informal networks, and can help recipients overcome various difficulties and improve their wellbeing. However, this line of literature only sheds light on the supply aspect of support. In order to provide a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the support process, it is essential to explore where and how people seek support from the support recipients' perspectives. In the next section, it will review concepts of help-seeking and then delineate factors that may affect help-seeking behaviour.

Help-seeking theory

Help-seeking is seen as both a positive coping strategy and an approach to communicating a problem or difficult situation, manifesting as a request for assistance or support from relatives, friends, neighbours and/or professional organisations in times of need (DePaulo 1983).

In the current study, it postulates three categories of older people's help-seeking behaviours: help-seeking for financial needs, help-seeking for personal care needs, and help-seeking for emotional needs.

DePaulo (1983) proposed two types of help-seeking behaviour. The first is a prototypical process of help-seeking that starts when one identifies a need or problem that can be addressed or solved with the help of others' resources, effort and/or time. The person with a problem seeks assistance or support from others directly. The second type of help-seeking

behaviour is non-prototypical. That is, when people do decide to ask for help, they usually disguise the help-seeking behaviour as something other than a direct request. Notably, strategies such as story-telling (Blau 1955), experience-swapping (Glidewell, et al. 1983), not-so-subtle and subtle hints (Cheever 1981) and aid-eliciting nonverbal cues (Mckessar and Thomas 1978) are frequently employed to ask for support or assistance indirectly, without acknowledging that a request is being made.

Gross (1983) suggested a three-stage help-seeking process model. First, one perceives a problem or identifies oneself as in need of help, in the knowledge that resources are available to solve the problem or meet the need. Second, one chooses either to assist oneself, not to seek help, or to seek help from others. Third and finally, the person in need employs different strategies to ask for support. It seems that when one decides to ask for help from others, one must previously have recognised difficulties that constitute problems and acknowledged the need for extra assistance or support to solve these problems. However, it should be noted that not all help-seeking behaviour is driven by actual needs, problems or deficits (DePaulo 1982, Arbretton 1998).

Accordingly, help-seeking is on the one hand a form of positive coping behaviour and an adaptive and instrumental response to a particularly difficult situation. On the other hand, however, it reflects one's failure, incompetence, weakness and inability to cope. Indeed, Rosen (1983) suggested that people usually avoid seeking help due to psychological obstacles such as distress, embarrassment, feelings of inadequacy and the fear of social comparison. Similarly, DePaulo (1983) identified factors that can obstruct help-seeking behaviour, namely feelings of indebtedness and embarrassment, fear of rejection or refusal, and an unwillingness to reveal one's apparent inadequacies/a more general disinclination for self-disclosure that

arises from the immediate situation as well as from the larger social context. Help-seeking has also been characterised as self-initiated, private and self-controlled. Therefore, instead of seeking support from others, people are more likely to choose denial, procrastination, persistence, resignation or acceptance. In other words, it seems that when they need support, people rarely choose to ask for help.

Further, DePaulo (1983) proposed that attitudes towards help-seeking display sociological and psychological ambivalence. Sociological ambivalence refers to inconsistencies built into the social structure. Psychological ambivalence relates to inconsistencies in beliefs, feelings or behavioural inclinations. Forms of psychological ambivalence have been discussed by various scholars (DePaulo and Fisher 1981, DePaulo 1982). However, the sociological ambivalence inherent in a country's culture has received insufficient attention. Therefore, a culturally oriented exploration of help-seeking may offer important insights into the effects of particular cultural components, such as the Chinese tradition of filial piety, on help-seeking behaviour.

Help-seeking is a complex process rather than a single action. As mentioned in the previous section, help-seeking can be inhibited by several factors, such as distress, feelings of inadequacy, fear of social comparison, a sense of indebtedness and/or embarrassment, fear of rejection or refusal, and an unwillingness to reveal one's perceived inadequacies/a general disinclination for self-disclosure. These factors may result in a discrepancy between the need for and use of support networks, and have a profound influence on both help-seeking patterns and pathways of help utilisation.

Help-seeking begins with the recognition of a problem. Therefore, one's perceptions of the nature and severity of the problem significantly influence one's willingness to seek support and choose a helper. The relationship between stress and help-seeking is not clearly defined.

Some studies have shown that pressure is more important than attitudes in triggering help-seeking behaviour (Dubow, Lovko and Kausch 1990, Offer, et al. 1991). Other studies have indicated that with increasing stress, people are more likely to delay or disengage from help-seeking (DePaulo 1982). However, what is more important is the social context in which the problem is understood and perceived. Components of the surrounding environment, such as family, friends and others, have a profound influence on people's understanding of the problem (Gross and McMullen 1983). Several researchers have shown that sociocultural elements determine individuals' definitions and perceptions of problems, which in turn affect their choice of helper (Chatters, Taylor and Jackson 1985, Ben-Porath 2002). The current study draws attention to the role of filial piety, which has shaped the help-seeking behaviour of China's rural older parents for centuries.

Several studies have focused on the relationship between help-seekers and the support providers. Two main areas have been addressed. First, the majority of studies examining the seeker-helper relationship have focused on investigating the influence of informal social networks on help-seeking. The findings have shown that members of people's informal networks have a significant influence on the process of help-seeking (Veroff 1981). In addition, some studies have explored subjects' choice of helpers and revealed a preference for close friends (Clark and Mills 1979). Some clinical studies have shown that people prefer to reveal their problems to family and friends before consulting professionals (Gourash 1978, Rogler and Cortes 1993), possibly because family and friends are less likely to elicit feelings of indebtedness, provide more trust and closeness, and pose less threat to self-esteem (Shapiro 1980, Grayson, Miller and Clarke 1998). However, other researchers have found that people more readily disclose their problems to strangers, suggesting that strangers may be preferred

over friends as helpers (Derlega and Chaikin 1977, Amato and Saunders 1985).

Some studies have focused on people's practices in seeking help from others who are similar or dissimilar in gender, background, social status and age (Rosen 1983). This research revealed a smaller tendency for help-seeking and a greater likelihood of help rejection among those who were very similar in the abovementioned respects (Nadler 1987). Seeking help from members of a similar group may expose one's inferiority and inadequacy, threatening one's self-esteem (Rosen 1983, Nadler 1987). Another factor affecting the choice of helper is the amount of resources and expertise possessed by potential helpers. The more resources and expertise an individual has, the less a help-seeker will request from them (Fisher, Harrison and Nadler 1978). This negative correlation also applies to knowledge, position and physical attractiveness (Nadler 1983). The rationale is similar to that explained above: a support provider who is more attractive and/or possesses more knowledge and a higher status may threaten the help-seekers' self-esteem (Nadler 1980).

In sum, help-seeking is a strategy for older people to solve their financial, physical and emotional difficulties. It is a complex process involving one's perception of a problem, choice of support resources and actual behaviour of seeking support. This process might be hindered or facilitated by several factors such as pressure, components of the surrounding environment, and the relationship between help-seekers and the support providers. More importantly, help-seeking is a contextualised behaviour that is profoundly affected by local cultures. In other words, people in different societies with different cultural values might show different kinds of help-seeking behaviours.

Summary

In sum, the aim of the last two sections was to provide some theoretical insights into the social

support and help-seeking behaviour. It discussed two aspects of support: the supply of support, and help-seeking behaviour as the demand for help by older people. In particular, it discussed the nature of support networks, the interaction between formal and informal support, and the different kinds of support provided by different sources. It also showed how people seek support from others, and reviewed the factors potentially influencing the help-seeking behaviour of older people. However, it needs to notice that all these discussions were based on western literature. In Chinese societies, there is a corresponding concept - filial piety. On the one hand, it was used to guide all kinds of support relations and behaviours not only within older people's informal support networks, but also used to provide explanations for the relationship between formal and informal support networks, and support providers and recipients. On the other hand, it prescribed and reinforced older people's eligibility of seeking support from their children. In the next chapter, a historical approach is employed to explore Chinese older people's support networks, the division of the caregiving role, and the support relations in three distinctive periods.

Chapter 3: Changes in filial piety and rural old age support in China

In western literature, social support has been proved to be beneficial for older people's wellbeing. Especially the informal support, it has been playing a far more significant role in maintaining older people's physical and mental well-being and providing tailored assistance when unpredictable events occur (Cantor and Little 1985). In Chinese societies, the informal support network was guided and dominated by the Confucian filial piety, which referred to a range of behavioural rules that include showing respect, being obedient, as well as providing appropriate support to older people. When one compares the content of filial piety in Chinese culture to the western notion of social support, filial piety seems to encompass all types of social support discussed in chapter two. However, what is unique is that filial piety occurs only in the interaction of parents and children or children's spouse(s), as opposed to other possible sources of social support, such as close friends, spouse and relatives. Therefore, filial piety can be seen as a specific category of social support in Chinese society for older adults who have needs in times of illness and difficulties limited to parents and their children and children's spouse(s) (Cheng and Chan 2006).

This chapter reviews the patterns of rural old age support in China from a historical perspective. Three distinct periods are relevant: before 1949, during China's commune era, and after the 1979 economic reform. In each period, the development of and changes in the tradition of filial piety, the social and economic conditions of rural areas, formal old age support and the status of older parents within the family are examined in detail.

Old-age support in traditional China

The Chinese family system is generally regarded as a welfare unit providing care and support for older people based on a sense of mutual obligation between children and their parents.

The functioning of the family, and the provision of old-age support in traditional China, was facilitated by a set of interpersonal relationships based on filial piety, the core value of Confucian ideology, and reinforced by imperial policies and an agrarian economic system. The focus of this section is the implementation of old-age support in traditional China, which offers important insights into informal support systems in modern China.

There is an old Chinese saying that filial piety is a virtue surpassing all others. Based on classical Confucian texts, Chow (2001) clearly identified three levels of filial piety: first, meeting older parents' material needs; second, obeying parents' wishes; and third, engaging in behaviour that makes parents feel happy and honoured. Other scholars have used different dimensions to characterise filial piety. Sung (1995) identified six important filial-piety items and grouped them into two dimensions: behaviourally oriented filial piety, including responsibility, repayment, and sacrifice; and emotionally oriented filial piety, including respect, affection, love, and harmony. Hwang (1999) characterised filial piety as either active filial piety, emphasising affection, care and benevolence towards parents, or passive filial piety, emphasising obedience to authority. Yeh's (1997) dual filial piety model distinguished between reciprocal filial piety, which is similar to active filial piety, focusing on the use of affection and gratitude to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships with close relations, and authoritarian filial piety, which is similar to passive filial piety, concerning submission and hierarchy. Despite these differences, the literature suggests that filial piety is closely related to the commitment to supporting and obeying one's parents and providing them with emotional comfort.

These filial practices were first emphasised by Confucius, who provided an ethical basis for the Chinese family system by advocating the reintegration of social behaviour and roles with

names: 'Let the ruler be ruler, the minister minister, the father father, and the son son' (1979 Analects XII: 11). In other words, Confucian teachings favoured hierarchy over equality in human relationships, mandating that individuals should behave according to their social class and social position (Chan 2011). The imperative of absolute obedience to a hierarchical social order is expressed in a common traditional Chinese saying: 'subjects must obey the emperor absolutely even if he orders them to die; the son must obey his father absolutely even if his father orders him to die'. This principle played a prominent role in establishing a hierarchy of human relationships both within Chinese families and at the national level.

Given the above quotation on the importance of consistency between roles and names, it is reasonable to assume that in traditional China, older parents were considered the heads of their families, entitled to privilege, honour and absolute authority over younger generations. According to Confucian ideology, practising filial piety was a lifetime commitment for children, and their obligation to their parents was both physical and spiritual. This relationship began with the birth of the child. From that moment onwards, children owed their lives to their parents and were required to repay them by practising filial piety. Children were not even considered to possess their own bodies, as their external forms had been bequeathed by their parents. Instead, they were required to take care of their bodies as the first step in the demonstration of filial piety, as outlined in the *Book of Rites*: 'while his parents are alive, a son neither dares to hold his body as his own, nor does he dare to use his wealth for his own private ends' (cited in Knapp 2006, p. 69). Nevertheless, even after one's parents' death, filial obligation persisted. Children were required to fulfil their parents' last wishes and to mourn them for three years. Under Tang Dynasty regulations, officials were obliged to retire from office to return home and mourn their parents.

After Tsai Wo had left, the Master said, 'How unfeeling Yu is. A child ceases to be nursed by his parents only when he is three years old. Three years' mourning is observed throughout the Empire. Was Yu not given three years' love by his parents?' (1979 Analects XVII: 21)

Based on these principles, the interests of older parents were emphasised and maintained even in matters of conflict. 'In serving your father and mother you ought to dissuade them from doing wrong in the gentlest way. If you see your advice being ignored, you should not become disobedient, but remain reverent. You should not complain even if in so doing you wear yourself out' (1979 Analects IV: 18). Members of the younger generation were expected to sacrifice themselves for their older parents' interests. In Fei's (1992, p. 6) words, 'children should proactively find the parents' needs and fulfil them so as to please the parents. Only by doing so, can one say he/she acted according to his/her conscience'. In general, filial piety – the core principle of Confucian teachings – functioned to explicitly justify, maintain, and strengthen the respectively superior and subordinate relationships between older parents and their adult children. The helping relationship was positioned as natural and directly required of blood relatives.

Clearly, the traditional practice of filial piety stressed obedience, submissiveness and loyalty to one's parents. This kind of control also met the needs of imperial authorities, who sought to maintain their power by establishing a hierarchal society. As a result, the ideology of filial piety was transferred into political usage. The state and family operated according to the same mechanisms: obedience and loyalty to authority (Chan 2011). The state implemented legislation to strengthen its patriarchal system by punishing those who failed to adhere to the obligations of filial piety. For example, in the Tang Code (China's first legal framework,

established in around AD 650, which had a profound influence on later Chinese dynasties and other Asian countries such as Vietnam, Korea and Japan), unfilial behaviour was identified as one of the 'Ten Abominations', 'crimes so venal that their authors were neither released under general amnesties nor were their executions delayed until ritually appropriate times' (Knapp 2006, p. 65). The Code explicitly prescribed punishments for adult children who exhibited unfilial conduct. For instance, those who disobeyed their parents or provided them with insufficient support received a sentence of two years of penal servitude. Other kinds of unfilial conduct, such as the maintenance of separate household registers, the possession of private goods and inappropriate demonstrations of grief, received corresponding penalties. At the same time, the imperial authorities rewarded those who performed their filial duties well. For instance, during the Han Dynasty, it was common for people noted for their filial piety and moral reputation to be nominated for official positions. Even after the Han Dynasty, filial piety was still the first and most important criterion for appointment to state positions. In these ways, respect for older people and the practice of filial piety were consolidated by the imperial state.

Respect for older people was not only prescribed and facilitated by the above-mentioned cultural and political mechanisms, but strengthened and reinforced by the economic system. First, older people were regarded as the embodiment of knowledge. In traditional China, agricultural production was the main source of household income. However, it required more experience and knowledge than physical input (Lang 1946). Therefore, older people had normally accumulated the practical experience, skills and knowledge required to ensure and improve agricultural yield, making them more authoritative than younger adults. Common Chinese sayings, such as 'an old person in a home is like a family treasure', indicate that status

increased with age. Ownership of land was an even more important means for older people to secure their people's authority. Land owned by the family was controlled solely by parents. Younger adults were not allowed to possess anything while their parents were still alive. According to the *Book of Rites*, 'while his parents are alive, a son neither dares to hold his body as his own, nor does he dare to use his wealth for his own private ends' (cited in Knapp 2006, p. 69). Therefore, children relied on their parents to survive. In addition, as parents had the power to dispose the family land as inheritance, it was imperative for children to obey their parents if they hoped to be made legal heirs to the property.

Village structure further strengthened children's obedience to and dependence on their parents, as well as parents' authority and privilege. Traditionally, Chinese people with common ancestors lived together, generally composing a village clan or lineage community with only one surname. Although people in some villages had different surnames, only those with the same surname lived together, with distinct boundaries between clan communities (Fei 1992). As a result, older people were surrounded by blood relations. The mandate of filial piety concerned immediate family members and blood-related ties. However, Confucius' 'five relations', which prescribed different levels of responsibility and status among human beings, created a 'graded love' society that also entailed 'graded care and support' or 'graded responsibility'. This extended one's responsibility of taking care of one's parents to taking care of other old people (Lang 1946). The extent of care or support was graded in accordance with a specific order. This suggests that even older people without blood relations enjoyed support and care from village members.

In sum, the Confucian principle of filial piety in traditional China was enforced and reinforced by the imperial government and facilitated by the agrarian economic system. This made the

norm of respecting older people a basic ethical and moral standard. However, it is also essential to consider the gender differences in filial responsibilities.

Parent-child relationship

The father-son relationship was predominant in China's traditional family system. Traditional filial practices mainly concerned sons. The meaning of having sons was different from that of having daughters. It was generally acknowledged that there were three ways of being unfilial, of which the failure to have sons was the most severe. The father's ultimate goal was to continue the family line by having sons who could be given their father's last name and would be entitled to inherit the family property. Neither daughters nor even their husbands were eligible to do so. As traditional China was an agrarian society, farming was the major source of income. Therefore, male labour was normally more helpful and productive than female labour. Sons were also expected to live with their natal parents to facilitate their continued provision of support and care for their older parents, as expressed in the following common Chinese saying: 'raising sons to help in one's old age is just like storing grain against famine'.

The situation for female children was far more complex. In contrast with male children's expected filial responsibilities, women's filial conduct was characterised as three types of obedience: to one's father before marriage, to one's husband after marriage, and to one's son(s) after the death of the husband. Unmarried daughters were expected to fulfil filial obligations towards their parents, but their responsibility for and relationship with their natal parents was limited and short-term, because as soon as they were married, their filial responsibilities were transferred to their husbands' families. This is expressed in a common saying: 'a married daughter is just like water that has been poured'. Given the importance of sons, women arguably had even less privilege than their younger brothers.

Marriage marked a significant stage in a daughter's life, at which point she was formally transferred to her husband's family. To secure the marriage, the groom's family paid a 'bride price' to the bride's family in exchange for the bride's labour and body. In the new family, the daughter-in-law was the main care provider. Daughters-in-law were expected to provide a wide range of practical support for their parents-in-law. In Hok's (1989, p. 163) words, 'a bride serves her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and husband as if she were serving God. In serving these three persons, she should satisfy them and avoid making them angry' (Chan 2010). Daughters' interaction with their natal families was extremely limited after marriage. The status of daughters-in-law in their new families was quite vulnerable. When conflict arose between daughters-in-law and parents-in-law, the former were usually blamed, even if the conflict had been the parents' fault. Husbands were normally on their parents' side due to the requirement of filial piety. Besides, the rights of daughters-in-law were not supported by the state. Stacey (1983, p. 38) provided a lively description of this situation: 'parents-in-law were not responsible if they unintentionally killed their daughter-in-law while beating her, as they should, for disobedience'. As a result, daughters-in-law in traditional China were characterised as independent, subordinate and submissive (Johnson 1983).

A review of the traditional support mechanism revealed that adult children in traditional China were held responsible for supporting and caring for their older parents from birth. This required children to put their parents' interests above their own. More importantly, it showed that culture alone was unable to maintain children's obligations to respect and provide support and care for their older parents. The power and control of older people over the younger generation was secured and strengthened by Confucian ideology, imperial laws, the economic system and village structure. Consequently, it was vital for adult children to provide

support for their older parents under all circumstances. What can be concluded is that it cannot be taken for granted that children's practise of filial is naturally evolved. The division of care within the family is socially constructed, sustained and preserved. As China has gone through extensive social and economic changes, how has the caring relationship and division of care responsibilities shifted within older people's support networks? And, how has older parents' help-seeking behaviour changed over time?

Rural old age support between 1949 and 1978

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, several distinctive social and economic reforms were carried out in rural China from 1949 to 1978. Those changes were heavily influenced by the Chinese Communist Party's socialist ideology, which emphasised freedom, equal rights, and a just society (Li 1999). Key developments in this period included the land-reform movement, the collectivisation movement, the implementation of the *hukou* system and the Cultural Revolution. As discussed in the previous section, the principle underpinning the traditional old age support system was filial piety, reinforced and safeguarded by political, economic and cultural ideology. However, the new order established by the Chinese Communist Party under Mao's leadership profoundly reshaped the traditional generation-age-gender hierarchy. This section investigates the effects of these events on rural older people's welfare in general, and on the support relationship between children and parents in particular.

Key social changes

When Mao came to power, the government first advocated egalitarianism in terms of age, generation, and gender by launching the Agrarian Reform Law in 1950 and conducting the land-reform movement. This was the first nationwide social change in rural China. Before the land reform, most of China's land had been controlled by rich peasants and landlords.

Approximately 60-70% of the land was controlled by landlords (Alavi 1965). The land reform replaced feudal land ownership with a policy of equal distribution. From 1950 to 1953, about 300 million landless peasants received a total of approximately 115 million acres of land (Chinadaily 2009). Poverty in rural areas caused by a lack of land was resolved. Every peasant received a piece of land on which to live. This was the first time in China's history that peasants had owned their own land.

After the land-reform movement, to achieve economic modernisation, the Chinese government introduced a commune system of collectivised agriculture to effect revolutionary development in rural areas of China (Ahn 1975). The commune system was not established immediately after the land reform, but in three stages. The first stage was the establishment of the Lower-Stage Cooperatives between 1953 and 1955. The second stage was the formation of the Higher-Stage Cooperatives between 1955 and 1956. Finally, the commune system became a three-level organisation in 1958, and about 99% of China's peasants joined communes between August and December of this year (Ahn 1975). Accordingly, rural households were organised into production teams. Production teams made up a production brigade. Brigades then made up a people's commune. Normally, one commune ranged from 10 to 30 brigades, one brigade had 10 to 20 teams, and one team had 20 to 40 households (Asia for Educators 2009). However, the number and size of the communes changed over time. There were about 24,000 communes, each with up to 5,000 households, between 1958 and 1960. Between 1960 and 1966, however, the number of communes increased to 74,000 and the number of households contained by each fell to 1,600 (Ahn 1975). The three-level commune system controlled every aspect of its members' lives. The organisations at each level had different responsibilities. The production team was the most basic unit, responsible for

dividing work, calculating income and organising farming activities. The brigade and commune were responsible for general planning, management and the provision of water resources and larger machinery (O'Leary and Watson 1982).

Finally, the introduction of the household-registration (*hukou*) system in 1958 had a profound influence on China's society. There were two broad categories of registration status: agricultural and non-agricultural. People living in rural areas were assigned agricultural *hukou*, and those who lived in urban areas were assigned non-agricultural *hukou* status. This system tied peasants to agricultural work and forced them to continue living in rural areas. This restriction on mobility prevented individuals from migrating from rural to urban areas (Ren and Treiman 2004).

Rural welfare system in commune era

After the establishment of the PRC, the government gradually set up a welfare system for its rural people. This highly decentralised system made local communities responsible for providing support for those in need, and was financed and operated variously by the Lower-Stage Cooperatives, the Higher-Stage Cooperatives and the communes.

In 1953, the Chinese government's first statement on welfare was announced by the Central Committee. It highlighted the role of the Lower-Stage Cooperatives in providing support for their members, as indicated below.

The amount of public welfare funds should never be too large a percentage of the annual incomes of the mutual aid teams of agricultural producers' co-operatives. Generally speaking, 1-5 per cent would be a comparatively reasonable amount (to allocate to the public welfare fund and the reserve

fund). (Cited in Dixon 1982, p. 3)

This statement later provided a basis for the communes to finance a set of welfare programmes: the 'Five Guarantees' scheme, homes for the aged and a co-operative medical system. These programmes were designed by the central government and received local collective funding. The first two programmes mainly targeted older people who were old, disabled, and/or widowed and had no children on whom to depend. These older people could choose to receive either cash or other material support to live on their own or to move to collective homes for the aged. Under the Five Guarantees scheme, five main types of support were provided: food, shelter, clothing, health expenses and funeral expenses. These five guarantees were later expanded to sixteen guarantees and made available to all commune members in certain places (Chang 2003). However, the content of support and criteria for eligibility were not uniform. They varied based on local communities' financial capacity and quality of leadership (Dixon 1982).

Compared with the Five Guarantees scheme and the establishment of homes for the aged, the co-operative medical system was a more extensive programme. In 1968, the Rural Co-operative Medical Scheme was launched at commune level. The scheme provided cheap and easy access to medical services for rural people. About 90% of China's rural citizens were covered by the scheme (Liu, et al. 1995). Although the brigades were responsible for the funding, administration and delivery of the medical services, there were three funding sources: a premium assessment fee, a collective welfare fund and subsidies from the upper-level government. However, the government's subsidies varied according to brigades' agricultural output and wealth (Jamison 1985). A unique feature of this medical system was the use of 'barefoot doctors' (Blumenthal and Hsiao 2005): farmers who received medical training in

county hospitals and then returned to their villages to provide both primary-care and preventive services. The barefoot doctors were highly praised for their effectiveness in meeting peasants' needs at minimum cost. The achievement of this scheme was remarkable. From 1949 to 1975, China's infant mortality rate dropped from 20% to 4.7% and life expectancy increased from 35 to 65 (Liu, et al. 1996). In other words, this medical system gave people the opportunity to live longer and thus have more children to secure additional support and assistance.

Changes in old-age support

The abovementioned government reforms destabilised the social and economic foundations of the Confucian concept of filial piety. As a result, the hierarchical structure favoured by the imperial government and older parents was removed. The relationship between adult children and their parents was reconstructed and redefined.

Under socialist ideology, the traditional family system was portrayed as closely related to the feudal landlord-based system; the government attacked several aspects of filial piety, such as absolute obedience to one's parents and traditional funeral practices, as anti-Communist (Davis 1991). During the Cultural Revolution, Mao's promulgation of the ideology of *po si jiu* ('break the four "old" ideas: old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas') did particular damage to traditional values. According to Davis (1991), 'the state orthodoxy outlawed ancestor worship and directly attacked many of the outward expressions of filial piety' (Davis 1991, p. 104), and the government explicitly criticised filial piety, arguing that it merely 'means that the young must give whatever they have to the old', and describing it as 'a feudal theory that makes people into slaves', 'used by landlords to make their own children loyal to them' (Davis 1991, p. 60). Consequently, the Chinese government displaced older parents from the

centre of power and authority within kinship groups and shifted people's loyalty from the family to society and government (Leung 1997). This shift was reflected in the following saying: 'the closeness of the father and mother is not as deep as the grace and love of Chairman Mao' (Shek 2006, p. 277).

In addition, land was redistributed to individual family members rather than to the whole family. Each of them had the right to an equal share of land regardless of age or gender. This had a direct effect on the internal structure of the Chinese family (Stacey 1983), as it removed the right of parents to wield absolute control over family land and gave young male and female peasants a sense of equal importance for the first time. Furthermore, the new marriage law implemented in 1950 officially prescribed equal rights for women. In particular, it gave women the same formal rights as men to choose and divorce a spouse, to hold land in their own names and to inherit property from their parents (Spence 1990). As a result, the economic dominance of patriarchal family norms was challenged. In short, these reforms empowered younger generations by abolishing the seniority of parents over children based on land ownership and land inheritance (Yang 1959).

It seems that the younger generation were encouraged to liberate themselves from the traditional old age support system during this time, accompanied by a massive reduction in parental authority. Indeed, the traditional family norms of rural China were altogether devalued by the party's reforms. Unintentionally, however, the socialist ideology, particularly the commune system in rural China, also created a safety net for rural older people (Davis 1991). Davis even argued that the commune system strengthened rural older people's well-being, as follows.

CCP leaders have not eliminated the traditional attitudes of respect and

concern for the elderly based on Confucian ideals, nor have they established an entirely new socialist ethic grounded in the ideology of communism... Overall, the communist revolution has thus strengthened rather than weakened the traditional view of old age, and the elderly have benefited from the government support. (Davis 1991, p. 13)

Under the commune system, land was collectively owned and managed and controlled by production teams. As a result, the production teams resembled state enterprises and peasants took the role of employees. The payment system was based on the annual number of 'work points' accumulated by the peasants. The work-points system had two main components. The first was one's capacity to work. An older person might earn 85% of the points obtained by an adult male labourer. The second component was a piecework system based on the number of tasks one accomplished in the agricultural-production process (Potter and Potter 1990). Under this system, older people were still able to obtain basic work points and rewards from the production team. In addition, older people with two or more family members working as labourers in the collective were offered special incentives by the production team to work at home for the more profitable private sector (Davis 1991). Davis (1991, p. 21) stated that 'the elderly working full time at home often are able to make twice as large a contribution to household income as they can by continuing in the collective workforce'. As a result, older people became significant contributors to their families rather than dependents, earning them the right to be supported and cared for by their children (Ikels 1993).

In addition, certain practical difficulties forced adult children to remain at home and rely on their older relatives. Due to the household-registration system, everyone had to live where they were registered. Accordingly, this policy facilitated the delivery of support to parents by

keeping the generations physically close together (Ikels 2006). A housing shortage and low income at this time also led adult children to rely on their parents financially before marriage; even after marriage, many children continued to live with their parents (Leung 1997).

Rural old age support after economic reforms in the 1970s

From 1978, several social policies countering the previous reforms were implemented to develop China's market economy, with implications for every aspect of society. In Davis' words, 'the egalitarian ideals and collective solutions of the Maoist era have disappeared, and in their place is an ideology that validates individual rather than group goals, and private rather than public solutions' (Davis 1989, p. 578). The key social and economic policies implemented in rural China at this time were the household-responsibility system and a relaxation of the restrictions on mobility. This section focuses on the consequences of these policies for rural older people's welfare arrangements.

During the post-Mao period, the first change in rural China was the land reform designed to effect a shift from collective to household-based agriculture. This was also known as the household-responsibility system. Following this reform, land was contracted out by each family under the name of the household head, and peasants were entitled to use the land as they wished. In addition, the government introduced a free market economy to rural China in 1985, further reducing government control of agricultural production and giving rural residents more freedom in their production choices. These changes significantly and directly improved not only agricultural production and family income but rural residents' living conditions (Davis 1991). According to data from the state's Statistical Bureau (Chen and Davis 1999), the output of grain, cotton and oil-bearing crops increased at an annual rate of 4.8%, 7.7% and 13.8% respectively between 1978 and 1984. Peasants' annual *per capita* net income

also increased from £13 in 1978 to £39 in 1985, and reached £200 in 1997 (Oi 1999). A recent study (Sheng and Settles 2006) indicated that between 1978 and 2000, the annual *per capita* income of rural residents increased by 483.5%; the *per capita* floor space available to rural residents increased from 8.1 m² to 24.8 m²; and the number of colour television sets per 100 rural households increased from 0 in 1978 to 101.7 in 2000.

The post-1979 reforms indisputably improved the lives of rural residents in several respects. However, they also had several negative effects on rural older people's welfare arrangements – both formal and informal. The most significant change was a shift in rural older people's welfare provision from the commune system to the individual family (Chang 2003). As a result of abolishing the collective economy, rural-welfare programmes were destroyed, including the Five Guarantees scheme and the cooperative medical service. The former service was abandoned partly due to the difficulty of obtaining funding and partly due to the lack of incentives to persist with the programme for local authorities that were busy with economic development. As a result, older people previously covered by the Five Guarantees were treated as normal villagers and had to depend on their own income. The rural cooperative medical service was also largely abandoned. Compared with the situation prior to the economic reforms, when about 80% of China's production brigades had cooperative medical services covering about 85% of the whole rural population (Li 1999), medical-insurance coverage in the post-reform period showed a sharp decline: by 1986, only about 5.4% of China's rural villages had maintained the scheme, and about 90% of rural residents had to pay their own medical fees (Shao 1988). Prior to the pre-reform era, older people's status and support had been secured and guaranteed by the commune system; however, the institutional changes after 1979 offered nothing but a freer market economy in rural areas.

As a result, the welfare of rural older people after 1979 was dependent primarily on informal sources such as income from land and support from family members. However, as a result of the free market economy, the control of rural parents over family resources and their economic contribution to the family sharply declined. The household-responsibility system merely allowed peasants to use land owned by the state and distributed by local village committees. After a peasant's death, his or her share of land was taken back and redistributed to local villagers. Therefore, the land was not reinstated as a form of private property that could be traded by parents or inherited by children. Therefore, parents could not use the land as leverage to mobilise family resources and elicit children's assistance. Although some older people continued to work on farms, their contribution received less recognition than in the commune era, as there was no longer a public measure. Even more importantly, agricultural production received low economic returns. The market price for agriculture products dropped significantly. According to Benjamin and his colleague (2005), the income from grain in rural China dropped by 35% between 1987 and 1999, from about £17 to £11 *per capita*, and the market price of crops fell by more than a third between 1996 and 2000. At the same time, production costs increased by nearly 15% per year (Oi 1999), and the prices of fertiliser, fuel, and other farming necessities rose nearly twice as quickly as the prices of farm commodities in 1993 (Li 1996). In addition, the agriculture tax levied on peasants was fairly heavy, reaching 15-20% of peasants' income after 1985 (Lu 2001). Due to the combination of decreased agriculture producer prices, increased production costs and heavy agriculture tax, the average proportion of rural household annual income from the primary industry dropped from 91.5% in 1978 to 57.2% in 1998, to which income from land contributed only about 42.9% (Pan and Lu 2004). Due to these low economic returns, older people's contribution to the family was marginal compared with that of their adult children. Wang (1999) conducted a survey of 100

older people in a village in eastern China, and reported that an older person working on a farm earned only a tenth of the income of his son working in an urban area. Wang (1999) also noted that this income difference became even more significant in the 1990s. As a result of all of these factors, the status of rural older people within their families declined sharply, increasing their dependence on family members. As Ikels (2006, p. 393) argued, the effect of economic reform was 'to weaken the economic standing of the senior generation relative to the junior generation and to reposition it as a supplicant to the young'.

The decline in older people's status was also reflected in ways of resolving family issues and the increased rate of suicide among older people. In 1978, Yang and Chhandler (1992) carried out fieldwork in two villages, comprising a survey of 158 older people and 30 semi-structured interviews with the participants, and found that when conflict arose between a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, the son usually supported his wife. One of Yang's interviewees made the following remarks.

If a young man can treat the old half as well as the old treats the young nowadays, I would say he is a filial son. Usually, younger men tend to treat their [wives] very well. That is the right thing to do. But they should treat [their mothers] as well as they treat their [wives]. Young men nowadays always think that it does not matter how they treat their mothers. (Yang and Chhandler 1992, p. 439)

A high rate of suicide is another indicator of distress among China's rural older population. In contrast with younger men and women's decreasing suicide rate, that of rural older people increased by five times between 1980 and 2009 (Chen 2009). Of all suicides in rural areas, the proportion carried out by older people increased from 24% in 1980 to 79.19% in 2010 (Liu

2011). Lee and Kleinman (2003) analysed 1,021 cases of suicide by elderly people in a county in Hunan Province, and reported that about a third of the cases were caused by conflict over old-age support. For instance, 12.2% were due to anger caused by abuse by children and 20.3% were due to desertion by family members. More recently, Liu and Wang (2014) conducted fieldwork between 2008 and 2013 in 11 villages in 8 provinces in China and found that threats to old-age support, health and status, along with the threat of spousal bereavement, were four important factors related to cases of suicide among rural older people. The first two were direct causes of suicide, while the last two exacerbated the effects of the first two. Liu and Wang (2014) also found that about 35% of the suicide cases related to a lack of old-age support and/or intergenerational conflict, echoing the results of Lee and Kleinman's (2003) study. In another study, Liu (2014) further explained that older people's suicide was closely related to the newly unbalanced relationship between older parents and their children.

Internal migration

In addition to the decline in formal welfare support as a result of the abandonment of the commune system, the well-being of rural older people within their families was altered by their adult children's migration, another profound consequence of the post-1979 economic reform.

Internal migration was facilitated by several factors; first, the relaxation of the household-registration system. As mentioned in the previous sections, the *hukou* system prevented free movement between urban and rural areas. The policy reform in 1994 allowed rural residents to obtain temporary registration in other areas without changing their *hukou* status (Shen 1995). Second, migration was encouraged by the huge pool of surplus labour resulting from improved agricultural productivity, the household-responsibility system and the limited arable

land available in rural areas. For example, population growth was about four times faster than the expansion of arable land. This situation became more serious between 1985 and 1990, when arable-land growth was as low as -0.5%, while population growth reached 1.3%. As a result, there were about 200 million surplus labourers among 460 million engaged in agricultural work (Li 1996). Subsequently, rapid economic development created job opportunities in urban China on a massive scale, also encouraging rural labourers to migrate. Lastly, internal migration was motivated by economic incentives. The rural-urban income disparity had grown from 1:1.71 in 1984 to 1:2.55 in 1994. The income of urban residents was 12% greater in 1993 than in 1992, while peasants' average income had increased by only 2% in the same period (Li 1996). All of these factors were closely correlated. Without a relaxation of the restrictions on movement, there would have been no possibility of migration. Without the labour surplus in rural areas, the labour demand in urban areas and related economic incentives, there would have been no reason for rural people to migrate to cities. All of these 'push' and 'pull' factors worked together, eventually resulting in rural-urban migration on an enormous scale.

[New services and support for rural older people](#)

Since the early 2000s, rural China has received significant attention from its central government. Between 2004 and 2010, all of the State Council's No. 1 Central Documents instituted rural policies as responses to the 'San-Nong' problem, which covered three important issues in rural China: agriculture, rural areas and farmers. Key rural policies during this period included the New Rural Cooperative Medical Insurance Scheme, the New Rural Old Age Pension Programme, the Rural Minimum Living Standard Guarantee, the elimination of agriculture tax and the establishment of agricultural subsidies. Although not all of these policies directly targeted rural older people, they had various effects on the daily lives of this

group.

Medical insurance

In 2003, the Chinese central government replaced the previous medical programme with a new policy called the New Rural Cooperative Medical Scheme, which was designed to safeguard farmers' access to basic health services and alleviate the financial burden created by sickness and poverty. Participation was voluntary, and the programme was financed at three levels: central government, local government and enrolees. In the early stages of this scheme, the central government contributed £1.10 (¥10) annually per household in the western and central provinces, but provided no subsidy for farmers in the eastern provinces. It was compulsory for the local government to contribute another £1 annually to farmers in the western and central provinces and £2 in the eastern provinces. The last £1 per year came from each participating household. The overall contribution increased year on year. For example, the government subsidy reached £22.20 (¥200) in 2011 (State Council 2012). According to Liu (2014), there were four major reimbursement models, differing mainly in the method used to reimburse participants for inpatient and outpatient medical services: an inpatient and household medical saving accounts model; an inpatient-only model; an inpatient and catastrophic care model; and an inpatient and outpatient pooling model. The four models were chosen by 66%, 17%, 11% and 6.7% respectively of China's county governments. By the end of 2011, the enrolment rate had increased to over 96% from 75.2% in 2004 (State Council 2012).

Studies have shown that this programme has increased rural older people's general physical and psychological health (Liang and Lu 2014) and decreased the financial burden of medical care by reimbursing 20-30% of the total cost of inpatient treatment (Du 2013). In addition, the

programme has been reported to have improved the utilisation of health services (Wagstaff, et al. 2009, Huang, et al. 2010). However, this effect is more obvious among affluent households than poor families (Wagstaff et al. 2009). In addition, Lei and Lin (2009) found that the programme has failed to decrease enrollees' out-of-pocket expenditure for medical services. Therefore, the overall effect of the new rural cooperative medical insurance programme is fairly limited.

Old-age pension

In 2009, China's government implemented a nationwide rural old age pension programme with two components: a basic component funded by the central and local governments, and a personal account based on enrollees' contribution. The central government contributed £6.11 (¥55) a month to the basic component, and local governments were encouraged to make additional contributions based on their areas' respective levels of economic development. Enrolees were required to have contributed for at least 15 years to receive benefits. However, people who were already 60 years old or above when the programme was implemented were entitled to receive the minimum payment (£5.50 a month) without contributing themselves. This programme was expected to cover 10% of China's rural regions by the end of 2009, and to achieve full coverage of rural areas by 2020 (State Council 2009).

In a study conducted in a rural old age pension pilot area, Zhang and Tang (2008) found that although the pension covered only a fifth of the participants' monthly expenditure, they used it to buy basic necessities, finance household running costs and purchase items for their grandchildren. The authors also reported that the pension increased older people's economic status, eliciting greater respect from other family members. They concluded that the programme had positively affected older people's psychological well-being. Similar findings

were reported by Cheng and his colleague (2013), who used data from the 2008 and 2011 waves of the Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey to compare older people who had enrolled on the old age pension programme with those who had not. They reported that the new old age pension programme had significantly reshaped the traditional old age support pattern by increasing older people's financial independence and utilisation of formal care, as well as their willingness to live alone. However, based on the same database, another study (Chen and Zeng 2013) revealed that the programme decreased intergenerational support. Specifically, every dollar of an individual's pension was associated with a reduction of 80.8% in intergenerational transfer from adult children.

Improved dibao system

Another relevant social-welfare reform is the Rural Minimum Living Standard Security Scheme (also known as the *dibao* system), under which a basic living allowance is provided for rural low-income people whose *per capita* household income falls below a locally determined minimum living standard. The scheme was piloted in 1990, and by 2007 had become a nationwide programme (State Council 2007). The coverage of the scheme expanded rapidly, from 38 million people in 2008 to 50 million in 2010 (Zhang and Tang 2008, Golan, Sicular and Umapathi 2014). In addition, the monthly average benefit received increased from about £3.15 (¥28.37) in 2005 to £11.20 (¥100.07) in 2011 (National Audit Office 2012). However, although the benefit increases year on year, the limited coverage of the *dibao* system and its high exclusion and inclusion errors mean that the overall effect is limited (Golan, Sicular and Umapathi 2014).

Agricultural reform

In 2004, China's government committed to reducing agriculture tax, and by 2006, the agriculture taxation system had been completely abolished. In the meantime, the government

launched a set of policies to subsidise grain producers (Xu, Wang and Shi 2012). These reforms were designed to stipulate agriculture production and increase farmers' income. There are four types of subsidy payments: grain subsidies, input subsidies, quality seed subsidies and agricultural-machinery subsidies. According to Huang and his colleague (2013), the first two subsidy payments are the largest, accounting for 74% of the government's total subsidy payments in 2011. The overall agriculture subsidy increases year on year. For example, the contribution of these subsidies to China's agricultural GDP rose from 0.68% in 2004 to 3.3% in 2010 (Cao, Lin and Cao 2012). Although some scholars have argued that due to insufficient incentives, the achievement of these reforms is limited (Du, Sun and Fang 2011), several other studies have indicated that the policies have at least increased peasants' income (Yu and Jensen 2010, Xu, Wang and Shi 2012). For example, each farmer received an average of £23 per acre in subsidy payments in 2008 (Huang, Wang and Rozelle 2013). Xu and his colleague (2012) found that the taxation reform and introduction of agriculture subsidies has significantly improved the post-tax net income of peasants in Zheijiang (16.8%), Shanxi (16.9%) and Shandong (9.2%). As farmland is a major source of cash income for rural older people, these policies certainly offer an alternative means for elderly parents to increase their income and perhaps even achieve financial independence.

Legislation development

Along with the aforementioned policy changes, older parents' right to ask for support from their adult children was strengthened by a recent legislative change. In 2012, in the reversion bill of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, the right of older people to ask for their children's support was emphasised for the first time. This bill also codified the requirement for adult children to regularly visit and never neglect or snub their older parents (Hatton 2013). The announcement of this legislation

led to passionate debate among both academic scholars and public media. On the one hand, critics asked how this law would be carried out in practice due to its lack of detailed guidance on the definition of 'regular' visits and the absence of specific punishments for people who contravened the law (Coonan 2013). On the other hand, it undoubtedly encouraged the whole nation to discuss the process of and responsibility for taking care of and supporting older people (People's Daily 2013). In essence, the 2012 law *per se* was less notable than the enormous rise in public awareness caused by the introduction of a law on supporting, respecting and caring for older people. As a result, this legislation may have influenced the attitudes of both the younger generation and older parents towards the content of old-age support.

In recent years, policy changes have had significant and far-reaching consequences in rural China. Almost all of them have led to unprecedented progress in rural welfare development. Although widespread deficiencies remain, such as a lack of available benefits and limited coverage, welfare-related policies have undoubtedly improved the living conditions and status of rural older people in China. The provision of an old-age pension, the *dibao* system and agricultural reforms have all increased older people's financial independence. In addition, access to medical insurance and the development of related legislation have indirectly relieved the burden on families of supporting elderly dependents, while strengthening children's responsibility to provide support for their older parents. Given the changing social context of China, characterised by a shift away from tradition towards autonomy and individualism, it is essential to explore both the support process and the strategies used by rural older parents to mobilise family support.

Chapter 4: Methodology and methods

This chapter presents the methodology and methods undertaken by this study. The whole chapter includes two parts: first, it presents the methodological choice of the qualitative approach as well as some philosophical assumptions underpinning the qualitative approach. The latter part describes the process of collecting data and recruiting participants in detail.

Rationale of choosing the qualitative approach

The choice of methodological approach is influenced by the nature of research purpose and research questions (Bryman 2012, p. 9). This study seeks to explore the extent and dynamics of social support among migrant workers' older parents in rural China. It is the advantage of interpretivist qualitative approach that emphasises the subjective perceptions and explores the uncertainty that such perceptions may bring (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2015).

As discussed in the introduction chapter, there was research conducted in the quantitative (surveys) approach to examine the effects of rural-urban migration on older people's financial, practical and emotional well-being and this concluded that older people with migrant children have fewer resources than those who do not have migrant children. A quantitative approach may provide accurate results in measuring difference and display the difference in a numerical way, however it is weak in understanding the complexity and variability of changing social phenomena which may cover multiple disciplines and have different meanings in different contexts (Hasan, 2014). In other words, fewer studies focused on exploring older people's subjective experience on their adult children's support. In this context, this study aimed to explore older people's views on their support network, to explore the older respondents' decision-making process in the process of seeking help and their feedback on their social networks, and to identify the patterns of help-seeking behaviours among this group of older

people. The researcher of this study agreed and believed that the practice of filial piety as well as the older parents' practical experiences of being supported and seeking support changed in various situation, so it is only by asking individual participants about his/her support receiving and seeking process that the researcher could understand the phenomenon. Watson stated that "experiences were not the fixed, measureable phenomenon that was assumed in positivist, quantitative research" (Merriam, 2012, cited in Watson 2008, p. 4). Further, it is believed that the quantitative approach is difficult to understand the insider's thinking (Bryman 2012). Creswell claimed that "if a phenomenon needed to be explored and understood because little research had been done on it, then it merited a qualitative approach" (2014, p. 20). Therefore, a qualitative approach is an appropriate approach for the current study.

Philosophical assumptions underpinning the qualitative approach

The qualitative approach not only includes methods used to collect data but also reflects some philosophical assumptions. The qualitative approach is characterised by an interpretivist flavour, which is different from the quantitative approach, which subscribes to positivist philosophy. In a social sciences context it typically contains a statistical approach based on a traditional scientific view in order to explain objective facts (Hasan 2014). These two approaches have different stances in terms of ontology and epistemology. Ontology refers to "beliefs about what there is to know about the world" (Snape and Spencer 2003, p. 11). Within social research, there are some important ontological questions about "whether or not social reality exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations; whether there is a common, shared, social reality or just multiple context-specific realities; and whether or not social behaviour is governed by 'laws' that can be seen as immutable or generalisable" (Snape and Spencer 2003, p. 11). Researchers who followed the positivist philosophy believe "that

external world exists independently of our sense and experience, ideation, and volition, and that it can be known” (Bunge 1993, p. 229 cited in Weber 1997, p. 174). In other words, they believe that reality is objectively given and its knowledge can be completely measured and accurately obtained by using scientific instruments, and they stress objectivity. From the other side, qualitative researchers usually take a constructivist perspective and believe that “truth is a construction which refers to a particular belief system held in a particular context” (Perry, Riege and Brown 1999 p. 18). The researcher of this study agreed and believed that “social world is regulated by normative expectations and shared understandings and hence the laws that govern it are not immutable” (Snape and Spencer 2003, p. 13).

Another important philosophical element is epistemology that refers to “ways of knowing and learning about the social world and focuses on questions such as: how can we know about reality and what is the basis of our knowledge?” (Snape and Spencer, p. 13). In general, there are three issues the epistemology concerns around social research: the relationship between the research and the researched; theories about ‘truth’; and the way to acquire knowledge. For quantitative researchers who usually take a positivism stance, they believe that the social world is independent and not affected by the researcher and usually maintain objective during the research process by using scientific methods such as modelling, hypothesis testing, and causal explanations. They are devoted to making the process and result repeatable so as to predict any future results (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). By contrast, the qualitative researchers from an interpretivism stance usually concentrate on rich description, understanding, and emergent theories and concepts, and believe that research is socially constructed and knowledge is originated from socially constructed meanings and concepts (Weber 2004; Williams 2008). Besides, they believe the social world and the researcher are inter-connected

and have an impact on each other. That is, the researcher himself/herself is the instrument to do the research. Therefore, findings are affected by the researchers' values and perspective. As a result, the research is subjective and does not produce value free research.

Data collection method

As discussed above, the concepts of methodology and method are closely connected with each other because "one of the tasks for a methodology is to explain and justify the particular methods used in a given study" (Clough and Nutbrown 2012, p. 31). However, method is a separate concept from methodology which relates to specific research instruments that may be used for research.

This study employed semi-structured interviews to collect data. Interviews are a widely used technique in social qualitative research. Because of the high frequency of usage, there is an assumption that interviews are easier to carry out in fieldwork (Miller and Brewer 2003). However, the reasons for employing interviews in current research are based on method suitability. The primary intention of the current study is to gain in-depth understanding of the practise of immigrants' filial piety from rural older parents' point of view. According to Seidman (2015, p.9), 'at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience'. Therefore, the interview is an appropriate method to pursue the purposes of this study.

In terms of structure, qualitative interviews have been loosely grouped into structured, unstructured and semi-structured (David and Sutton 2011, p. 119). There are several reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews. First, there is usually an interview guide for semi-structured interviews. It helps interviewers to stick to an interview agenda while giving the interviewers much flexibility to explore the questions. As Barriball and While (1994, p. 330)

suggested, semi-structured interviews are 'suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers'. Besides, the semi-structured interview provides a relaxing environment for interviewees. This could enable the interviewee to freely develop their own ideas. Further, the researcher could establish rapport and trust through comfortable conversation (Denscombe 2010).

For the purpose of this study, several questions for the semi-structured interview were developed before fieldwork. The interview schedule consists of two parts (see Appendix A and B). The first part is mainly demographic data. The second part includes a list of questions that covers three old age support areas: financial, practical, and psychological aspects. These questions were all drawn from the literature review. For example, the demographic data enable the researcher to find out how older people's physical conditions and a family's composition affect their support needs, their help-seeking patterns, and the extent of their supportive networks (Introduction chapter, page 15). Besides, the three types of support are not only discussed in the section of social support in chapter two, but also the three important support aspects derived from the Confucian filial piety (See chapter three, page 68). Therefore, it is essential to explore support dynamics among these three dimensions in the context of China's internal migration (see discussions in chapter 3, page 50). It needs to notice that the set of questions in the interview guide were not asked in a scheduled order during the execution of this study. Instead, the type of questions asked was according to the spontaneous response of each interviewee.

Before conducting the interview in the field, the researcher piloted the interview questions with his relatives and neighbours. It not only helped the researcher to identify some

difficulties that might be encountered in the field, but also helped him to refine the words and phrases that could be easier for interviewees to understand. The fieldwork data collection started on 20th January and was completed on 15th April 2014.

The interviews were recorded for analysis purposes. After explaining the issue of confidentiality to avoid pressure on the interviewees, and obtain consent as well as permission from the interviewees, the recording was then started. All of the interviews were carried out at a place of the interviewees' choosing, within a Chinese context, which usually meant being a guest in the participants' home. This way, the privacy of the interviewees was assured.

Procedures

Background of the chosen study sites

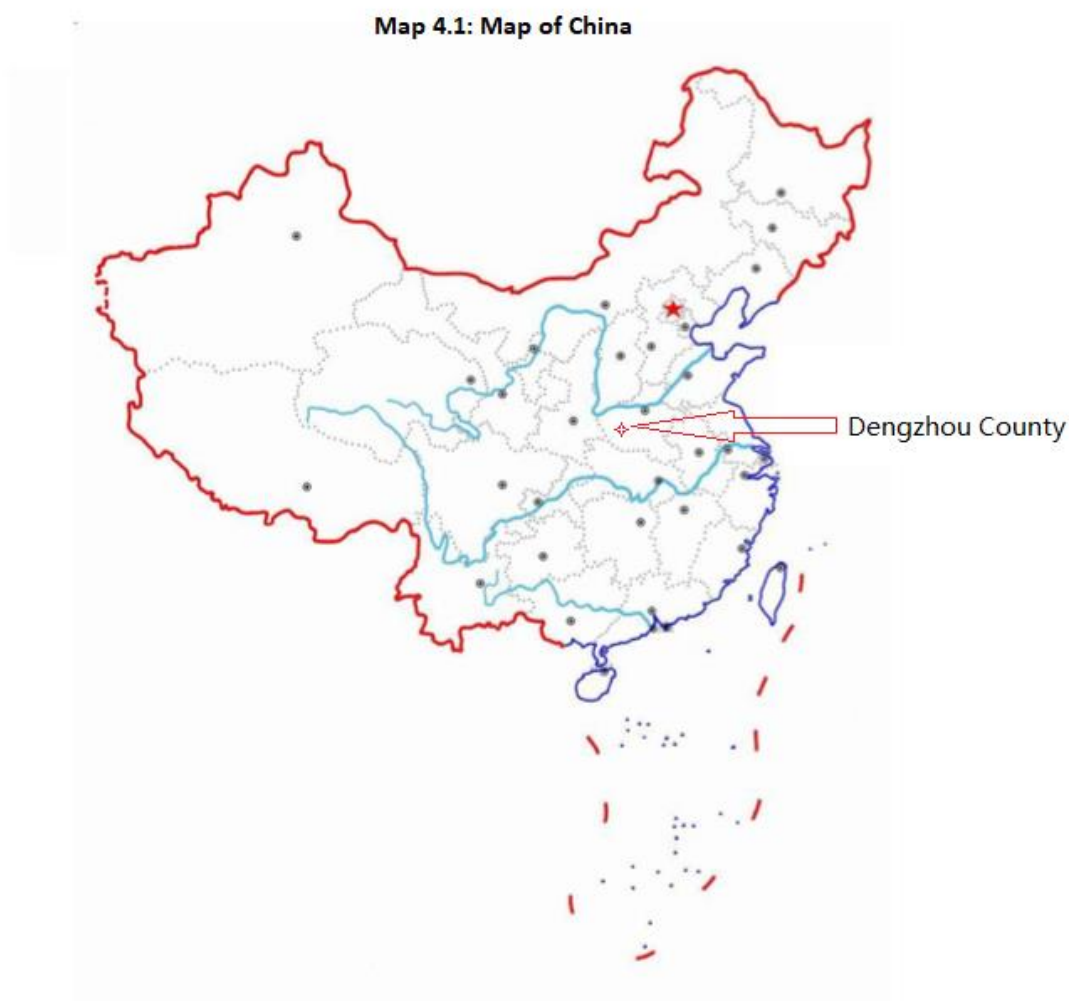
The study was carried out in Peiying village and Rangdong village that are administered by Dengzhou county, within Henan Province (See map 4.1). Henan Province is a good example of a labour sending province because it had the most rural-urban migrants in China in 2009 (State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development 2010).

Peiying village and Rangdong village are two long-established villages belonging to two different administrative villages. These two villages both have standardised two-lane roads connecting them to towns and Dengzhou county. It takes about 20 minutes and 40 minutes driving from Peiying village and Rangdong village to Dengzhou county respectively. There is running water in both villages but with no sewage treatment system. Also, there are no public toilets and most of the private toilets have walls, a roof, and doors, and are dry toilets with underground storage tanks. In addition, there are no sports grounds, public libraries or any other leisure centres in these two villages. The villagers can watch television programmes and

have access to mobile phone networks and internet.

Economically speaking, these two villages are a little lower than national level. From the data for disposable income per capita in rural China in 2016, the national average was about £1,374 (¥12,363), the average for Henan Province was around £1,299 (¥11,696), and the average for Peiying and Rangdong were about £860 (¥7,740) and £930 (¥8,370) respectively (Fan 2017, The people's government of Dengzhou City 2017, NBS 2017). The main income for the local residents in these two villages is from farm land by selling their crops or finding jobs in cities. There are no businesses or companies owned by their village committee. In other words, they are not like some east coastal rural areas which possess collective business enabling local community and government to implement better old age services and welfare policies (Yu 2010).

At the time of the fieldwork, all rural welfare policies including rural old age pension, rural medical insurance, and rural minimum living standard guarantee (dibao) program were all implemented at the lowest level with no extra support from local government. For example, older residents in the two villages only received £6.10 (¥55) every month, which is the minimum benefit level required by the central government.



Generalisability is the major weakness of the single-case studies in qualitative research as it is impossible to find any other areas that are identical to the chosen sites. And, it should be noted that wherever is chosen, the regional factors that might influence the findings would be of no particular difference in this setting when compared with others. This study also bears this bias. However, it is argued that thick information such as detailed description of the sites and participants studied can achieve transferability of findings from any site (Schofield 2004). Therefore, it is believed that the findings from the two chosen villages can be regarded as the basis for other researchers to make comparisons in the future.

Research participants

In light of the study's aims and objectives, older people who are aged 60 and over with migrant

children are the target respondents. In order to diversify the sample, I have attempted to include older people who are suffering from chronic disease, living alone and living with partners (single versus couple). By doing so, it diversifies my samples that makes findings from this more comparable to the larger population. In addition, it allows the researcher to find out how older people's physical conditions and a family's composition affects their support needs, their help-seeking patterns, and the extent of their supportive networks. Besides, people with severe cognitive impairment will be excluded from this study for ethical considerations and because of communication issues.

This study only focused on older people. This is mainly because the aim of the current study is to explore older people's views and feelings about their support networks. Older people aged 60 and over who were born before 1950 have experienced China's commune system, its economic reform and recent radical social changes including extensive rural-urban migration and emerging old age welfare policies in rural areas. Such experiences have made them distinctive from their counterparts in other historical times and also made it an interesting inquiry to explore their understandings and interpretations of dynamics among their support networks.

It should be noted that it is not easy to access respondents in rural China. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I relied on formal organisations to access respondents in Zhangcun village, but I encountered difficulties in gaining trust from the participants. Although some older people agreed to be interviewed after the village committee's introduction, they were suspicious of the purpose of my research and gave very superficial answers and showed their unwillingness to talk about themselves during the interviews. This type of interview barrier seems to be caused by the special relationship between the village committee and villagers. The village

committee has the power to reallocate or redistribute land and welfare benefits with insufficient transparency and loose supervision. Under this circumstance, the respondents might feel they were being coerced to attend the interviews and they were unwilling to talk in-depth with strangers for fear of damaging their own interests.

After realising this problem, I gave up doing interviews in Zhangcun village and changed my approach to access to and recruit participants by using personal relationships in another two villages. Firstly, I tried to gain access to Peiying village with the help of a friend of my father to access the respondents of the village. Though it was a workable solution, it took a long time to build trust and rapport between the respondents and me. And then, I used a more personal approach. I returned to my mother's hometown as a distant relative to gain the respondents' trust. By doing so, the psychological distance and barriers between my respondents and me were largely reduced, which led to effective recruitment for respondents. To include the respondents' relatives to my study cannot be easily achieved in a rural environment where respondents are suspicious of social researchers and people emphasise 'face'. In addition, informal networks in Chinese society are very big, including a lot of people based on blood relationships and also marriage relationships. Especially, it is common in rural villages that local residents share the same family names and come from a few family lines (Fei 1939). This will create an issue of who should be interviewed.

As there is no sampling frame for the target respondents and there are some constraints on obtaining a random sample, this study adopted purposeful sampling at the initial stage, as the fieldwork went on, snowball and convenience sampling were also utilised. Finally, I conducted 29 interviews for my research project.

In qualitative studies, there is no definite answer on how many respondents need to be

interviewed. Some scholars suggested that the number of respondents can be between 5 and 60 (Baker and Edwards 2012). Mason (2012) reviewed 560 interview-based qualitative doctoral theses in the UK and Ireland and found that the mean sample size was 31 and the most common sample sizes were 20 and 30. Compared with previous research studies, 29 respondents was not too low a number for a qualitative PhD project.

More importantly, the sample size of my study was guided by the concept of data saturation, which is a well-accepted approach to ensure the depth of inquiry (Mason 2010). The process of data saturation involved a judgement on deciding a point at which no new information can be obtained by interviewing more respondents. During the fieldwork, at the time of completing interview 26, I realised that responses from the respondents were very similar to interview 24 and interview 25. I continued to conduct another 3 interviews and then ensured that no new data arose. It is argued that data saturation sometimes cannot be truly reached in practice for some kind of data which is potentially limitless because of respondents' different life experiences (Green and Thorogood 2004, Wray, Markovic. and Manderson 2007). Indeed, some data was easier to be noticed when it achieved saturation such as barriers to access hospitals. Other data such as older people's help-seeking rules achieved saturation at the very end stage of the data collection process.

[Data analysis of interviews](#)

All interviews have now been transcribed. In order to maintain the meaning of sentences, I used Chinese during the analysis process. At this stage, only some initial coding has been carried out. For further analysis, I will attempt to use thematic analysis that includes six steps: (1) Becoming familiar with data, (2) Generating initial codes, (3) Searching for themes, (4) Reviewing themes, (5) Defining and naming themes (6) Producing the report (Braun and Clarke

2006). In doing so, it is expected to interpret the meaning and experiences of older people with migrant children who are or are not being supported by others, and the dynamics among those support providers. Once analysis is completed, themes and categories as well as identified exemplars will be translated into English to form the final thesis.

Ethical consideration

The project applies the Nottingham Trent University Code of Practice for Research, the Nottingham Trent University Research Ethics Policy and Socio-legal Studies Association's code of ethical practice. To ensure the research project meets the standard of ethical requirement, an application form for Ethical Approval of a Research Project was submitted to the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) before the data collection and it was granted in December 2013.

This chapter gave reasons for choosing the qualitative approach over the quantitative approach. Further, it described how the fieldwork was conducted and difficulties of getting access to the chosen study sites the researcher encountered. In the following chapters, detailed analysis will be presented.

Chapter 5: Informal support of the migrant workers' older parents

Chapters five and six are two analysis chapters corresponding the proposed framework in the introduction chapter. That is, chapter five covers the supply aspect of support to explore the contents and structural aspects of the respondents' support networks. As discussed in chapter three, the Confucian filial piety is considered as a specific category of social support in Chinese society. Hence, chapter five puts much focus on adult children's provision of support in the context of rural-urban migration. Chapter six explores support from the demand aspect. As discussed in the second part of chapter two, the help-seeking behaviour is a complex process involving people's perceptions of problems, their actual help-seeking behaviours and their choice of helpers. Chapter six explores the older people's help-seeking patterns in dealing with their day-to-day needs as well as processes and rules those older parents followed to seek help. These two chapters closely link to the theories of social support, help-seeking and the Confucian filial piety discussed in chapter two and chapter three, however, to what extent the findings of each chapter can reflect existing knowledge are discussed together in chapter seven.

The current chapter examines the support the migrant workers' older parents received from various sources. There are two parts in the chapter. It firstly begins the analysis by focusing on migrant children and exploring the support contents which they provided to their parents, and then it identifies some factors affecting support provision; lastly, it examines how the support is given during the two-way visits. Following that, it examines how local sources provide support to those older parents.

After presenting this analysis, it found that the family support roles have changed from the

traditional patterns that assumed daughters-in-law as the main care givers to the blood relations. That is, the older parents' sons and daughters are taking the place of supporting their older parents.

Support from migrant children

As discussed in chapter 2, there is no universal classification for the type of support because it changes accordingly. In this study, two types of support were mentioned: tangible support and intangible support. In particular, the tangible support includes financial support, material support, and hands-on support. The intangible support mainly includes emotional support.

Tangible support

Financial support

Studies focusing on poor migrant workers' older parents found that adult children's migration reduces the households' financial burden and brings social and economic benefits (Knodel and Saengtienchai 2007). Apart from this, some other studies found that the older parents of both skilled and unskilled migrants acknowledging the financial support from migrant children is a reflection and expression of those children's affection and gratitude (Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding 2007, Raghuram 2012).

In this study, most of the respondents reported that they received financial support from their migrant children including their migrant sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and even their migrant grandchildren. There are three sub-themes under the theme of financial support. Those are pocket money, monetary support for living expenses and monetary support for medical bills. Those financial assistances helped the older respondents to achieve more financial independence.

Pocket money

Here, pocket money refers to monetary support the older parents received from their migrant children. It is different from monetary support for daily living. It was usually given during special events such as the older parents' birthdays or the Chinese festivals.

Last year, my youngest daughter sent me ¥200 (£22.20) on my birthday...

Only my migrant daughters gave me the pocket money. (Brother Gang)

I only receive pocket money during the Chinese Spring Festival. My first son returned home last year and he gave me ¥300 (£33.30) ... and asked me to buy anything I like. (Mr Jian Pei)

The amount is not fixed. The maximum amount of money I received was in last year's Spring Festival. ...My daughter in Guangzhou came home and brought a lot of things. She married to a guy in Guangzhou five years ago when she was working in a factory.... She gave me ¥900 (£90). I also received ¥100 (£11.10) from my grandson. He is still a student in Beijing (Ms Li).

My first grandson is working now. He gave me some pocket money when he returned home during his winter holiday... It was not too much. Last year he gave me ¥200 (£22.20) (Mr Gong Li)

I have two daughters-in-law...They only gave me money during their return in the Chinese New Year. Last year, the older one gave me ¥300 (£33.30) and the second one gave me ¥400 (£44.40). (Mr Dao Li)

As the above statements indicate, the migrant daughters, the migrant daughters-in-law and

the migrant grandchildren are the main pocket money providers. The migrant sons are rarely involved in such supportive activity. By comparison, the migrant daughters are the major providers. The migrant grandchildren play a marginal role in such supportive activity, and the amount and frequency of pocket money is not fixed. Rather, it depends on the providers' own willingness. Usually, the pocket money ranged from one hundred to several hundreds, however, more than one thousand is very rare. The time those respondents received pocket money is normally on festivals such as the Chinese New Year or the mid-August festival. Also, the way of providing pocket money is various. According to the respondents, there are three different approaches. Some of their migrant daughters sent the money by bank transfer. Some gave their parents the pocket money when they returned home. The others asked their colleagues or friends who come from the same village to bring the money back to their parents. As for the migrant daughters-in-law and grandchildren, the only way of giving pocket money to the respondents was during their return visits.

Monetary support for Living expenses

In contrast to pocket money, monetary support for living expenses is more regularly provided by the migrant sons, though the frequency and amount also vary.

Last two years, I received two times monetary support from my son [who works in Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan Province]. He came home every five or six months...one in summer, one in winter.... He gave me ¥1000 (£111.10) in last summer and ¥1500 (£166.70) in last winter. (Ms Feng)

My second son in Guangzhou gave me money every two to four months.... Sometimes he gave me ¥300 (£33.30), sometimes he gave me ¥600

(£66.70). It mainly depends on the time he received his salary.... My first

son in [nearby] city do not give me that much. (Mr Dao Li)

My son and daughter are all working outside. My son sends me money

every two months.... ¥200 (£22.20) or ¥300 (£33.30). It is not much but

regular. (Ms Ning)

Based on older people's descriptions, the migrant sons are the major regular financial aid providers for older people's living expenses. Compared to pocket money, it is on a regular basis rather than only on special events. The amount and frequency is also not fixed. It ranges from a few hundreds to a few thousands. There are two possible trends that can be identified. Firstly, those older respondents received more money during summer before schools start in September and winter before and during the Chinese Spring Festival. That is because some of the migrants left their children at home. Therefore, the migrants provide more money to their older parents to buy school stuff or pay their tuition fees for their own children. As for winter holidays, it is also the time that almost all migrant children make their return visits. They give their older parents cash for the special purchases for the Spring Festival. Secondly, the frequency of receiving money from migrant sons depends on the migrants' occupation. According to the respondents, the time they received the money is usually also the time when the migrants got paid.

[Monetary support for medical bills](#)

Another form of financial support is monetary support for the respondents' medical bills including surgery costs and medicine costs. According to the data, the majority of respondents who were in the hospital or got sick received this kind of support from their migrant sons.

Four years ago, I had surgery in the city's hospital. I cannot afford the cost.

My sons came back and paid the hospital bills. (Mr Jian Pei)

I have got hypertension, I have to take pills every day.... Actually, I do not want to eat them. They are expensive. ...My son insisted and gave me extra money to buy these pills. (Ms Ning)

The pocket money, monetary support for living expense and medical fees are the three major forms of financial support respondents received from their migrant children. In particular, the migrant sons are the major monetary support providers for older people's daily expenses and medical fees. The migrant daughters and the migrant daughters-in-law are mainly responsible for providing pocket money. In comparison, the respondents' grandchildren only play a marginal role, and their supportive behaviours are more flexible and unpredictable.

Based on the interview data, the pocket money and regular financial aid respondents received were mainly used to cover expenses during the Chinese Spring Festivals. They gave pocket money to their grandchildren and nephews who are children and not working yet. And then, they used the money to buy essential stuff such as meat, fish and vegetables for the festival. Lastly, they saved the rest for later use such as to pay for the phone and water bills, to buy medicines, and to buy snacks or cover the daily costs of their grandchildren they are taking care of.

Material support

Apart from the cash the respondents received from their migrant children, they also received financial support in-kind. Three supportive activities were identified: buying home appliances, buying food, clothes and shoes, and buying snacks and small gifts.

Buying home appliances

During the field work, I noticed that the majority of the respondents own some basic home

appliances such as washing machines, TVs and mobile phones, and electric motor tricycles are very popular.

In the second year of my youngest son migration, he bought me a washing machine. He said to me that it would be much easier to wash clothes. Indeed, it helps me a lot. ...This one is a new one bought by my first son. The old one is broken...This is better as it washes, rinses and spins clothes in the same place. It is much easier to wash clothes than the old one. (Mr Jian Pei)

I got a telephone before. My son bought it before his migration. However, it stopped working within one year...My grandchildren may break it. They are so naughty. I then used my neighbour's mobile phone to receive my sons call but it was not convenient. When my son came home last year, he bought me a mobile phone too. He said that he can be easier to reach me and I can call them anytime I want. Actually, they wanted to talk to their children more often. (Mr Chang Pei)

I can drive the electric motor tricycle. I do not want to buy it, but my son insisted on buying it for me. He wants me to pick up his daughters and sons after school. (Rongdong 10)

My son gave me this mobile phone. They used it before. (Mr Xin Li)

I wanted to buy a solar energy water heater.... I told my son ...and he supported me to buy a new one.... (Ms Li)

According to the respondents, the migrant sons and migrant grandchildren are major

providers to buy or provide the washing machines, the mobile phones, and the electric motor tricycles. Such supportive activity normally occurred after their children's migration. As for their migrant daughters, they rarely provided this kind of material support. They were more often involved in providing clothes and shoes to respondents.

Buying groceries, clothes and shoes

Based on the interview data, it was found that the migrant daughters and the migrant daughters-in-law bought food, clothes and shoes for the respondents. Besides, the migrant sons and the migrant daughters also provided some kinds of food to them.

My daughter bought my new coat every year whether she came home or not during the Chinese Spring Festival. (Ms Ning)

My clothes and his (her husband) clothes and shoes were all bought by my daughters-in-law. She usually bought shoes in her working city and then gave them to me when she returned home... She said that she could buy very cheap shoes with good quality there because there is a shoes manufacturer around her working place. ...After she returned home, she brought me to the local market and bought me clothes... She did not send the shoes by post. It did not worth it. Besides, the delivery men do not delivery parcels to my home. If they post it, I have to go to town to pick it up from the post office. It is too trouble for me. (Ms Li)

I received pork, fish, and oil from my son when he was home last Chinese Spring Festival. He said that his wife bought all things and he just brought them to me. ...My daughter did not come home last year. Instead, she gave me 300 (£30).

The above statements indicate that the older people received food, clothes and shoes from their migrant daughters and daughters-in-law. And such supportive activity usually occurs on their return visits.

Buying snacks and small gifts

Apart from the above-mentioned material support, the respondents also received some snacks and small gifts from their migrant grandchildren.

Look, my granddaughter bought me this bracelet. She has married. Last month, she came back and told me that she bought me a bracelet...It is silver. I am really happy. She also bought me some cakes. They are delicious and soft. Although I do not have teeth, I ate a lot. (Mr Fu Li)

My first grandson is working now... when he returned home during his winter holiday... He bought me some fruits that I have ever seen.

(Rongdong20)

Hands-on support

Regarding hands-on support, the respondents received assistance with washing clothes, maintaining household chores, and providing personal care from their migrant daughters-in-law, daughters and sons when they were sick.

She [the respondent's daughter-in-law] helped me to wash my bed sheet and clothes before the Chinese New Year. (Mr Xin Li)

My daughter came home on a very tight schedule as she need to go to her home as well. Therefore, she only helped me to clean the living room and the kitchen. (Ms Qin)

My son came to my house and told me to bring any dirty cloth to his house

because they were doing laundry. (Ms Ning)

Similar to the material support, those hands-on support are again limited because it only occurs when the migrant children return home. When the older parents were in greater frailty such as illness, they also received personal care from their migrant children. Some of the migrant children came back home to provide care, while others provided care in their hosting cities. These two points will be further elaborated in different sections.

Intangible support

Apart from the tangible support mentioned above, the respondents also received emotional support that is one kind of intangible support. As discussed before, different from tangible support, intangible support does not need direct contact between migrants and left-behind older parents. It is more flexible.

Indeed, transnational studies found that the exchange of emotional support is a significant aspect in transnational family relations because it helps the migrants to express their concerns and care about left-behind family members (Asis et al. 2004; Chiang 2008). Some migrants used Skype, text messages, and phone calls to express their concern and love to their older parents. And the support receipts also felt the improved communication technologies reduced their loneliness resulting from the absence of children (Parreñas 2001a, 2001b; Baldassar et al 2007). Thus, underdeveloped communication technology may bring a negative impact on family relations and old people's psychological health (Wilding 2006; San Pascual 2011). However, it is not the case in my study. According to the interview data, mobiles phones are very popular among the respondents and they received emotional support in the form of showing concern, care and respect.

Showing concern and care

Under this sub-theme, several supportive activities are identified: showing concern about the older parents' health condition, providing information and feedback on their illness, talking with them about daily issues, and return visits.

My son called me a lot. About every three or four days. He always asks me that whether I take the medicine regularly. (Ms Ning)

My youngest daughter is very nice. She phones me every two or three days at night. Sometimes she told me about her work...She always asks me to eat well...I just listen. She also listens to me. I tell her what I did during day time. (Ms Qin)

I ate a lot of pills. I feel that they are not working, but my daughter said that it takes a long time to see the effect. And told me do not worry about the money...She was nicer than son who phoned me and just told me that I need to take medicine on time otherwise the money is wasted. ...I know my son concerns about me but talking to daughters were just better. I felt more comfortable. (Rongdong 19)

During his last days [her husband], my son and daughter were all came back. Although there was not much for them to do, I felt that I am not alone. I still got children to depend on. (Ms Ning)

When they all came back during the Chinese New Year, it is good, and it felt like family that sons and daughters were all around. (Ms Qin)

It evidenced that the respondents received emotional support in terms of concern and care

from their migrant children via phone calls. And their migrant children's return visits during the older parents' crisis time or on festivals were appreciated. The respondents gave more credit to their children's presence rather than their supportive behaviours. However, based on the interview data, it finds that the way migrant children express their concern and care does not always come with respect.

Showing respect

The respondents also received the emotional support in the form of respect that is a vital element of traditional Chinese filial piety. According to those respondents, the respect they received includes giving them money or goods, supporting their decision, and inviting them to live in cities.

I am happy when they give me money no matter how much it is... They are respectful and grateful to me so they give me money. (Ms Mei)

No matter what they give me, I think they conduct filial practice to me. (Ms Feng)

Last summer, my daughter asked me to live with her....Although I do not like the environment, I am happy, and it makes me felt respected and honoured...A lot of older people admired me of having good daughter. (Ms Li)

My son and daughter gave me money and did not control me. They allow me to buy anything I like. Last year, the old television was not working well. It could not display clear image and showed snow image. I decided to buy a large flat screen one. I did not tell them in advance. After they learned

about it, they did not quarrel with me. (Ms Ning)

I wanted to buy a solar energy water heater.... I told my son that it was not working and leaking water. And he supported me to buy a new one...I will install one in this summer... I think he respected my opinion. (Ms Li)

Summary

Transnational family studies focusing on supporting older people proposed that financial, practical, and psychological forms of support constitute distant old age support (Baldassar et al. 2007). In my study, I have identified different but similar support contents. In particular, the migrant children including migrant sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren are all taking part in providing financial, material, hands-on, and emotional support. However, the grandchildren shouldered a very minimal role of supporting the respondents in regard to financial and material assistance. The migrant sons are the major financial contributors to the respondents in terms of covering their living expenses and medical bills. The migrant daughters were more significant in providing emotional support than the migrant sons.

In addition, it was found that the migrant daughters and daughters-in-law also engaged in monetary support. However, different from the migrant sons' supporting behaviour that transferring the money by bank transfer, the migrant daughters and daughters-in-law were more likely to deliver the money to the respondents during their return visits.

Indeed, return visits of migrant children is a significant moment for the older people to receive support. Not only for the financial support by migrant daughters, daughters-in-law as well as grandchildren, but also for material and hands-on support. It found that during the return visits, all the migrant children provided some kind of support to the left-behind older people. In particular, the migrant sons mainly engaged in providing home appliances and hands-on

support; the migrant daughters and daughters-in-law mainly engaged in providing groceries, clothes and shoes, laundry, as well as cleaning work.

Similar to other transnational family studies, this study confirms that the advanced communication technology enables the older parents to receive their migrant children's care and affection (Knodel and Saengtienchai 2007). As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the respondents in this study are in their early stage of old life, they usually do not have severe illnesses that lead to pressing economic and physical care needs. Therefore, they take their migrant children's tangible support as emotive messages. Moreover, not all the respondents see the financial help alone as an expression of respect. Some of them appreciated cash only (Mckay 2007). Some others believed that emotional support and expression of respect should not only come from monetary support but also care and financial autonomy. In addition, it found gendered notion of emotional support. Given the tangible support pattern of migrant children, a gendered support pattern can be concluded. That is, women usually take part in affective and daily basis support, however men usually provide practical support (Wong 2009).

Factors affecting migrant children's support provision

In the above sections, the support provided by migrant children was analysed in terms of sources and contents. The support resources include the migrant sons, the migrant daughters, the migrant daughters-in-law and the migrant grandchildren. Among the different types of support include financial support, material support and emotional support, it shows that different support sources have different duties and roles in providing a certain type of support. Based on the interview data, it further found that the support provided by the migrant children is affected by two factors: the migrants' working and living location and the older parents' circumstances including the number of local children and marital status. These two

factors have significant impact on the contents and frequency of support the migrant children provided to their older parents.

Distance

Supporting from a distance can be a problem for some supportive activities that require face-to-face contact or physical interaction. A UK based study found that people consider a trip that is over one hour a reasonable excuse for not providing support or help to relatives (Finch and Mason 1993). Based on the interview data, the migrant children are grouped into three different categories: the long-distance migrant children are those working outside of their provinces, the mid-distance migrant children are those working in other cities of the departure province, and the short-distance migrant children are those working in nearby cities or towns. By comparing the support contents their older parents received, it found that the distance plays an important role in disguising the migrant children's capability of providing financial support, hands-on support and emotional support.

Support from the short-distance migrant children

The short-distance migrant children work in the areas of Nanyang that is a county-level division. The distance between the migrants and their parents is less than 150 km by car or bus. The trip lasts for up to three hours by bus and two hours by car and some involve two to three bus transfers. Those short-distance migrants usually live in the working places and come back to their original village every one to four weeks to see their parents.

He [the respondent's son works in Dengzhou, about 30 minutes' trip by bus] came to see me every weekend. And he usually cook lunch for me on

Saturday. (Ms Li)

When I was sick, my daughter always asked me to go to the city

[Dengzhou] to receive treatment there...She brought me to take the bus or she ride a motorcycle. (Old sister Wang)

They [her son and daughter-in-law] came back once a month with their children...Sometimes, my son came back alone...My daughter-in-law did not come back very often, she always came back with my son. (Rongdong

10)

My first daughter [lives in Nanyang] come back very often...about every two weeks...Normally on Saturday, and sometimes, she stayed home for one night...She helped me to wash my clothes and bed sheet...and brought fruits and milk to me... And every one to two months, my son-in-law also comes back with his two daughters. (Sister Hong)

Based on the data, it found that it is also the short-distance migrant daughters who were more likely to invite their older parents to live with them in their working places. However, the couple respondents usually refused such invitations while they were very happy and content.

Indeed, those migrants who work or live a short-distance from their parents have more chance to make return visits. And during their visits, they brought food and provided hands-on support to their parents. In particular, the migrant daughters never come home with empty hands, while the migrant sons usually come home to have a meal with the respondents.

Support from the mid-distance migrant children

Compared to the short-distance migrant children, those migrants who are working beyond the Nanyang county but within the same province face longer hours of travel. For example, the distance between migrants and their parents is normally more than 300 km. And the trip

lasts for at least four hours by bus or train. And therefore, the frequency of return visits is less than that of the short-distance migrants.

*He [the respondent's son] only came home at holidays...three to five days
at most. (Old sister Wang)*

*They came home by train. It is cheap and convenient, but the time is quite
long, about 9 hours. And then they have to take a transfer to a bus in order
to arrive home. (Sister Hong)*

The capability of providing hands-on support of the mid-distance migrants might be hindered by longer hours of travel. Compared to the short-distance migrants, those mid-distance migrants return home less often, and usually on public holidays. In particular, there are seven public holidays in China such as New Year's Day, the Chinese New Year, the Qingming Festival, May Day, the Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Day, and National Day. Among them, there are five three-day holidays and two week-long public holidays.

In addition, the hands-on support of those migrant daughters is also affected by the location of their husbands' home.

*She need to go to her home as well. Therefore, she only helped me to clean
the living room and the kitchen...She also has to take care of her own
house. (Ms Qin)*

Therefore, for those mid-distance migrant daughters who married in another place but the same or nearby place to their natal parents, the frequency of return visits are very limited. As a result, their older parents received less hands-on support.

Additionally, the older respondents also received an invitation to receive treatment for their illness. However, compared to the short-distance migrant children, such support only occurred for older people who had a serious illness.

Support from the long-distance migrant children

For those who work in other provinces such as Guangdong, Beijing, Shanghai and Zhejiang, they face the longest trips to travel home. The trip lasts at least 15 hours by train or bus. They normally returned home up to twice a year. Once during the Chinese New Year and once on National Day holiday. Therefore, their chance of providing hands-on support is less but with more financial support.

They did not come home very often as the travel cost it too expensive...about 600 for a round trip per person...if they come back, they have to buy a lot of stuff for the festival...they also have to give pocket money for their relative's kids...It does not worth. (Old sister Wang)

My second son in Guangzhou gave me money every two to four months...

My first son in [nearby] city do not give me that much. (Mr Dao Li)

Based on the data, it found that those long-distance migrant children are less well-established in their working places than the mid-distance and short-distance migrants. For example, no respondents mentioned that their long-distance migrant children had bought a house there. Instead, most of them are blue collar workers and live in factories' dormitories. This may be the major reason why the long-distance migrant children do not invite their parents to live with them.

Support for empty and non-empty older parents

Based on marital status, there are single and couple older people among my respondents.

Given the number of migrant children they have, the respondents can be grouped into empty or non-empty older parents. The empty older parents are those whose children are all migrants and no one is home. The non-empty older parents refer to those who have at least one child at home. Therefore, the respondents can be grouped into single and empty, single and non-empty, couple empty and couple and non-empty respondents. By comparing the support contents those four groups of older respondents received, it found that the single and empty respondents received the most emotional support and financial support. On the contrary, their couple and non-empty counterparts received the least financial and emotional support. In particular, the majority of the single and empty older parents are female.

I mainly depend on my children. Although I have a relatively good health, I cannot work in farmland. It is too heavy for me... They ask me not to do anything; they will give me what I want. (Ms Ning)

I can do nothing but wait to die... My son pays for my medical bills. And he gives me money regularly... I do not worry about the money. He will cover it without any question... He asked my phone bills and electricity bills and then he gave money to pay it. (Ms Juan)

My sons called me a lot. It is very frequent, almost every day I receive phone call from my son either the elder one or the younger one. They usually ask me about my health and diet. I feel very content although they are not around me. They are very good and concerns me a lot. (Ms Yao)

My son and daughter call me very often. Especially my daughter, she asked me to live with her several times... I have a good fate, you know, got very

good and filial children. (Ms Li)

Those single and empty older parents are satisfied with their migrant children's financial and emotional support. Although some of them expressed their expectations of having someone living around in case of emergency, they show understanding for their migrant children who need to earn money in cities and believe that they will get their children's care and support if the time comes.

For respondents who are a couple and have nearby children, it seems that they received the least financial assistance and emotional attention from their migrant children.

My son is only willing to pay my medical bills. However, my migrant son and local son even angry with each other over the way of splitting the cost of medicine. (Mr Jian Pei)

My migrant sons call me every week. He always asked questions about his son and daughter and did not care us too much... He gave me money depends on his children's cost. I do not think he is willing to spend money on us. (Old sister Wang)

Although couple and non-empty older parents received the least support from their migrant children, the role of the local children cannot be neglected. In the last section of this chapter, the role of local children in supporting the respondents will be elaborated under the topic of support from local sources.

Summary

This section focused on exploring factors that influencing the support practices of migrant children for their older parents. It found that the distance between the migrants and their

older parents, the circumstances of the migrants' financial capability, the circumstances of the older people in terms of the number of migrant children and the marital status and the social policies resulted in different support patterns (Zechner 2008) Firstly, it found that the shorter distance between the migrants and their older parents, the more hands-on support and less financial support provided by the migrants. The longer distance between them, the less hands-on support and more financial support provided by the migrants. Financial support compensates less hands-on support.

However, the impact of distance can be reduced by the migrant children's financial capability. Accordingly, the travel time and cost are significant factors affecting the migrants' return visits frequency. Therefore, it would happen that for more affluent people, they can choose faster but more expensive ways of travel, while people from impoverished households are less willing to spend money on choosing alternative transportation. In other words, it may lead older people from impoverished households to suffer both emotional and financial deprivation.

As for the circumstances of the older parents, the number of migrant children and the marital status affect the financial and emotional support they received from the migrant children. That is, the more local supportive resources the older people have, the less support they received from their migrant children.

More importantly, the different policies play a role in support provision. In transnational studies, the policy refers to restrictions on applying for visas and entitlement to welfare benefits. Here, it refers to the latter one only. The rural people's medical insurance is different from their urban counterparts. In addition, one cannot claim such benefits across different proveniences. Therefore, the older people did not receive their migrant children's invitation

to receive treatment as their children need to pay full price for their medical bills. Besides, this point supports the argument that Chinese internal migration is far more complex than other developing countries because of its discrepancies between rural and urban welfare policies. That is, the rural-urban policy difference has transferred some parts of internal migration into transnational migration. Meanwhile, other parts still have characteristics of internal migration.

Providing support in proximity

The above analysis shows that the migrants provided most kinds of support especially the hands-on support on their home-visits or the older parents' visits on the migrant children. Therefore, this section focuses on how the support is given during the two-way visits.

The migrant children's home-visits

Based on the data, the frequency of home-visits of the migrant children ranges from one to five times a year. All the respondents received at least one visit from their migrant children, though the respondents have relatively good physical health conditions and independence that requires no personal care. The above analysis shows that most of the respondents appreciated their children's home-visits because they received money, food, clothes, and some kind of hands-on support when the migrant children returned home. As mentioned earlier, "It felt like family that sons and daughters were all around (Ms Qin)." However, some others expressed a negative opinion on their migrant children's home-visits.

My son with his wife came home one day before the New Year Eve and stayed home for only four days...I had to make everything ready for them.

(Rongdong 10)

He broke his leg and came home for recovery... His wife was working at that time, so I have to take care of him and the three grandchildren. I was

really exhausted. (Rongdong 19)

They did not spend much time with me. They just brought their children back... He was drunk every day...They were supposed to provide meals for me and to treat our relatives when they pay New Year's visits to me. However, he did not care about it and it was still me to do everything. (Mr

Xin Li)

The older parents' visits to their migrant children

Among the older parents, about one third had made trips to visit their migrant children. However, there were only three male respondents. The rest were all older mothers. The period of living in their migrant children's working cities ranges from one week to two months. The respondents who made the visits are relatively independent and physically mobile.

My two daughters just asked me to live with them. They said that she can provide better care and support to me if I live around her...I went to the younger daughter's house for two weeks. (Sister Hong)

I was asked to be there for one month to provide child care after my daughter-in-law gave the birth... I cleaned for them, cooked for her, and doing everything there... just like a maid...Actually, I was there one and half month. (Ms Li)

Besides, for some respondents who have a chronic illness such as heart problems or continuous pain, they also received the invitation to receive a medical check-up in their migrant children's working places. And the three male respondents are all in this situation.

My heart was not good. It was abnormal and faster than normal

speed...My son asked me to conduct a full medical check-up there.

(Rongdong 19)

*My legs were a big problem for me...I went to Zhengzhou's hospital to
receive examination and treatment. I lived in my son's home...My
daughters-in-law prepared meals for me. (Mr Chang Pei)*

According to the respondents, their visits to their migrant children were all with pleasure despite some complaints of being unfamiliar and uncomfortable with urban life. Most of them felt that they were not abandoned by their migrant children, rather their migrant children still care about them and honoured them. Their children's migration brought them a chance to experience something they never expected. Nevertheless, these respondents expressed an ambiguous feeling when residing with their migrant children.

Although these respondents lived with their migrant children for a few days, they all expressed unwillingness to live there permanently. Some of them reported that it was difficult to get used to living in cities. For example, they had to depend on their children to go out as they had difficulties to make themselves understood by others due to their accent; and they do not know how to take the bus as they cannot read. Therefore, they had to stay at home to watch TV and had nothing else to do. In comparison, their home gives them a sense of comfort and familiarity. Living in cities is just like being "a guest" for them. Therefore, when they lived with their migrant children, they encountered increasing dependence and vulnerability in terms of mobility and routine daily activities.

[Support from local sources](#)

In spite of the physical distance, the older parents received financial, hands-on, and emotional support from their migrant children. Some of the respondents received an invitation to live

with their migrant children in cities. However, the respondents reported unfamiliarity and discomfort when living in cities. It seems that the local environment provides respondents a sense of being home. Therefore, this section is going to explore how local sources are being supportive for the respondents. According to the interview data, there are spouses, local sons, daughters-in-law, daughters and relatives who provided support and assistance for the respondents.

Spouse

Spouses play significant roles in older people's later life. According to the respondents, they received various support from their spouses including financial support, emotional support, hands-on support and informational support. For example, for older couples who have relatively good health conditions, their husband normally takes care of their farmland and conducts sideline businesses to generate cash income. The wife normally takes care of household chores. In this way, they share income and provide mutual support and assistance for each other.

Financial support

According to the data, the financial support is normally given by husbands. Most of the wives resemble assistants to their husband or only engaged in some light sideline business or even didn't take part in any kind of such activity.

It is men's job to deal with other people. Women are only responsible for household work... My wife knows nothing. She cannot read... I go to the town to sell vegetables... If it were she, she would be easily cheated. I also rent out our farmland to others only keep a small plot to plant vegetables. I am too old to work. (Mr Xin Li)

Her lungs and heart are not good. Once she cooks, she will get heavy cough. Therefore, now she only carries out light work and it is me to cook and even sometimes I am doing laundry work. I did not know how to cook but I can cook now. People can learn things they never know when there is no other way. (Mr Guo Li)

He used to work in the farmland. When there was not much agricultural work to do, he also worked for others. For example, to do some labour work in the construction site in nearby villages...They were all short term and very flexible. However, those job can give us some money to make life easier...Now, his legs and knees got problems, cannot do heavy labour work. I have to work in the farm and raise some chicken for our living. Life is difficult. (Ms Mei)

It is me to do the labour work and take care of him. Without me, he probably already died. Now, he is crippled and cannot speak clearly...He used to drink wine. One day, he was drunk. On the way home, he fell into a ditch. I was home wait for him and did not know what happened. Until midnight, I was worried about him and then went to several places where he used to be drunk but I did not find him. I did not know what should do and then went to his siblings and nephew's home to ask for help. And finally his nephew found him lying in the ditch with face down. I was shocked. Thanks to his nephew and siblings who drove him to the hospital immediately. It was also me there to take care of him...I clean him body and wash his clothes. I am doing everything for him...I am here for him. I

do not know who will help me if he goes away (Ms Li)

However, such labour division is not fixed. It changes when one spouse encounters illness or disability. For example, the wife will take their husband's position, while the husband will take part in some household chores.

Hands-on support

Apart from financial support, the spouses also helped each other both in daily issues and personal care needs.

She took care of me very well when I was in the hospital...I also take care of her when she got sick...We are too old to take care of ourselves and have to depend on each other to live every day. (Rongdong 10)

One night, I was very uncomfortable. I wanted to get up but I just cannot. I was even sweeping. Fortunately, he was there and I called him up to bring me water and pills. (Old sister Wang)

We are old and help each other every day. We do household chores together such as cooking and cleaning. (Rongdong 10)

According to the above statements, it is also under these circumstances that the role of spouses becomes increasingly more important than others and they are the frontline caregivers for the infirm one.

Intangible support

The presence of a spouse provided much emotional comfort for the respondents.

Sons and daughters are not living around, I have no one to talk to, only my husband. (Mr Xin Li)

My wife is the only one can understand me and look after me every day...When it is cold, she told me to wear more cloth and every day she reminds me of taking my pills...She also knows what I like to eat and what I do not like...She concerns for my feelings. (Mr Chang Pei)

In addition, the spouse also provided informational support to each other. The husbands are usually the helpers, while the wives are usually the seekers.

He can read, without him, I even do not know how to eat pills. I am really confused. I can only tell the colours. (Old sister Wang)

According to the interview data, almost no older couples live with their children under the meal and residence rotation arrangement (Zhang 2010). This may be because of the presence of spousal support, as older couples can help each other to meet their financial and nursing care needs and have a longer period of dependence. More importantly, the spouses provide emotional comfort that no one else can replace. On the one hand, it is only the spouse who can provide twenty-four hours' companionship. The presence of a spouse gives older people a sense of safety especially during night time. Some single older people expressed their worries of being victims of theft or no one is there to help if they have any medical emergency. On the other hand, re-marriage in rural areas is not common. Actually, it is very rare. No single older people in my study are married again.

The presence of spousal support makes a significant difference between older couples and single older people. Compared to single older people, those older couples have a better organised life. In the words of one respondent who is a widow and lives alone (Ms Ning), "When you are alone, you do not want to cook. It is boring. Sometimes, I only had one meal a day...it is only me, no one will make complain. If there are two people, you have to cook.

Otherwise, the other one will shout or even mad at you.” It seems that the presence of a spouse is motivation for the other to have a more organised life.

In addition, the death of a spouse has different impacts on widowers and widows. That is, the widowers are more likely to live with their children, while most of the widows can still live by themselves. This is mainly because of the previous domestic labour division between husband and wife, the widowers are not good at household chores. It is hard for them to keep their house and themselves clean and tidy. Therefore, they need to live with their children who can offer them meals and provide assistance for household work. For the widows, the death of their husbands means they lost the previous financial support resource, but they are capable of managing and organising their life on their own.

No matter whether older couples or single older parents, the spouse is always their most desired one for help and support despite whether their other caregivers such as sons, daughters or daughters-in-law are living around or not. In reality, the spouse indeed provides all kinds of support. However, it is not saying those older couples can meet their needs by themselves. Rather, they encountered many difficulties and their self-support capability is rather low and insufficient especially when one’s spouse has bad health or is in need of medical services.

Local sons

According to the interview data, the local sons shouldered very minimal responsibility of providing personal care and financial support. They provided the major hands-on support. In addition, their support can be characterised as timely and usually as the first supportive source to intervene when the respondents are in an emergency.

Hands-on support

The local sons provided several kinds of hands-on support including helping with agriculture work, fixing farm machinery, doing shopping, laundry, as well as household repairs.

My son helped me buy things such as vegetables, meat and other snacks...

Last time, my son came here and did the laundry for me. It was not difficult, just put clothes into the washing machine. Because my backache, I cannot lift heavy stuff... I cannot do agriculture work as well. He helped me with watering and weeding. (Mr Jian Pei)

I can drive the tractor but I do not know how to repair it. My son knows. If there is any problem, he will come and fix it. (Mr Gong Li)

Due to the geographical closeness between the respondents and their local sons, the latter provided most kinds of hands-on support to their older parents. Based on the interviews, the respondents appreciated their local sons' contribution.

Financial support

Besides, the local sons also provided monetary support to the respondents. However, different from the hands-on support, the financial support is quite limited to the respondents' illness rather than a routine basis.

He [the local son] bought me medicine regularly without reminding... Apart from that, he did not give me money very often. (Mr Gong Li)

My son here helped me a lot but no financial assistance. (Old sister Wang)

My second son first to pay the hospital fee [when his wife had a car accident]... My first son in Zhejiang. He was far away from home... Even I

told him in the first instance, it took too long for him to transfer the money back...As she [his wife] got very severe accident, I know the first son would come back and then I asked him to pay the rest of the medical cost. (Mr Fu Li)

Compared to the financial support of the migrant children, those local sons provided less financial support. Nonetheless, the presence of the local sons provides a kind of safety for the respondents.

I know I got someone here to help me. It eases my worries. You know, accidents happened to older people. I am afraid that I die at my own home without anyone else knowing. (Mr Jian Pei)

There are several features that can be found from the above analysis. Firstly, the support the local sons engage in is less intensive, and does not require regular and frequent effort. Besides, they are usually the first ones who respond to the older people's financial and personal care needs.

[Local daughters-in-law](#)

There are two kinds of local daughters-in-law in this study. Some of them are the same as the older respondents, whose husbands are migrant workers. Some others' husbands stay with them in the same village working in agriculture. Here, I will stress the support the former type of daughters-in-law provided. This is because the latter type was seldom mentioned by the respondents. Their routinely supportive role is possibly replaced by their husbands; the older respondents' local sons.

According to the interview data, the respondents received very limited support from their stay

behind daughters-in-law.

My daughter-in-law did not give me much support... She only came my home every two or three days to check whether I am good or not.

(Rongdong 19)

I think I gave her much more than that she gave me... She took care of me when I was in hospital... Although I have problem with washing clothes, I do it myself. (Mr Ming)

Nowadays, daughters-in-law do not behave in the same way with the old time. They want you to help them rather than they help you. I was asked to take care of her children even she is home and has a lot of time. (Mr Guo

Li)

The above statements were shared by the majority of the respondents. Even some reported a very intense relationship with their daughter-in-law.

Married daughters

Traditionally, women were usually considered as less important than men. In the previous chapter, it mentioned that the daughters were traded for 'bride price' by their natal parents and after their wedding ceremony, they were formally transferred to their husbands' family. Their behaviours and practice were constrained by a set of moral codes. Among the many responsibilities, they had to take care of their husbands' parents and they are no longer to bear any responsibility to their natal parents. However, given the rising economic and social status of women in rural areas, the role of married daughters in providing support to their natal parents is becoming increasingly important. In my study, most of the respondents

reported that they received clothes, frequent visits, assistance in farm work and laundry, and even financial support from their married daughters.

Last week, my daughters bought me some milk. I have not finished them. I think she will come in next week to see me and will buy me another box of milk if she sees me finished this one. She is pretty good. She always asks me to eat one egg one day. For that, she brought me some chickens to produce eggs. They are enough for me. (Old sister Wang)

She comes to visit me every week because she knows her brothers and sisters-in-law are not home... She washed my clothes and bed sheets by using the washing machine. She also bought me some pork and fish. (Ms Qin)

As sons are not home, I have to manage the farmland. However, I have bad health and got a backache. I cannot work a long time. Last summer, my daughters came home and helped me to harvest the wheat. She stayed at home three days as she also got to return her home to manage her family's land. (Sister Li)

I have only one daughter; she married to the town. She helped her husband runs a restaurant. Every two or three days, she comes to see us and bring all kinds of food including vegetables, meat and noodles. She even bought me a fridge to store food. She does not want us to cook. The food she gave us is all ready to eat. What I need to do is to steam them and cook some rice or noodle. (Mr Jian Pei)

According to the interview data, the daughters provided a range of support to their natal parents. More often than that, they never go to their natal parents' home with nothing, but with clothes, all kinds of food and even small amounts of money. The monetary support occurred less often and only in some festivals and working married daughters are more likely to offer more than those in local or nearby villages.

However, such supportiveness of daughters among older people having sons living around is not as strong as those do not. And their supportiveness is only limited to critical occasions such as hospitalisation.

Another interesting finding is that the monetary support between married daughters and their older parents stays only between them. The older parents will never tell their sons how much money they have received from their daughters.

In addition, the daughters provide a short period of accommodation for their natal parents. Such supportive function is also conditional on a limited number of older parents. Firstly, it is the single widows who are the majority of recipients of such support. Secondly, the single widows do not have sons living around; lastly, the older parents only agreed to live with their daughters for a short period ranging from several days to up to two months if their daughters' parents-in-law passed away.

When talking about the support those older people received from their married daughters, they generally had a delightful look on their faces. For some older people who receive less frequent visits and the amount of support in kind and cash, they showed no complaints or sadness. Compared to sons, those older parents do not have much expectation toward their married daughters to support them. Rather, they normally just accept no matter what their

daughters provided and would never actively request support and assistance from their married daughters.

Compared to sons' customary responsibility and obligations of supporting older parents, there is no clearly defined responsibility for married daughters to provide support to their natal parents. Given the various support the older parents received from their married daughters, one question arises: are those daughters more important than sons in providing for their older parents? Some studies have reported that older people are now believing that raising daughters is more important than raising sons (Shi 2009). However, in this study, the older respondents still hold the opinion that they received more benefits from their sons and do not recognise that daughters are now more important than sons. Such a difference may result from several economic and social factors. Firstly, it is the traditional belief that having sons means to continue the family line. This aspect has been reflected in the last section discussing the importance of sons for older parents. Secondly, the amount of financial support received from married daughters is relatively smaller than that of sons, and older parents still need to depend on sons to provide a large amount of monetary support when there is a need. Thirdly, the supportiveness of married daughters only occurred when there was no son around the older people. That is, the support from married daughters is only a partial replacement of support from sons. Besides, older people regard themselves as a guest in their daughter's family. This explains why the older people accept their daughters' invitation of living in their daughters' family only if their daughters' parents-in-law passed away. Lastly, older people feel they are 'losing face' if they rely on their daughters if they have sons.

The availability of support from daughters results from some social and economic factors. Firstly, most of the respondents have more than one married daughter. This enables the older

people to choose one whom they have the closest relationship with to marry in nearby villages or towns. As a result, they can receive better support and care from them. Lastly, it is because of the increasing social and economic status of young wives in rural areas due to the rural-urban migration that enables them to be economically independent rather than totally relying on their husband's family.

Support from local relatives

Apart from their spouse and local children, there are other support sources including siblings, nephews, neighbours, sisters-in-law, and brothers-in-law. As mentioned earlier, people from the same village normally share the same family name and have blood somehow connected to a common ancestor and all people in the same village. Indeed, the two study sites are traditional and natural villages. In Rangdong, all the people there have the same family name: Li. As for Peiying, people share the same family name of Pei. Therefore, they are all so-called relatives. For example, a neighbour can be a sibling, a brother-in-law or a nephew. I group all local supportive sources but spouses and children into the category of local relatives. Based on the data, I found that the intangible support including emotional support and informational support is the most frequent form of support that those supportive sources provided. Second to that is tangible support including hands-on support and financial support.

Emotional support

When the respondents were not busy with labour work, taking care of their grandchildren, or they were not too sick to get out, they often catch up with other older people in some open areas having a chat and spending time together.

Old people have fewer things to do, even little things to do. I go out after

lunch every day if the weather is good. If it is not, I just sit in my front

yard... Just sitting there, and talk to other older people from time to time...Old people actually do not have much to talk...It just feels good to see people. You do not feel alone. (Brother Gang)

I do not like to talk to others...I am usually sit in front of my house. Sometimes, other older people come to sit with me and chat for a while.

(Mr Xin Li)

Based on the data, it evidences that being around people makes the respondent less lonely. Another respondent said he felt safer when there is someone living around.

Bad people are very bold nowadays. I lived close to the river once. There were me and another house, but we were not close. One day, a bad guy stole my motorcycle when I was having a nap in the afternoon. And I lost a cow on the other night. Now, I moved here where is surrounded by neighbours, I feel safer. (Mr Guo Li)

Showing concern and care

Additionally, those respondents also reported that they received care and concerns from their local relatives.

My nephew visits me sometimes when he knows I am not well...He lives not far away, in the east corner of the village...about 15 minutes walking.

(Ms Li)

I meet with other older women every day. If they do not see me for one day, they will come and see me what happened...They know I am alone here. I am very appreciating that. (Sister Li)

My sister-in-law always told me not to work too much and helped me to pick up heavy stuff. She said that if there is any heavy labour work, just ask her son to come to help. (Ms Yao)

Informational support

When people gather together, they usually talk with each other. It is also at this time when they provide informational support for each other.

She told me not to go to the hospital in town. She said that I should go to the Diyi Hospital and see the doctor Wang who is specialised in treating my illness. (Ms Qin)

I usually discuss with my brother about what kind of wheat seed is good...And then we buy together because there is a discount for a large amount. (Mr Chang Pei)

I heard from others...They knew that I wanted to buy a motorcycle. One day, he (his neighbour) came to my house and told me that there was a big sale in town. Then I went there and bought this three-wheeled motorcycle. (Ms Juan)

The information provided by the local relatives is usually related to illness, medicine, hospital information, and sales in town.

Hands-on support

Due to the physical closeness, the local relatives can provide various hands-on support.

Last time, my tractor was not working, my brother came and fixed it for me. (Rongdong 10)

Thanks to Brother Ming...he is my cousin. All of my children do not live in this village. Once, he brought his medicine for me when my heart almost started speeding up. My wife asked help from him. He came to my house with medicine and phoned hospital to save my life. (Mr Gong Li)

I do not know how to use the mobile phone at the beginning... My neighbour helped me to dial my son's number and taught me how to use it. (Mr Fu Li)

I do not have a motorcycle... Sometimes my neighbour brought me with them to the town. Sometimes it is my brother. (Ms Yao)

My legs have problems. I cannot walk for a long time... Sometimes, my neighbour bought things for me from town. (Brother Gang)

The above statements indicate that the neighbour is very supportive when there is an emergency such as getting a severe illness or suddenly falling at home.

Financial support

According to my respondents, they also received financial support from their relatives.

In last Chinese New Year, my nephew brought their children to pay me a New Year visit. They refused my pocket money. Instead, they gave me money. (Ms Qin)

I borrowed ¥50 (£5.60) from my neighbour last time as I did not have any cash, but I need to pay for my electricity bill when the staff came to my house. If I did not pay on that day, I have to go to their office to pay it. (Ms Ning)

It should be noted that the financial support from local relatives is only limited to special events and the amount of such money is small.

Summary

This chapter firstly explored the support the migrant children provided to their stay-behind older parents. It showed that their migrant children do not abandon the older people. Instead, the migrant children still engage in providing financial, material, hands-on, and emotional support. In addition, it identified several influencing factors including distance and circumstances that affect the support practice of the migrant children. Following that, it examined how local sources support the migrant workers' older parents.

The analysis of this chapter has shown several features of old age support pattern during the adult children's migration. First, it has revealed that the son is still the most important financial support provider. In particular, the migrant sons are seen as more important in providing financial support than their local counterparts. Those local sons are the major hands-on supporters. Second, the most significant change in the role of supporting older people is the daughters-in-law. They were traditionally believed to be a family caregiver and household manager. However, this role is shared by the sons and daughters. The sons have stepped into the daughters-in-law's area. For example, the local sons helped their parents to do laundry. By comparing the migrant daughters-in-law and local daughters-in-law, it seems that the migrant daughters-in-law preserve a more traditional supportive role than their local counterparts. For the local daughters-in-law whose husband is also in the village, their husband almost replaced their supportive function. For others who are left-behind women, they just performed as their parents-in-law's health checkers. The daughters have engaged in providing many aspects of support to the respondents.

Chapter 6: The help-seeking behaviours of the older parents

In the previous chapter, it has identified several potential helpers including the older people's migrant children, local children and local relatives. Based on that, this chapter mainly explores the older people's help-seeking patterns in dealing with their day-to-day needs as well as the process and rules of those older parents followed to seek help.

Before proceeding to detailed analysis, it briefly discusses existing literature relating to the help-seeking of Chinese older people. Studies about Chinese older people's help-seeking behaviour are limited to date. Some of them were carried out in the United States. For example, Dong and his colleagues (2012) interviewed 39 older Chinese immigrants in Chicago's Chinatown and showed they were lacking knowledge about available support services. Another study carried out by Yan (2014) who interviewed 40 mistreated older people in Hong Kong showed cultural barriers, self-blame, and lack of knowledge were major barriers to help seeking. In mainland China, based on three sets of survey data in Beijing, Yao (2009) suggested that urban older people in Beijing seek support based on 'consanguinity values'. Consanguinity here refers to kinship deriving from blood relationships and marriage. A related study was carried out by Cong and Silverstein (2014), who used longitudinal analysis to examine the effects of intergenerational exchange on rural older parents' choice of caregivers. They reported that both parents favoured sons and that migrant children were less likely to be chosen as caregivers. However, detailed analysis of the patterns of and rules governing the help-seeking behaviour of migrant workers' older parents in rural China is still lacking.

Help-seeking pattern

Financial needs

Self-support

Due to the increasing age along with decreasing physical capability of engaging in heavy labour

work such as agricultural production, the income of the older respondents becomes insufficient and their dependence on others for financial support is increasing. However, based on the data, it shows that older people preferred to rely on themselves to meet their financial needs.

Usually, I do not ask for money from my children, neither sons nor daughters... I depend on myself. (Brother Gang)

No, I do not want money from them... I can feed myself and my wife. I can still work. So, why I need to depend on them. (Ms Li)

Although the farmland can offer some cash for us, it is much less than that when I was young... Nevertheless, it is only enough for our survival. (Old sister Wang)

Some respondents reported that their illness and physical limitations brought them many difficulties working on farmland. Therefore, they had to work on some other light labour jobs for their living. For example, selling vegetables in the city centre, raising chickens for selling eggs, and finding recycled items to resell.

It is a demanding job for me to continue working on farmland because of my broken legs... I found that there are a lot of abandoned furniture, clothes, boxes and glass bottles around some newly established courts. I loaded them to my tricycle and then go to recycle shops to sell them... The income is not fixed. It depends. If I got lucky, I could get as much as ¥100 (£11.10) per day. If no lucky, it just wastes my time. I am not sad. I got nothing to lose. (Ms Mei)

*City people like country eggs because the hens are free range... I sell it for
¥1 (£1.10) each. They are very popular... but the hens are not producing
eggs every day. (Mr Chang Pei)*

*If it rains, I am not going there to sell vegetables because I do not have a
booth. I will be wet from being out in the rain and very easy to get cold if I
do so... If the weather is not good, I just stay at home. However, you know
what, the price goes up during rainy or windy days. (Mr Xin Li)*

Based on the data, it found that such alternative jobs have several common limitations. Firstly, the generated income is not as much as farmland. Secondly, the amount of income depends on several uncertain factors including the weather condition and the timing, as well as luck. More importantly, all those light labour jobs require mobility. That is, they are only doable for people who have a proper vehicle and relatively good physical condition to manage it. As a result, the self-support ability of those older people who are in a poorer financial situation and cannot afford motor bicycles are largely limited. In addition, for older people who are less physically mobile and capable of riding motor tricycles, such relatively easy income generating activities are out of their considerations. However, like their counterparts who are more mobile, they are doing their best to depend on themselves to survive. Due to the physical disabilities, they asked their neighbours and relatives to sell their eggs. The role of neighbours and relatives in the respondents' help seeking process will be further explored in following sections. In addition, they rent their land out for grain food and money. By doing so, they just have adequate food to eat and some cash in their hands.

*I rent out my land to other people, so they give me food and cash... About
300 (£30) for one Mu or 130 kg grain food... It is not fixed. It depends on*

*the location of your land and the price is going up every year... I have 6 Mu
and they are enough to feed us. (Mr Xin Li)*

The financial income of the respondents based on their own labour is limited in general. It only can guarantee them a low-level survival. The respondents used their income to pay their phone bill, electricity bill, to buy medicines and groceries, and to save for future needs.

*It allows me to do nothing but to keep my wife and me alive... I can get
about 500-700 (£50-70) from each Mu. Approximately, I have ¥2,500
(£277.80) net income from farmland... Though I do not need to buy grain
food, I have to use that money to buy meat, cooking oil, and electricity
bills. At last, I cannot save much. Only without any severe sickness, I can
have a good life. Otherwise, life will be very difficult. (Sister Li)*

For older people who are living alone, their capability of making money on their own is less than that of their counterparts who are living with a partner. And compared to others, the choice of renting out their land is the most popular strategy among those who are single and living alone.

*I am the only one in this household. Although my health is not that bad, I
do not work in the farmland any more. This is because there is no one
behind me to cook and doing domestic for me. I also have to take care of
my grandchildren. Too much work for me... I rented all my farmland out,
though I cannot receive the same amount of money that I work on them.*

(Ms Ning)

Indeed, the older respondents who are single and living alone face more challenges when they

choose to rely on themselves for financial income. This is, firstly, because most of the single older respondents are female who naturally believed that they “cannot work as men” and “farmland work needs men rather than women”. Secondly, most of them are currently engaging in taking care of their grandchildren. As a result, they do not have enough time and effort to conduct other economic activities. Therefore, their self-support capability is largely compromised.

In general, the respondents see themselves as the first source of financial income. When they are capable of doing agricultural work, they try their best to make money from it. When their physical conditions are compromised, they still try to use other sources such as asking for help from their neighbours and relatives to maximise their financial independence. It should be noticed that the respondents’ dependency on other people becomes greater when they face crisis and emergency situations such as illness. It is also this time that makes significant shifts on these respondents’ help-seeking behaviours.

Children

When the older parents are in greater financial needs, their self-support capability of financial independence is insufficient. Based on the data, it was found that the older respondents faced financial difficulty during several events such as severe illness, before the Chinese spring festival, before planting seasons, and some unexpected emergency times. Most of the respondents firstly chose to seek financial assistance from their children including their migrant children and local adult children when they were in need of money during their sickness.

Who can I rely on? Only my children. No one else is willing to give me their money...Even sometimes they are not willing and happy to do that. (Mr

Chang Pei)

I gave everything to them, of course, I will ask for money from them if I need... My income is only enough for food... If I do not need them to support me when I am old, why I need to raise them. (Ms Li)

I did not give them too much because I did not have much money, but I took care of the children... So, I think they should give me money. (Mr Guo Li)

The respondents have expressed their reasons why they will ask for money from their children. Firstly, the children are the only choice they have got; secondly, they still believe that the purpose of raising children is to guarantee old age life; thirdly, they believe that their children should shoulder the responsibility of supporting them in exchange for child care. Indeed, some respondents reported very successful help seeking experience from their children. For example:

There was a surgery about my heart. My husband told my migrant son that I need money. He sent it very soon. We were quite content with him. (Ms Fan)

I need to take medicine every day. They are quite expensive... I asked my local son to buy it for me. He was very good. He agreed to buy them regularly. (Ms Ning)

However, the choice of the respondents on migrant children and local children are different. Based on the data, firstly compared to migrant children, the respondents asked their local children for financial help in the first instance. And then, they contacted their migrant children

for further support.

I asked my second son first to pay the hospital fee [when his wife had a car accident]... My first son in Zhejiang. He was far away from home... Even I told him in the first instance, it took too long for him to transfer the money back...As she [his wife] got very severe accident, I know the first son would come back and then I asked him to pay the rest of the medical cost..He did what I asked for. (Mr Fu Li)

If I need a small amount of money, I will ask my local son for it...It is not worth it [to ask money from migrant son] ... Banks charge fees for money transfer services. (Brother Gang)

My local son knows my situation very well. You know, it is complex to explain the situation to my migrant son through phone talks. (Sister Li)

If it is not critical, I do not want to ask financial support from my migrant children... And sometimes it causes unnecessary troubles... I have to go to town to withdraw it from bank...It took me half day... People there are not that friendly. They ignore us and do not want to provide service because they think we are old and poor. (Ms Little Mao)

Based on the data, it found that there are several reasons for the respondents to choose their local children for financial support in the first instance. On the one hand, the geographical advantage enables the local children to make a quick response to their parents' financial needs in time of crisis. In comparison, the migrant children take a longer time to meet the respondents' needs even when they are willing to. Besides, the physical proximity enables

timely communication between the respondents and their local children. On the other hand, there are some barriers such as the bank charges for money transfer services, the time taken, and unfriendly bank services which deter the respondents' willingness for seeking financial support from their migrant children when they are in need of financial assistance.

Unfavourable seeking experience

In contrast to the respondents who had successful experience of seeking financial support from their children, there are also some respondents who had not achieved such favourable outcomes.

He did not send much money to me while I asked him to do so several times. I am really disappointed in him...If I had the money I will pay my medicine bill by myself instead of asking him for support...He and his wife might think that I still have a lot of money and do not want them to know.

This was not true. (Mr Xin Li)

They gave me a little money. Only one-third or one-quarter of what I needed...They may also be in need of money...Because they just bought a 3-bedroom flat for their son's future wedding in Dengzhou city. (Mr Ming)

I wanted to buy an electric motor tricycle but I cannot afford it by myself... I told my daughter-in-law that I am old and bicycle is hard and dangerous for me to ride but a tricycle is easier for to me keep balance...She does not agree with me and said that I am old and do not need to go out often and she has not got one yet so there is no need to buy one for me...She clearly showed her attitude and I did not want to bother my son again...Probably,

he would say no as well. (Mr Ming)

I wanted to split the medicine bill between my two sons. So I asked both of them to pay it. However, my first son did not agree with the decision and refused to do so... At that time, he and his wife were both migrants, now his wife is at home...Because his wife thought that I gave too much for my little son's wedding. She was angry and did not want to share the bill...At last, I cheated my little son that his brother gave me the money and then he gave me as well. (Mr Guo Li)

The above statements show that it is not always a pleasant journey for the respondents to seek support from their children. Some of them were satisfied with their children's response, while some others were upset and did not achieve a contented outcome. Therefore, what are the key rules to seek support successfully? This question will be answered in the following section.

Who do they prefer?

For migrant children whose wives are also migrants, they prefer to contact their sons and tell them their situation and the amount of money they needed. Local children and those migrant sons whose wives are also left at home prefer to let their daughters-in-law know their situation first and then they will consider whether to take further action. It depends on their response. However, none of the respondents mentioned that they would ask for financial assistance from their married daughters.

Before, I only need to talk to my son as both of them (her son and daughter-in-law) worked in cities...Now I have to tell my daughter-in-law first because she is at home and in charge of my son's money...My son will transfer the money to her wife's bank account and then she gives the

money to me. (Mr Ming)

I will talk to my daughter-in-law first and then ask for support from my son...The daughter-in-law is an actual master in my son's household. I do not want to see them arguing with each other. Therefore, I talk to my daughter-in-law first... Such practice will make the daughter-in-law felt her opinion and position are respected. (Ms Little Mao)

I did not ask much from her. You know what, a good daughter-in-law can not only make me happy but also can take care of her children and husband...It also works reversely. Years ago, an old couple were too harsh on their daughter-in-law. As a result, the women firstly left the family and left two children to her husband. And then, she married to a man in city while her ex-husband still single. No one wants to marry him because girls are becoming rare in villages... Women are becoming more independent and precious. (Sister Hong)

The above statements indicate that the daughters-in-law are playing a significant role in these respondents' families especially in making decisions over allocating family resources with older parents. The respondents also take the daughters-in-law's feelings and responses into serious consideration.

I will see the response of my daughter-in-law. If she shows a sense of agreement or thinks what I told her is reasonable, I will definitely phone my son and told him everything. (Old sister Wang)

If your daughter-in-law agrees with your request, then it definitely means

OK. However, if it does not go that way, probable you will get nothing. (Ms

Little Mao)

The profound influence of the daughters-in-law in family resource allocation is also reflected in one previous mentioned statement about buying the electric motor tricycle (Mr Ming). The respondents did not take further action as the daughter-in-law “clearly showed her attitude” and the son “would say no as well”.

Why not talk to migrant daughters-in-law?

Based on the data, the role of daughters-in-law is becoming more significant. However, when the daughters-in-law are migrants or away from home, the respondents showed totally different behaviour. That is, they do not consult their daughters-in-law’s opinion in the first place and even have little contact with them.

I just feel that I have nothing to talk with my daughter-in-law...She is out there, we have little in common. If she is home, things are different. (Ms

Yao)

I seldom phone my daughter-in-law and talked to her except she is at home...So, I just told my son about my situation and asked him to support me. (Ms Ning)

I am not asking the son to make decisions immediately. I will give him time to discuss with his wife...His decision is definitely affected by his wife...If his wife agrees, then he will meet my needs or even give me more than what I need. However, if she does not, he will probably give me little or even

nothing. (Mr Jian Pei)

Indeed, due to the increasing physical distance between the respondents and their daughters-in-law, the older respondents had less opportunity to communicate with their daughters-in-law. However, they do not deny that their daughters-in-law still have the decisive power and influence over their son's response. There are some respondents who said they received frequent calls from their daughters-in-law, they just talked about the grandchildren and received some warm greetings. The respondents seldom ask for support or directly make any requests to their daughters-in-law.

Accordingly, face to face communication is important to build a strong and meaningful relationship. It can minimise the risk of miscommunication as the two parties can understand each other directly with the help of body language. Thus, does the increasing distance between the older parents and their daughters-in-law make it any harder for the parents to seek support from their sons?

Based on the data, it finds that there are indeed some differences on the older parents' help seeking behaviours when their daughters-in-law are at home or stay with their migrant husbands. In particular, the respondents with nearby daughters-in-law are less likely to seek financial support from their migrant son. As the data is qualitative in nature, I cannot provide exact frequencies, but this point is reflected in some respondents' statements mentioning benefits of children being home.

They are responsible for giving gifts to other relatives' special events. As a result, I can save money. (Mr Gong Li)

When they buy things, they will buy some for me... It includes wheat seeds, insecticide pesticide, fertiliser, and even some groceries. (Mr Jian Pei)

*They know how much their children spend. I do not need to tell them
everything and ask for it. (Mr Guo Li)*

Those older parents' statements provide some possible explanations for why the respondents are less likely to seek financial support from their son when their daughters-in-law are at home. On the one hand, the older parents have less financial burden when the daughters-in-law are at home. This is because the daughters-in-law take their due responsibility of managing the relationship with other relatives. By doing so, their parents are released from the financial burden of giving red pockets. Secondly, it is mentioned in the previous chapter that the local children will give their parents in-kind support on some occasions. As a result, it reduced the older parents' spending. On the other hand, when the daughters-in-law are at home, they know everything about their parents-in-law. This point is becoming meaningful only in the condition of taking the unpleasant help-seeking experience of some respondents into consideration. That is, due to the daughters-in-law knowing everything about those respondents, they will refuse their parents-in-law's requests.

According to the data, I identified that the help seeking pattern between the single and couple respondents is different. Compared to those who are single, the couple respondents show more willingness to ask for financial support from their children, while, the single respondents are more passive. In particular, among the couple respondents, it is the one with a better situation who asks for financial support from their children for the infirm one. The roles are not fixed. Sometimes, it was the husband who would tell their children about their mother's situation and then asked them to provide financial support. Sometimes, it was the female respondents.

Seeking support from others

Apart from asking for financial assistance from their children, the respondents have also sought financial support from their siblings, relatives and neighbours. However, different from their children, such help seeking behaviours only happen when the respondents need a small amount of money in an urgent situation.

I seldom ask for monetary support from others...well, yes; sometimes I am short of cash and I will ask for temporary monetary support from my neighbour...Last time, I forget to pay the electricity bill. You know, if you do not pay before the deadline you will get fine and be cut off from electricity. It was the last day to pay it, one officer came to the village to collect the money. I did not know that. I was chatting with my neighbour and he told me this in the afternoon. I just recalled that I had not paid the bill yet. However, I did not have cash on hand. I asked my neighbour to lend me 50 (£5) and he had no hesitation and lend me the money...I returned the money to him the next day. (Ms Ning)

Borrowing money from others is not very often. People are very sensitive about money...Yes, everyone must have some problems about money, so am I...A short time ago, and my grandson came home. He was in high school. He asked me for 300 (£30) to buy some study books. I do not have that much cash. He only got one day off. There was not much time for him to return school...Yes, it was quite urgent. I went to my brother's home and told him the situation. He lent me 200 (£20). It was still not enough. Therefore, I had to borrow another 100 (£10) from my neighbour...I told

her what I was going to do with the money and he lent it to me. (Ms Yao)

According to the data, to ask for monetary support from others only happens when the respondents' children are not available or convenient to provide immediate financial support. In addition, the respondents only asked older people in the same village for monetary support. It is very rare for them to borrow money from younger generations in the village.

I do not have many interactions with young people. They are afraid that I do not have the ability to pay back. More importantly, they are also afraid that I forget it and my children do not admit the debt. (Ms Juan)

Personal care needs

Apart from the financial needs, the respondents also expressed their needs of care in case of illness and hospitals. According to the data, a similar help seeking pattern of meeting their financial needs is identified. In particular, the respondents are more willing to take care of themselves as long as they can. If they are not windowed, they normally firstly call their spouse for help when they need assistance or have problems. Then, they will ask for support from children and grandchildren. Such order also reflects a development process of sickness. That is, when the respondents are in the early stage of illness or the situation is not severe, their spouse is on the frontline to be asked for help. For widows or widowers, they usually bear such need within themselves. Only in the case when their situation is becoming severe do they call their children to step in. In the following sections, I will elaborate the details of the respondents' help seeking process and outcomes.

Spouse

According to the data, the respondents will firstly ask for support from their spouse in whatever situations.

I usually ask my husband to help me no matter what. I feel comfortable and no stress at all to make any request... Especially during my sickness, he was just sitting next to me and brought me water and pills... I cannot read. Everytime I also asked my husband to read the instructions on pill bottles. Although he has eyesight problem, he can do it with the help of glasses.

(Old sister Wang)

I was taking a very long time traditional Chinese medicine. You know that, it is very complicated. It takes long time to cook the herbs and needs care and patience. I asked my wife to do that for me. (Rongdong 10)

I asked my husband to accompany me to the village clinic when I need IV drip. I was a bit afraid when I was there. The clinic was too busy. There are a lot of patients but only one doctor. He cannot take care of everyone.

Sometimes, he cannot refill the IV bag in time. Once, I saw that one patient's IV tube was filled with his blood. So I ask my husband to be there in case I am fell asleep. (Ms Fan)

The spouse played an important role in the respondents' life especially in need of care. The couple respondents asked for all kinds of support including reading instructions on pill bottles, cooking Chinese medicine, providing companionship when the frail one is in the clinic, collecting pills from the hospital, and cooking special food for the infirm one from each other. It should be noticed that all these tasks are not intensive care work. Rather, they are light jobs but time consuming.

However, for the respondents who are widowed, they usually internalise such care needs when there is no severe problem and refrain themselves from asking for support from their

children. They attempted to actively interact with their neighbours and seek assistance from them as well as other older people who have the same problem.

It is not a big problem if I do not need to go the hospital. I can manage it by myself. I went to the village clinic and got medicine or IV drip... I always talk to other patients when I am there. You know, if you are nice to others, they will will be nice to you as well. (Ms Ning)

They are busy and have their own things to take care of. I just feel I can manage it. Besides, if you make too many requests, children will be bored with you and think you are useless. (Ms Qin)

I do not have the electric motor tricycle and I am too old to ride a bike for a long time. So when I need to buy medicine from the town, I ask my neighbour to give me a ride... I need to plan it in advance. You know, you need to see when they are available and convenient. Although he is willing to help me, I still need to cooperate with his schedule. (Ms Juan)

For those widowed respondents who only have daughters-in-law around, they are the most passive seekers of asking support from their children. Such a point was also found in the previous chapter when the single respondents were seeking financial support.

I am alone now. My son is not home and my daughter married to another place... I have only got a daughter-in-law around me... I seldom ask her to provide me any support... She lives not far away from me. It is about 8 to 10minutes walking. She knows everything about me. If she wants to give me a hand, she will come. I am not going to ask her to come to help me.

(Mr Ming)

If she comes to support me, I am happy. If she does not, I am not going to blame her. Because I still depend on them to take care of me in the future. If I trouble her too much now, I am afraid they will be bored in the future.

(Mr Guo Li)

There is an extreme example that revealed the dispute between in-laws.

I do not dare to ask her to take care of me. She is angry with me... She is the first son's wife. They married a long time ago. At that time, I am poor and cannot afford much. When the little son got married, his wife asked for a lot of things. I just gave what they want. It was not my fault. The social value is changing. If I did not do that, the little son could not find a wife.

(Mr Guo Li)

Children

Migrant children VS. Local children

Respondants firstly chose their local children to ask for support.

They can do little even they return home very soon... They are not home for a very long time. They need to know everything first. They need information to know every situation such as which hospital is good, which doctor is good, and how the medical insurance works. (Ms Yao)

It is not easy for him [her migrant son] to come back. He is working and making money... You know what, I do not want to be the one who drags him down. (Ms Feng)

One is enough for now. He (the local son) can drive me to the hospital and talk to the doctors. That is enough... Of course, if I am in serious ill, he definitely will tell his brother and they will come back to take care of me.

(Mr Jian Pei)

Sons VS. Daughters

In the previous chapter, it mentioned that the daughters provide more material and hands-on support than sons. However, the majority of respondents did not mention that they actively asked for support from their daughters. Only a few of them said that they asked their daughter to help them with laundry and cleaning.

I asked my daughters to come here helping me with washing my bed sheets. The washing machine does not work. The sheet is too heavy to me to wash... In winter, I also ask her to wash my clothes... She always did what I asked for. After several times, she just comes regularly and helps me. (Brother Gang)

For respondents who have only local daughters, they usually ask their daughters to call their sons back when they are in greater frailty.

When the doctor told me that I need surgery, I asked my daughter to call my son back to take care of me... If I asked her to do so, I think she probably will do. While, she has already married... I want her to take care of me, but I have to think about her. If she spends too much time and effort on me without her brother's presence, she would be blamed by her husband's family... You know, married daughters belong to her husband family. I cannot ask too much from her. (Ms Qin)

The respondents do not take their daughters as caregivers for granted. Rather, they believe that their married daughters do not have the responsibility of taking care of them. And the daughters only play a role as assistant to their brothers to provide care and support.

Emotional needs

Indeed, people are getting emotionally frailer in old age. During the interview, most of the respondents started crying when I talked about their migrant children with them. When I asked them directly if they missed their children, all of them answered positively. In this section, it is going to show the process and outcome of respondents' emotional support seeking behaviour. Accordingly, it finds that the respondents will call their migrant children, hang out to visit their siblings or go to a local market, and chat with neighbours to tackle their emotional needs.

Migrant children

Transnational family studies have identified that thanks to the improved communication technologies such as telephone and internet, it is becoming much easier for the migrants and stay behind family members to convey their concern and love. Lack of access to such technologies is seen as a barrier for the family members to feel connected. In this study, this is not a problem as all of the respondents have access to telephones or mobile phones and no one expressed difficulties of using them. In particular, except eight of them using a landline phone, others are all using mobile phones.

I use my mobile phone to call my son. I used to have a landline phone... I like the mobile phone. It is so small and convenient...I just want to know their situation. I am a nervous and worrisome person. It makes me feel ease when I know that they are all well outside. ... Usually, I call him on

night... Every one or two days. (Mr Gong Li)

I called my daughter when I feel lonely and unhappy ... Just want to hear her voice... My husband asked me not to call that often because they are busy. Although he says so, he wants to know her situation as well... At the beginning, I did not know how to use it [mobile phone]. It was too complicated to me. However, my son bought me another one that is specially designed for older people with larger keyboard, louder sound and less function... I am happy with it. I can call them very easy. (Ms Ai Li)

The above statements are shared by several other respondents. By comparing the help-seeking pattern of the respondents whose children are all migrants, it evidences the gendered notions of care. That is, the respondents are more willing to call their migrant daughters rather than sons. Several respondents' statements provide possible explanations for their dislike of calling their migrant sons.

I told him I am ill. And then, he just asked me how much money I need to see a doctor. You know what, I do not want his money. I just wanted to talk to him about my illness and hear from him. (Ms Ying)

He did not call me in his early stage of migration. I did not call him as well... I called him but, you know, the conversation is very short. He did not have much to say to me. So I just call him if there is something really happens... My daughter and I can talk for ages. She tells me a lot of things and care about me. For example, she asked me my health, the food and medicine I eat. She always tells me to eat fruit and drink milk. (Ms Fan)

As revealed in the previous section, the older parents need monetary support and it is essential for their living. However, the respondents show that the money does not guarantee satisfaction. They want to be concerned and taken care of instead of simply given money. Putting too much attention on money may undervalue the older parents' actual emotional needs. Given the children's migration, there is still a gendered care notion. That is, the daughters responded to their parents' emotional needs with more affective forms, while the sons fail to provide psychological satisfaction.

Go socialising

Apart from contacting their migrant children in case of emotional depression, the respondents also reported that they usually spend some time visiting their siblings, going to the town market, and chatting with people. However, by comparing the interview data, I found that there are differences between the couple respondents and single respondents. In particular, with the presence of a spouse, the couple respondents are more likely to carry out the former two activities, whereas the single respondents are more likely to be confined to the village and interact with their village peers.

My husband can drive the electric motor tricycle. So it is very convenient to go outside... We visited his sister who married to the city last month. We set off in the morning and arrived there just before the noon. He is quite happy. His sister got bad health. As we are all old, there are not much time left. (Mr Dao Li)

Indeed, having someone to give a ride is important because the average distance between the two villages is about 20 to 30 minutes driving. Some single respondents who do not have a vehicle or are less physically capable of managing it highlighted the difficulties of finding a free

ride to take them to town or somewhere beyond their walking distance.

People are afraid of providing you with a ride. You are old so they have the responsibility of taking care of you. If anything happens during the journey, they are afraid of being blamed by your family members. So, it is understandable... When I asked someone to take me to the town, I told them my health is good and they do not need to take any responsibility if I fall. (Ms Qin)

You have to coordinate your time with others. If they are not convenient, it will be trouble for them. I do not want to bother others. (Ms Li)

I do not ask people to give me a ride. Rather, I ask around to find who is going to town and when they are going to set off. And then, I will walk around their house or the road they will pass. When I see them, I greet them and see if there is room for me... I do not make the request first. I think it brings burden to them. (Sister Hong)

Not every single older person cannot ride the tricycle. Some of them are physically and mentally capable of doing that. However, they still expressed their unwillingness of going outside and preferred to stay around.

I have got the motor tricycle and I can manage it. It was mainly used to drop-off and pick up my grandchild before and after school... I seldom to ride it to go outside for pleasure except to help others or a necessary trip... I am alone even I go to town market. I just do not feel good and do not like it... I think that chatting with others is quite interesting. It makes me feel

good and very useful to kill time especially when there is not agriculture work to do... We do some work together while we are talking. I helped my niece to make a new bed sheet... It makes me useful... I also get some information from another old woman. She told me a kind of medicine that is quite effective to treat her knee pain. I tried it. It really works. (Mr Dao Li)

Some other respondents also evidenced that their loneliness has been a barrier for them to go socialising outside of the village. They are more content with communicating with their village peers. By doing so, they can get information about medical insurance, quality of hospital services, the effectiveness of pills, and promotional sales information in the town market.

Summary: self-reliance before reliance on children

As shown in this section, a distinctive help-seeking pattern has emerged among rural older people in China: first, self-reliance; second, reliance on children if self-reliance is impossible.

In traditional China, parents relied first and foremost on their children. Why has this changed?

First, there are no effective formal channels for rural older people to request or enlist more support from their children. Traditionally, national laws as well as local authorities enabled older parents to obtain support from their children. However, as discussed in the above sections, parents have lost their power and authority over their adult children in the process of rural-urban migration. Although parents' right to ask for support from their adult children has recently received legal backing, such as the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, as well as the Marriage Law, it is near-impossible for older people to use these channels to secure old-age support by filing lawsuits

(Yan 2003). Consistent with the results of previous urban studies, the older respondents in this study were reluctant to take family disputes to the village committee for mediation, due to embarrassment. They also expressed concern about risking their financial and emotional relationships with their children as a result of seeking legal redress. Therefore, it can be concluded that no useful and effective mechanism is available for rural older people in China to secure their traditional prescribed privilege.

Second, parents' new tendency for self-reliance is closely related to the collective values of traditional filial piety. As demonstrated in the previous chapter and elsewhere, traditional filial piety stresses family interests and harmony. Conforming to this value system, older parents today are willing to sacrifice their interests for the "greater good," enabling their adult children to free themselves from the obligations due to their wider families and pay more attention to conjugal and personal interests.

Third, as the basic requirements of life are more easily satisfied today, older parents have turned their attention to improving their intergenerational relationships. In an effort to maintain emotional bonds with their children, they are reluctant to make demands and attempt to remain independent as far as possible. The respondents also attempted to attribute their children's inadequate support to social pressures. Although this study did not include adult children, the older respondents identified some of the difficulties faced by their adult migrant children as legitimate excuses for their failure to provide support. Meanwhile, the older parents supported their adult children as much as they could. For example, they provided financial support for their adult children to get married, cared for their grandchildren and even covered some of their grandchildren's tuition fees and daily expenses. According to Yan (2003), their adult children exhibit an "incomplete and unbalanced individuality": they

tend to “emphasise individual rights and personal interests while downplaying a person’s obligations to the community and other individuals” (Yan 2003, p. 16). Yan called them “uncivil individual[s]” who conceive of self-interest in exceedingly narrow terms.

Fourth, the increasing self-reliance of rural older parents is facilitated by the widespread usage of modern technology. Traditionally, older parents depended on their adult children to do physical work. Both agricultural work and domestic chores required intensive labour input. This study showed that the prevalence of washing machines has reduced older people’s dependence on others for housework. In addition, with the modernisation of agriculture, more and more tractors and other heavy farm machinery are used in modern rural China. This reduces labour input and allows older people to escape demanding physical jobs. Lastly, even if older people are no longer able to work, they can rent out their farmland in exchange for cash or grain.

Help-seeking rules

By focusing on the help-seeking process of the respondents, some general rules can be noticed. First, the needs should be genuine and essential. Second, to follow proper patterns, that is to seek support from blood relations first and find the potential helper who is capable of providing the support. Third, the seeker should have the proper attitude: being grateful and humble, rather than making the demand. Lastly, use proper language based on different kinds of needs.

Genuine and essential

According to the data, support should be requested only for genuine needs. Besides, the needs should be essential as well. For example, money for sickness, and personal care during and immediately after hospitalisation.

Nowadays, people want everything even they do not need. They should not do that. They should consider asking for help only in the case they cannot manage it. (Brother Gang)

You need to tell your children real situation. If you cheat on them, they will not support you next time. Or they doubt your true ability. (Mr Chang Pei)

Find the right helper

To find the right helper is the key to achieving successful help-seeking outcomes. There are two principles. Firstly, to seek help follows the above-mentioned patterns, and also to find the one who is capable of providing the requested help.

I think you should find the person who is capable of providing support. If someone is in the same situation with you or even worse, there is no point to ask support from them. (Sister Li)

I ask my second son to cover my medicine bill as he is running a small business and has a better financial situation. (Mr Jian Pei)

They are same like me who do not have a large amount of cash. I do not borrow cash from them. (Ms Ning)

The proper attitudes

According to the respondents, they also need to show a set of proper attitudes including being humble, understanding and grateful towards helpers.

Children are not the same with that before. You cannot show that you got any temper. Nowadays, older people need to be humble. You need to show humility to them rather than your authority. (Ms Ning)

If you want to be good, to have a better life, you need to be small... That is, listen to your children and do not make them angry especially the daughter-in-law. Even you do not get their support, you need to show your understanding of their difficulties. By doing so, you probably can get support in the future. (Mr Fu Li)

I am grateful to my neighbour. People need to be grateful to others who helped them. This is personality. You should thank for those people. Otherwise, no one is willing to help you. They think you are mean and not good. You got very bad reputation in the village. (Ms Ying)

The proper language

As previously discussed, there are two types of help-seeking process: prototypical and nonprototypical (DePaulo 1983). In this study, both of the processes are found. Some respondents directly asked for support from their children and neighbours with regard to financial and hands-on support.

My husband told my migrant son that I need money. He sent it very soon.
(Ms Fan)

I went to my brother's home and told him the situation. He lent me 200 (£20). It was still not enough. Therefore, I had to borrow another 100 (£10) from my neighbour...I told her what I was going to do with the money and he lent it to me. (Ms Yao)

Several other respondents also used the direct help-seeking strategy. It found that such strategy is sometimes conditioned. That is, the seeker needs to provide a reasonable explanation for the helper first and then to make the request. Besides, some others expressed

their need indirectly and waited for the listeners to initiate the help they needed.

My farmland needs watering. So I told my local son, "I have moved the hose to the land and going to move the pump right now. They are so heavy." He said, "I will be there with you and help you to do the rest." I was so glad he said that and came to help. (Mr Gong Li)

I do not ask people to give me a ride. Rather, I ask around to find who is going to town and when they are going to set off. And then, I will walk around their house or the road they will pass. When I see them, I greet to them and see if there is room for me. I will tell them I am going to town. And they probably will take me with them. (Sister Hong)

It seems that the respondents who used indirect help-seeking strategy informed their needs to the potential helpers by conversations. They expressed their needs in ways such as "I am going to town" instead of "can you drive me to town". "I need to wash my bed sheets" can be interpreted as "I want you to clean my bed sheets." By doing so, the seekers seem less demanding and bring less "burden to them (the helper)" (Sister Hong) as well as much flexibility. Thus, it avoids possible pressure or embarrassment between the seekers and the helpers.

Additionally, by comparing the two strategies, it found that the direct help-seeking strategy was mainly used when the respondents' needs are absolutely necessary. However, it is not saying that the respondents who used an indirect help-seeking strategy did not have genuine and essential needs. Rather, their needs can be met by themselves to some extent with extreme efforts or much longer time.

Greater realism and renunciation of traditional filial obligations

Another aim of this study was to identify the rules followed by older parents in seeking support to meet their needs. By focusing on the help-seeking process of the respondents, some general rules can be noticed: first, the needs must be genuine and essential. Second, parents should follow proper patterns, seeking support from blood relations first. Third, parents seeking support should have an appropriate attitude: grateful and humble rather than demanding. Lastly, suitable language should be used to make the request, depending on need. Overall, these rules may offer several insights into the cultural adaptations of older people in China in response to social changes, as follows.

It firstly may imply that rural older parents have renounced their traditional expectations of filial obligation toward their adult children. According to traditional filial piety, adult children hold the responsibility of supporting their older parents in any situation. However, participants in this study expressed that they only should seek support when the needs are genuine and essential. In other words, those older parents do not require their children to support them on a daily basis except in the case of a crisis. In addition, their growing tendency to display humility and express gratitude to their helpers suggests that rural older people are increasingly valuing emotional connection over responsibility. This trend has been observed in some other well-developed Asian countries that share the tradition of Confucian filial piety, such as Japan and South Korea (Sung 2000). Some scholars have also reported that older people in China's big cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, are prioritising emotional exchange over the traditional requirements of filial piety (Whyte 1997). Whyte (1997) also proposed that older people who are securely covered by pensions and health insurance are becoming more emotionally oriented in their relationships with adult children. However, although rural older people in China are now covered by an old-age pension system and a health-care system,

Whyte's assumption cannot be uncritically applied, as these benefits are barely sufficient for survival. What can be concluded, however, is that rural older parents are becoming more realistic and adapting to the new social and cultural environment. This point is elaborated in the following section. Further, the final help-seeking rule may indirectly reveal that needing support or help is not a source of shame for rural older people. This suggests that the traditional connection between being old and being supported by others is still internalised by older parents. This finding is inconsistent with the suggestion made in previous work that people are eager to hide their needs to preserve their autonomy (Smithers 1985).

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion

This study was designed to explore the extent and dynamics of support among migrant workers' older parents in rural China. By employing social support and help-seeking behaviour theories, it aimed to address several important questions concerning the practice of Confucian filial piety within the context of rural-urban migration in rural China. These questions that have been mentioned in the introduction chapter of this study: first, what is the caring relationship between migrant workers' older parents and their children? Second, how far has internal migration in China shaped the practice of filial piety? Third, what are the main social support differences between older people with different physical conditions and family compositions? Further, how do government policies shape the contents of social support among older people in rural areas? In addition, what are the main factors older people take into consideration when seeking support? Finally, has existing social support addressed the needs of migrant workers' older parents?

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of older parents' support in the context of their children's immigration, this study proposed to see support from two aspects: supply of support and older parents' demand for support. Following this point, the previous two analysis chapters focused on exploring the support received by left-behind older parents and their help-seeking behaviour. This chapter organises and discusses the major findings reported in the preceding two chapters. Linking these findings with those of the earlier theoretical chapters, the discussion provides both theoretical connections and contextual explanations.

Changing social and cultural environment in rural China

As the image of old age is a socially constructed concept, the experience of old age varies to some extent between social contexts (Phillipson 1998). Older people in rural China have

experienced significant social, economic and political changes since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). As a result, the cornerstone of Confucian filial piety has been gradually challenged by the Party's socialist ideology, the land-reform movement, the commune system, and the household-registration (hukou) system. However, it has to admit that there is always an organisation such as production-team or village committee to back rural older people and ensure they receive support from family members.

However, such arrangement has been completely destroyed by adult children's migration. Findings of this study show that the moral aspect of family support was reproduced and older people's control over family resources allocation was overtly loosened. In other words, the support relationship among family members has been reproduced under the changing social and economic system. In particular, it refers to a thorough loss of power and authority by (1) older parents and (2) local patriarchal kinship based authority and the state system.

Older people's high status and authority were traditionally well defined by an age hierarchy and supported by Confucian filial piety. Older people were considered to possess wisdom, authority and prestige as a result of their agricultural skills and life experience. Children's responsibilities and obligations to their parents were emphasised; the reverse received little attention (Ng, Phillips and Lee 2002). Accordingly, children were responsible for taking care of their older parents and following their parents' instructions as well as showing respect, support and love. Meanwhile, parents managed and controlled family income and allocated family resources. They had the right to make every decision within the family, ranging from daily purchases to the marriage of their adult children.

In this study, the older parents were found to consult their daughters-in-law or sons before making purchasing decisions. The outcomes of such decisions were significantly influenced by

their children, as the older parents neither possessed nor were in control of resources such as land, money, and knowledge. Their skills and experience were no longer considered valuable by their adult children. For example, as the older parents had spent almost their whole lives farming, they had gained enormous experience of and skills in cultivating agriculture. However, as the migrant children no longer worked on farmland, the parents' experience had become useless.

One study conducted in urban China revealed significant changes in parental authority (Whyte 1997). After China's economic reform, members of the younger generation started to choose partners themselves rather than acceding to their parents' arrangements. They were also more likely to set up new households with their partners than to remain living with their parents. Most importantly, they emphasised independence over dependence, with less stress placed on family obligation and obedience. In light of these changes, Whyte asked the following question: has the new spirit of independence from filial piety changed children's loyalty and sense of filial obligation towards members of their large families?

This study provided substantial evidence supporting Whyte's findings in urban China. First, most of the older respondents lived independently, and their children had their own houses. Even when older parents lived in the same village as their children, they rarely shared households. Second, the older people did not play a major role in purchasing decisions, and were not permitted by their children to manage the family finances. In other words, the older people no longer had the power or ability to control their children's income, and their own income and purchasing decisions were influenced by their children. They had to rely on their adult children because they did not have enough income to support themselves. As a result, the adult children could decide how much financial assistance to give their parents, and how

often. This severely limited the older people's power and authority over purchasing decisions. Even more importantly, this power and authority had shifted to the families of the older people's sons. In particular, daughters-in-law, who can be seen as "shadow managers" and decision makers, played a significant role in choosing whether to grant parents' requests. Therefore, the older people needed to take the attitudes of their daughters-in-law into consideration. All of these findings suggest that parental authority is currently in decline and shifting towards the families of adult children, particularly sons.

Despite the transition of power from older parents to their children, the local patriarchal kinship based authority and the state system regulating, supervising, and enforcing adult children's practice of filial piety has also lost their role in supervising adult children's provision of support for their older parents. Some previous studies have identified major sources of dispute, such as conflict between sons over the division of family property, conflict between parents-in-law and daughters-in-law, conflicts between son caregivers and defects in the moral character of caregivers (Qu 2007, Jiang, Li and Feldman 2015). This study did not focus on conflict over old-age support in the context of adult children's rural-urban migration. However, it did indicate that the strategies used by older parents to deal with such conflict have changed.

Some scholars have found that in traditional China, parents first sought support from their children's uncles, whether maternal or paternal. Parents next asked the seniors in their village to arbitrate disputes. In addition, village committees were involved in resolving domestic disputes. Although the arbiters came from different backgrounds—extended family members, local village authorities or both—they played the same role in evaluating and intervening in family disputes to bring about reconciliation or agreement. As witnesses to this mediation

process, they also supervised the adherence of both parties to the agreement reached.

However, the interview data obtained in this study provided no evidence that the abovementioned strategies are still operational and effective among parents in China. On the contrary, the older respondents did nothing when their children failed to meet their requests. Rather than inviting other people to intervene by forcing their children to support them, or even expressing resentment towards their adult children, they understood that their migrant children were sometimes incapable of supporting them and meeting their needs. This finding may reflect the changing attitudes of older people towards social support. Some studies have shown that perceptions of the content of social support and attitudes toward such support are closely related to social and cultural context (Jacobson 1987). Even when people belong to the same support networks, their behaviour in and attitudes toward utilising and soliciting support may differ according to their social and cultural background (Taylor, et al. 2004).

Indeed, rural China has gone through several social and economic changes since the establishment of the PRC (People's Republic of China) in 1949. A notable consequence is the transformation of the basic values and customs guiding human interaction in rural areas. From a network perspective, Fei (1992) defined traditional China's rural society as an "acquaintance society": a society in which people are familiar with each other and in which rituals and customs rather than laws and reason determine acceptable and unacceptable forms of interaction. In other words, individuals' behaviour can be influenced by other people.

Life in rural society is very parochial. Villagers restrict the scope of their daily activities; they do not travel far, they seldom make contact with the outside world; they live solitary lives...It is a society where people live from birth to death in the same place...Every child grows up in everyone else's

eyes, and in the child's eyes everyone and everything seem ordinary and habitual... (Fei 1992, p. 41)

The above quotation describes the agrarian society of traditional China, which was characterised by a high level of familiarity and a relative lack of mobility.

Over several decades, China's rural society has gone through significant changes such as Mao's collective-agriculture movement, Deng's economic reforms and, recently, massive rural-urban migration. Therefore, the description of rural China as an acquaintance society has been criticised and modified by some scholars. For example, after taking market relations into consideration, He (2000) argued that China's rural society has in fact become a semi-acquaintance society. He stressed that the relationship between rural villagers has become less familiar and more rationalised, and that the lives of these villagers are no longer "bound to earth" but "bound to market." Similarly, Gou and Zuo (2009) called China's rural society a "weak acquaintance society," and Guo and his colleague (2012) argued that rural-urban migration has decreased the scope of people's social ties. These theories differentiate traditional from contemporary rural society, mainly in terms of familiarity.

From another perspective, Wu (2014), highlighting the importance of young people in rural China, defined rural China as a "baseless acquaintance society," indicating that the structural and cultural foundations of rural society have been destroyed. He found that with the absence of young migrants, who formerly made a major contribution to the labour force and public life in rural villages, the fundamental features of Fei's acquaintance society, such as peer pressure, "face" (*mianzi*) and accumulative social capital, are no longer visible (Fei 1992). This may change the narrative and reciprocal relationships between rural people. As village committees and other local authorities have lost their influence over individuals' behaviour, it is pointless

for older people to enlist their help with resolving domestic-support issues.

Given the changing environment, another question arises: how has support relations between family members changed? In general, there are three widely used models of intergenerational support: the bargaining-power model, the exchange model and the needs-based model (Goode 1963; Morgan and Hiroshima 1983; Whyte 1992). The bargaining-power model stresses that the more resources, power and authority older people have, the more support they can obtain from their adult children. The resources include land, money and knowledge. The exchange model stresses a reciprocal relationship between support providers and recipients and suggests that the more support that older people give to their children, the more support they will receive. The last model, the needs-based model, suggests that the worse the financial or physical situation of older people, the more support they will receive from their adult children; that is, adult children provide support based on their parents' needs.

In traditional China, the support relationship was not only a bargaining-power model, but also an exchange model. That is, the Confucian filial piety stressed adult children's moral obligation to support their parents. Based on the assumption that children owed their bodies and their lives to their parents, one-way support was emphasised. In addition, the rural economic system as well as the state enforcement had entitled older parents' economic advantage over their adult children.

However, the findings of this study suggest that in the wake of rural-urban migration, a more complex mechanism of intergenerational support has emerged. That is, the needs-based and exchange-based models now co-exist in rural China, manifesting differently in different situations, and the support relationship between adult children and their parents tends to be more equal.

Most existing studies have stressed that the support received by left-behind older parents from their children is now based on exchange rather than older parents' needs (Lee and Xiao 1998), and that providing childcare for grandchildren is an effective means for parents to reciprocate the support of their adult children (Silverstein, Cong and Li 2006, Cong and Silverstein 2008b, Cong and Silverstein 2011b, Cong and Silverstein 2012b, Luo and Zhan 2012). In particular, based on a survey of 1,443 older people in three migrant-exporting provinces, Hebei, Henan and Anhui, Luo and Zhan (2012) found that left-behind older parents who provided care for their children received more financial support than those with poor health, those who lived alone and those who had no independent income. In addition, compared with older people living alone, those who lived with their grandchildren received more instrumental and financial support. However, in the opposite case, the support provided by children declined (Song, Li and Feldman 2012). Cong and Silverstein (2011b) conducted longitudinal research in 2001 and 2003, and found that left-behind older parents who provided childcare and financial support at baseline received more returns, although this effect was negative for parents with non-migrant children. Similarly, Luo's (2008) "new mutual generational support pattern" and Akay and his colleague's (2013) theory of a "contractual motivation" for child-parent support indicate that in return for their children's financial support, other material help and promises of better support in the future, parents take the role of child carers. Children's support has shifted from the "altruism hypothesis" to a "new logic of balanced exchange" (Yan 2003, p. 16, Li, et al. 2012). It is obvious that the newly formed support relation is quite different from the traditional one: it emphasises equity in intergenerational relations rather than a rigid hierarchy and children's sacrifice for their parents' interests.

However, it should also be noted that this new, more balanced exchange of intergenerational support has increasingly disadvantaged older parents. The most common type of exchange behaviour for older parents, providing childcare for grandchildren, has become less effective since the development of boarding schools in rural areas of China, which has facilitated the process of providing childcare. Using National Education Development statistics, Dong (2014) reported that by the end of 2010, there were about 30 million boarding students in primary and secondary schools in rural China, accounting for 24.32% of all rural students. Most importantly, boarding-school attendance has been encouraged and accelerated among left-behind children by certain government policies. For example, the Outline of the National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) explicitly mandated that boarding schools in rural areas should prioritise left-behind children's needs. An annual report on China's education revealed that by the end of 2014, rural children made up 26.6% of primary- and secondary-school boarders, of whom 71.1% were left-behind children (Yang 2014). Despite some scholars' criticism of rural boarding schools for their poor quality of education and living conditions (Yang 2009, Growing Home 2014), these schools do relieve the burden of care placed on left-behind older people. However, the inability to care for their left-behind grandchildren may put older people at a disadvantage in terms of reciprocal intergenerational relations.

Some of the older respondents reported making efforts to cover the tuition fees, medical bills and daily expenses of their grandchildren at boarding school to strengthen their own positions within the family. Therefore, whereas many other studies have stressed the heavy burden on left-behind older parents created by the obligation to take care of their grandchildren, this study may suggest that taking care of their grandchildren has a positive impact on older

parents' well-being. There are three reasons to explain why taking care of grandchildren can boost older people's life satisfaction. First, some of the respondents reported that while taking care of their grandchildren, they received telephone calls from their migrant children. Although the content of these calls mainly related to their grandchildren, they gave the older parents a sense of connection with their migrant children. Second, providing childcare offers a direct means for older people to prove their value to their children. This enhances older people's self-confidence. The third reason relates to Confucian filial piety. Traditionally, parents were mainly responsible for maintaining family stability and harmony and continuing the family lineage. In caring for their grandchildren, older people not only reduce the burden on their migrant children, enabling them to seize all opportunities to make money, but are themselves able to fulfil their traditional responsibility to maintain family integration and cohesion.

In sum, adult children's immigration has exposed their older parents in a thoroughly new environment where the previous existing external regulation organisations have lost their power and authorities over young adult migrants. Under this "baseless acquaintance society", the nature of filial piety has changed from one-way upward support based on the age-gender-generation hierarchy to a two-way "new logic of balanced exchange" emphasising equity in intergenerational relations. This changing nature of filial piety cannot be interpreted as a loss of support from immigrants. Rather, the support those staying behind older parents received across different locations, not only from sons but also daughters, and in-laws as well as grandchildren over their life course. In next section, it will explicitly explain how the practice of filial piety has been modified in the context of adult children's immigration.

Unveiling Confucian filial piety in the context of rural-urban migration

Filial piety is an important part of China's traditional value system, obliging adult children to

support their older parents. Admittedly, “this practice is not unique to Asia, as virtually all world religions recognize filial obligations of some form as an important moral value” (Johnson and Schaner 2005, p. 437). However, as Confucianism made filial piety not only a moral guideline but a social-control system, the tradition has special meaning in China. The imperial authorities placed considerable stress on the need to meet the requirements of Confucian filial piety, incorporating this set of values into laws and everyday practices. As a result, the authority and privilege of older parents at both the level of family and the level of society were legitimated and prescribed. The orientation of filial piety is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, and stresses family harmony and continuity. However, this value system, as discussed in chapter three, has faced many challenges from both Communist and capitalist ideological positions. Linking the findings in chapter five and six, this section shows how Confucian filial piety has been modified within the families of rural-urban migrants in China. Some of the key changes of filial piety have been summarised in table 7.1. In the following sections, it discusses how filial piety is maintained or changed in the context of adult children’s migration.

Table 7.1 Changes of filial piety among older people with migrant children

Key changes in	Tradition	Findings in this research
Caregiving role of daughters	Not obligated to provide support to their natal parents after marriage	Providing emotional, financial as well as practical support
Caregiving role of daughters-in-law	Key caregivers within family	Less engaged in providing support than older parents' sons and daughters
Relationship between parents-in-law and daughters-in-law	Daughters-in-law were subordinated to their parents-in-law	More power and control in family resource allocation
Adult children's attitudes toward filial piety	Put their parents' interests in first place	Have prioritised the conjugal family's needs over their own parents' needs.
Older parents' attitudes toward adult children's filial piety	Adult children should meet all kinds of care needs of their older parents.	Show understandings for their children's insufficient filial piety, and prioritise family's needs over their own care needs, and do not impose their expectations on their adult children unless they are willing to provide support.
Filial piety expectations among older Chinese	Focused on children's obedience as well as practical and material support	Focus on intangible, emotional support, and their expectations of emotional support outweigh other forms of support.
Ways of solving domestic support disputes	Seeking support from senior people within extended family members, or village committee	To internalise such disputes
Older parents' attitudes toward help-seeking from their adult children	They were entitled to claim support from their children.	Show humble attitudes

Migration does not mean less support

The tradition of filial piety arose in an agrarian society in which rural people made a living primarily from agriculture and farmland. Accordingly, traditional filial piety required adult children to live with their parents and provide financial, physical and emotional support for the older generation. Today, rural China is affected by ongoing rural-urban migration, part of

China's modernisation, which is changing traditional patterns of family life. As a result, scholars have paid considerable attention to the support provided for rural older parents whose children are rural-urban migrants.

The findings of this study were inconsistent with the inference drawn in some existing studies that rural older people are abandoned by their migrant children. Instead, this study suggested that migrant children are still active in providing support for their left-behind older parents, although the pattern of provision and the extent of support may not conform completely to traditional prescriptions. This point was substantiated by the research findings. First, migrant children (migrant sons, migrant daughters and migrant daughters-in-law), and to a lesser extent migrant grandchildren, were found to actively provide financial support for their left-behind older parents or grandparents. In particular, migrant sons were the major financial contributors, while migrant grandchildren played a minimal role in providing financial assistance to the left-behind older people. This finding is consistent with that of certain previous studies in Chinese and other Asian settings, which indicated that migrant children play a significant role in providing financial support for their left-behind older parents (Lee and Xiao 1998, Li 2001). Indeed, the older respondents revealed that they depended on their migrant children for the majority of their financial support, asking for only a small amount of financial assistance from children living locally. This may suggest that migrant children play a more significant role than local children in financially supporting their older parents. There are three possible reasons for this practice. First, due to the influence of the Confucian principle of filial piety, migrant children may feel obliged to provide more financial support when their own financial condition is improved by migration. Second, also in line with the requirements of filial piety, migrant children may increase their financial support to

compensate for their reduced physical support and companionship. Lastly, due to migration, migrant children may be more financially capable of supporting their older parents than siblings still working on farmland. In addition, the majority of the older respondents in our study received hands-on and physical support from their migrant children when the migrants made home visits or the parents visited their migrant children. In some cases, support was provided even when the need had not been expressed. In terms of personal care, the majority of the respondents reported receiving assistance when they became severely ill and/or were hospitalised.

By exploring the content of the support received by older parents from their migrant children, it found that the distance plays a significant role in affecting migrant children's ability and capacity to provide financial support, hands-on support and emotional support for their older parents. The shorter the distance between the migrants and their older parents, the more hands-on support and the less financial support provided by the migrants. The greater the distance, the less hands-on support and the more financial support provided by the migrants. These findings indirectly lead to the conclusion that financial support compensates for a relative lack of hands-on support. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the impact of distance can be reduced by migrant children's financial capability. Travel time and cost are significant factors affecting the frequency of migrants' return visits. More affluent people can choose faster but more expensive modes of transport, whereas people from impoverished households are less inclined to spend money when choosing forms of transportation. As a result, older people from impoverished households may suffer both emotional and financial deprivation.

Overall, the findings suggested that adult children's migration does not eliminate a

relationship based on filial piety between the migrant children and their left-behind parents. Instead, migrant children (migrant sons, daughters and daughters-in-law) were found to provide less hands-on support but more financial support than their non-migrant siblings. Nevertheless, the finding that adult migrant children continue to provide support for their parents by no means implies that all other aspects of the Chinese traditional family have remained unchanged in the context of labour migration. Instead, a new pattern of receiving support was emerged, and the role of caregiving has been modified.

[New experiences of older parents with urban migrant children](#)

Traditionally, rural older parents and their adult children lived in the same villages and relied on farmland to survive. Scholars have generally reached the consensus that in the wake of rural-urban migration, migrant children provide support when they make home visits. However, this study revealed a new trend in old-age support. Specifically, a temporary pattern of support during parents' visits to their migrant children has emerged. This study indicated that the invitation to visit migrant children was highly appreciated by the older respondents, who always enjoyed the visits (despite some complaints about being unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the routine of urban life). Most of the older respondents felt that they had not been abandoned by their migrant children; on the contrary, they reported that their migrant children still cared about them and made them feel respected. Their children's migration gave them the opportunity to experience things they had never expected. This outcome is seldom mentioned in existing studies.

Although the respondents investigated in the current study still lived in rural areas, the migration of older people is an inevitable result of their adult children's migration, and this phenomenon is expected to increase as more and more younger migrants settle in cities.

According to the 2016 Report on China's Migrant Population Development, more than half of the country's migrants plan to stay permanently in their host cities, and the family size of these immigrants is increasing. The number of older migrants (aged 60 or over) increased from 9.3 million in 2010 to 17.8 million in 2015, representing 4.2 percent of a total 221 million migrants in 2010 and 7.2 percent of a total 247 million migrants in 2015. During this five-year period, the number of older migrants nearly doubled. The report also indicates that more older people are joining their migrant children in host cities. Chengrong Duan, a professor of population studies at Renmin University of China, noted that this trend has only just begun to receive attention in the last five years, and that more research should be conducted on this group (Wang 2016).

The current study yielded some important findings regarding the emerging phenomenon of the rural-urban migration of older people whose major purpose is to re-join their migrant children. First, the majority of the rural older people to have received such invitations were female, relatively healthy and at the lower end of the age range (Zhou 2002). Second, most of these older parents went to cities to support their migrant children or grandchildren. This finding is consistent with the 2016 Report on China's Migrant Population Development, which showed that about 43 percent of older migrants move to look after their children or grandchildren, while 25.4 percent move to obtain senior care (NHFPC 2016). Third, few of the respondents reported enjoying living in cities, although they were all gratified and honoured by receiving invitations from their migrant children. The respondents' feelings about co-residing with their migrant children were conflicted. As living with one's children is part of China's traditional old age support pattern, why did the older respondents show little desire to live with their migrant children? What factors hinder such older people from joining their

migrant children?

The respondents in this study identified some factors affecting their motivation to re-join with their migrant children. For example, cultural differences between urban and rural made it difficult for them to integrate with their local communities. In addition, parents who live with their migrant children in cities may be entirely dependent on their children for support. For example, some of the respondents had to rely on their children even to travel around the city, as their accent made it difficult for others to understand them and they could not take the bus as they were unable to read. As a result, they tended to stay at home watching TV, with little else to do. Their rural homes gave them a sense of comfort and familiarity, whereas living in cities was just like being a “guest.” Therefore, parents who lived with their migrant children experienced increasing dependence and vulnerability in terms of their mobility and routine daily activities. The unfamiliar urban environment may make migrant older parents feel useless. As a result, older rural-urban migrants—as both migrants and older people—face both social and familial discrimination. They not only receive the unfair treatment meted out to all rural-urban migrants in terms of living conditions, salary and welfare benefits, but may also experience discrimination from their migrant children’s families, as they have lost their economic independence and their power and authority over their migrant children. Unsurprisingly, therefore, many of the older respondents were eager to return to the rural villages with which they were familiar and where they could support themselves through farming.

Changing patrilineal tradition

Another important shift has been observed in the role of daughters and daughters-in-law in supporting older parents. In traditional China, sons and their wives were the major providers

of material support for older people; daughters, especially married daughters, were not considered support providers for their natal parents. Instead, they provided emotional support or played supplemental roles in their natal families when needed. However, the findings of this study suggest that the role of married children today, and especially that of daughters, is more complex. Rural-urban migration has empowered rural women. Reports on Chinese women's social status indicate that migration enhances rural women's decision power over family issues (NBS and ACWF 2001, 2011). The declining suicide rate among rural women provides further evidence of rural women's empowerment. The rate of suicide of rural women was disproportionately high between 1987 and 1997, but decreased significantly after 2000 (Lee and Kleinman 2003, Wang, Chan and Yip 2014). Some scholars have attributed this change to rural-urban migration, which allows women to escape their traditional subordinate status within their families (Jing, Wu and Zhang 2010).

Indeed, this study revealed that compared with non-migrant daughters, daughters who had migrated provided more financial support for their natal parents, although their role in providing financial support was still less important than that of migrant sons. This may suggest that the traditional pattern of old-age support is still dominant (Xu 2001), but that the rural-urban migration of women has reduced the differences between sons and daughters. My results do not support the findings of Shi's (2009) ethnographic fieldwork in a rural community in north-eastern China, in which he proposed that daughters are considered more filial than sons; nor are the results of this study consistent with the argument made in other studies that daughters have become the primary financial providers for their older parents (Whyte 2004, Zhang 2007). Our findings are also inconsistent with the results reported by Guo and his colleagues (2009), who found that daughters' migration had no effect on any form of support

received by older parents.

Although migrant daughters have become more active in providing support for their natal parents, the older respondents still did not actively seek support and assistance from their married daughters; they continued to believe that their daughters now belonged to their husbands' families and had neither the responsibility nor the obligation to support their parents. This finding is consistent with the observation made in other studies that older parents in China still name sons as their preferred source of support (Luo and Zhan 2012, Cong and Silverstein 2014). The changing role of daughters in providing support for parents has been observed in previous urban studies suggesting that both sons and daughters regularly provide financial assistance for their natal parents (Goldstein and Ku 1993). In addition, some studies have indicated that the contribution made by daughters and sons to their parents' care is very similar: 17.7 percent and 18.7 percent (Yu, et al. 2000). However, there are still some differences between urban and rural older parents. Urban older parents tend to regard daughters as a source of support and rely on their daughters as much as on their sons (Gu, et al. 1995). As evident from this study, however, rural older parents continue to focus on their sons, deeply affected by family continuity and stressing their sons' preferences regardless of whether the sons provide support—even if they asked for more from their parents than they provide.

Rural-urban migration, a component of urbanisation, has already changed some traditional old-age practices in rural China. Although the findings of this study suggest that the traditional emphasis on sons as support providers is still dominant, rural-urban migration has weakened the difference between sons' and daughters' contribution to their parents' welfare. Given that the families of rural young men currently face exorbitant bride prices (Jiang, Zhang and

Sánchez-Barricarte 2015), will the son's role as main support provider change in the future?

And will the traditional support pattern persist in rural areas or shift toward the urban style?

Along with the increasing support provided by daughters for their natal parents, the findings of this study show that daughters' duties to their families-in-law have also changed. Traditionally, daughters-in-law were expected to assist their parents-in-law with housekeeping and provide personal and emotional care. As noted in the previous chapters, daughters-in-law were traditionally subservient to their husbands and parents-in-law. In other words, they were regarded as belongings by their male partners and servants by their parents-in-law. It seems that daughters-in-law had no power or authority within the family. However, the findings of this study suggest that in the context of rural-urban migration, the status of daughters-in-law within their families has significantly improved. In particular, the older parents in this study reported that their daughters-in-law not only took part in decision-making processes but, more importantly, exerted significant control over family purchasing decisions. Indeed, the older respondents reported that their daughters-in-law were the decision makers in their sons' families. Although no data was obtained from the younger generation in this study, some existing studies have shown that migration has enabled rural women in China to access much more power over decision-making (NBS and ACWF 2001, 2011).

At this point, the following question should be asked: does the improved social status of daughters-in-law make them weaker or stronger support providers? As this study is not based on longitudinal data and can thus provide no comparative information on the support behaviour of daughters-in-law before and after their migration, no definitive answer can be given at this point. However, comparison of the content of support provided by migrant and local daughters-in-law indicates that rural-urban migration makes daughters-in-law more

financially supportive. However, the older parents reported that they could no longer depend on their daughters-in-law to support them. How should this controversial finding be interpreted? One cannot simply say that the role of daughters-in-law in providing support for their parents-in-law is marginal or nominal in the context of rural-urban migration, because it is difficult to determine precisely how much money is earned by sons and daughters-in-law, respectively. Financial support received from either sons or daughters-in-law should be considered as support from sons' families. Therefore, daughters-in-law are not marginal support providers for their parents-in-law. It is also impossible to deny that daughters provide the kinds of support and daily care for their natal parents that were traditionally the responsibility of daughters-in-law.

Contextualising rural older people's social support and help-seeking behaviour in contemporary China

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, this study explores support from two aspects: supply of support and demand for support. On the one hand, the support aspect enables the author to make comparisons of practice of filial piety between tradition and in the context of adult children's migration. On the other hand, the demand aspects discovers rural older people's changing perception and actual behaviour of seeking support from their support networks.

According to the findings in chapter six, the rural older people seek support both from their adult children and other support resources. As parent-child support is a very important part of traditional filial piety and the primary focus of this study, it has summarised in the last section of chapter six that the rural older parents might have renounced their traditional expectations of filial obligation toward their adult children and expressed high willingness of self-reliance when solving their difficulties. Here, it refers back to theories of social support

and help-seeking behaviour discussed in chapter two and linking findings in chapter five and six to provide an indigenous view about older people's social support and help-seeking behaviour in contemporary rural China.

[Social support of migrant workers' older parents in rural China](#)

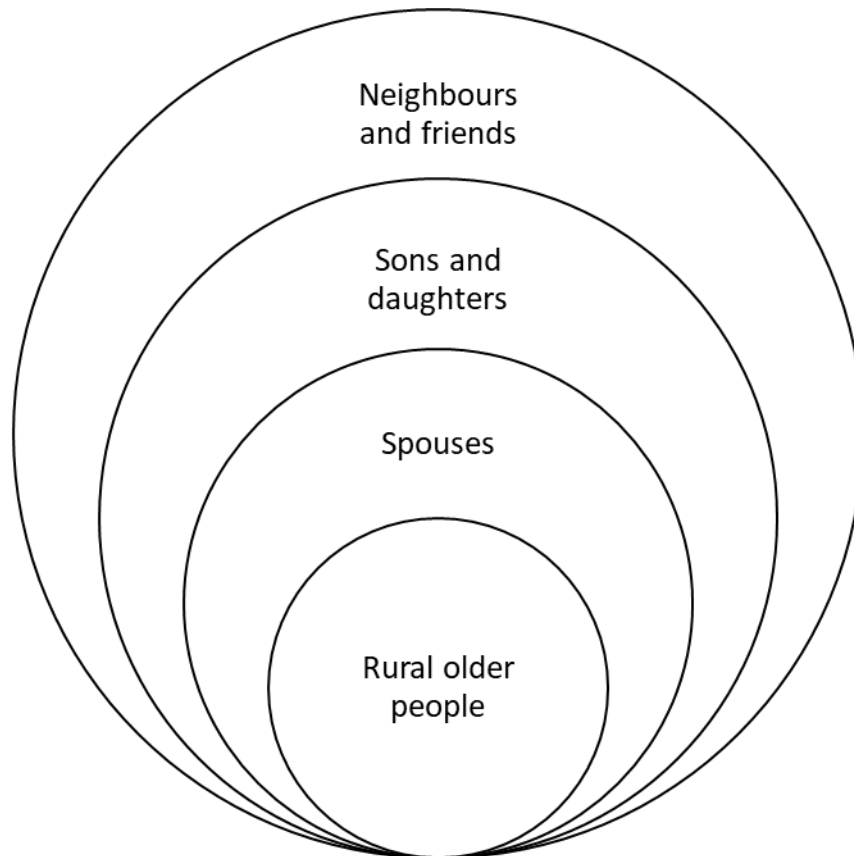
As identified earlier in the first section of chapter two, formal and informal support networks are two important sources of providing support for older people. However, this study reported that the informal support networks such as sons, daughters, grandchildren as well as neighbours or friends are far more important than formal support in terms of financial, physical, and emotional aspects.

Although the formal support networks such as the rural old age pension and the new rural co-operative medical insurance have marginal roles of supporting rural older people, findings from chapter five evidenced that the development of formal support has a positive effect on informal support. For example, some respondents expressed that their children were more willing to provide monetary support for their medical bills after the new rural co-operative medical insurance was implemented. Therefore, this study supports the complementary/supplementary effect between formal and informal support .

As shown in figure 7.1, the core elements of the respondents' informal support networks include: spouses, sons and daughters, and neighbours and friends. The spouses are extremely important support providers in all aspects. The sons and daughters are more useful in financial aspects, while, the neighbours and friends are critical in times of emergency with limited support ability. Given the discussion in the section of "changing social and cultural environment in rural China" in chapter seven, the village committee is no longer seen as a supportive organisation for older people to mediate domestic disputes over old age support

issues.

Figure 7.1: the informal networks of rural older parents with migrant children



All those support providers in figure 7.2 can provide all kinds of support but with varying support ability from time to time. In other words, it supports the hierarchical-compensatory model mentioned in chapter two that explains the operation of informal support networks (Cantor 1979). Contrary to Litwak's theory of shared functions (Litwak 1985) that focused on the nature of tasks, the hierarchical-compensatory model is based on the assumption that the provision of support by informal caregivers follows a particular order – from primary caregivers, such as spouses, children and relatives, to secondary caregivers, such as friends, neighbours and other potential supporters. The model also suggests that different kinds of support can substitute each other. When one support element is unavailable, other

supporters step in to compensate. In this study, it was found that when sons were not available, daughters stepped in to provide hands-on and financial support. And when there were no children around, the neighbours and friends provided hands-on, emotional, and even small amounts of financial support.

In sum, the rural older people mainly relied on their informal support networks. The supportiveness of these support elements including spouses, sons, daughters, neighbours and friends can be strengthened by providing better formal support services and programmes. And they show great flexibility and elasticity in the context of massive rural-urban migration.

Help-seeking: absence of alternative choices and resources

As discussed in chapter two, the behaviour of help-seeking is a complex process that has different manifestations in different cultural environments and starts with one's perception of a problem, choice of support resources and actual behaviour of seeking support. In this study, the respondents did not express high needs of seeking support. The general rule the respondents followed is to seek support only when it is absolutely necessary and genuine. In other words, they did not see their financial, physical and emotional needs as severe problems. Instead, they firstly relied on themselves to meet their needs and show greater realism.

The unwillingness to seek support from others can be explained by feelings of indebtedness and embarrassment, fear of rejection or refusal, and an unwillingness to reveal one's apparent inadequacies/a more general disinclination for self-disclosure (DePaulo 1983). In this study, the rural older people also expressed similar concerns. For example, they expressed their need indirectly avoiding causing troubles to others and being rejected. However, it seems that this cannot be simply explained by those theories based on western culture. Rather, it should take Chinese historical and cultural factors into consideration. This is because the sociocultural

elements determine individuals' definitions and perceptions of problems, which in turn affects their choice of helper (Chatters, Taylor and Jackson 1985, Ben-Porath 2002).

Firstly, those older people's life experiences make them more resilient and easily satisfied with material conditions. The older people in this study have experienced poorer lives with insufficient food and income to maintain a productive and healthy life. The per capita income was only about £22 per year in 1978 and about 33% of the rural population lived below the poverty line (Fan, Zhang and Zhang 2004). Such difficult life experiences makes rural older people easily satisfied with current life. As a respondent said "I have food and clothes, it is much better than before". Thanks to the tough life experience, the rural older parents do not consider that current difficulties can bring as severe problems and they can live with it.

In addition, it contributes to the Chinese societies' cultural values such as interdependence, others-directedness and collectivist ideology (Hofstede 1980; Ho, Chan and Chiu 1989; Triandis 1994). That is, Chinese people value mutual relationships and they are not self-centred. They put a lot of emphasis on other people's opinions, thoughts and feelings especially for their immediate and extended family members. More importantly, they emphasise collective interest instead of self-achievement. In this study, the older parents tried to maintain independence and indirectly ask for support. By doing so, they tried not to be a burden to their adult children, avoiding causing trouble to others.

Moreover, as identified earlier in chapter two, there are several factors affecting the process of help-seeking. First, members of people's informal networks have a significant influence on the process of help-seeking (Veroff 1981). This study has evidenced that older people's pathway of seeking support varied. For example, when the older parents have daughters-in-law around, they seek advice from their daughters-in-law. When their daughters-in-law are

away, they only seek support from their sons wherever they are.

Also, the previous studies expressed that people prefer to reveal their problems to family and friends before consulting professionals (Gourash 1978, Rogler and Cortes 1993), and seek support from those who had less resources (Nadler 1980). This study has found that the rural older people do express their needs of seeking a doctor to their sons, daughters or neighbours rather than professionals. However, it is not because family and friends are less likely to elicit feelings of indebtedness, provide more trust and closeness, and pose less threat to self-esteem (Shapiro 1980, Grayson, Miller and Clarke 1998). It is mainly because they cannot find available helpers in hospitals or other formal organisations. In other words, it is a result of absence of alternative choices. Secondly, the respondents in this study expressed a tendency of seeking support from members with similar backgrounds. It is because of their lack of resources to reciprocate. As mentioned in chapter three, rural China has less financial opportunities other than working in agriculture. Besides, the loss of authority of rural older people makes them less able to exchange support with others including their family members and villagers. Consequently, they are only confident to ask support from similar age groups.

In sum, the rural older parents' increasing self-reliance and greater realism in help seeking can be seen as a way of maintaining harmonious intergenerational relations, a reflection of their adherence to traditional values, and a result of absence of choice and lack of resources to reciprocate.

Contributions of the study

Taking a qualitative approach, this study focused on migrant workers' older parents and explored changing patterns of rural old age support in China. The key contribution of the research has revealed the changing nature of filial piety in modern rural China in the context

of rural-urban migration. Specifically, several key findings emerged from the analysis. First, it found that in the wake of rural adult children's migration, an increasing number of rural older parents have begun to spend their old age co-residing with their migrant children in cities. This new group of older rural-urban migrants has received insufficient attention from scholars to date. It is hoped that the findings of this study will stimulate further research on this issue. Second, the study reshapes our understanding of the relationship between land and rural older people's need for physical support by showing that working on farmland is no longer a burden for migrant workers' older parents as a result of the extensive usage of modern farming technology and equipment, as well as reforms to China's rural land tenure system. Third, the study casts light on rural older parents' help-seeking behaviour, revealing the dynamics of their efforts to seek support from both their families and their local communities. And, the rules found to govern the help-seeking of older parents will inform social workers or help policy makers to better understand older people's needs and to improve their well-being. Finally, given China's special social and economic characteristics, this makes a unique contribution on enhancing understanding of support for older people in the context of migration.

Policy implications

Older people in rural China today are affected by changes to traditional filial piety in the context of rural-urban migration. These effects will persist as urbanisation increases and China's population continues to age. Although some policies have already been implemented to address issues relating to rural old age support, more must be done to improve rural older people's well-being. Based on the findings of this study, this section provides some suggestions for policy makers.

The findings suggested that local community members such as neighbours, nearby friends and relatives play an important role in providing various kinds of support for older people when their adult children are not available. This may indicate the need for efforts to strengthen older people's informal support networks and to provide effective community-based services in case their informal support networks break down. The government has stressed in a report that measures will be taken to ensure that urban older people are cared for – primarily by their families, but with extra support from their communities and the government. However, no explicit statement has been made on rural older people. The findings of this study provide evidence that rural village communities are another source of support for older dependents. How such support should be organised is a question for future researchers as well as policy makers.

The study also discussed the unsustainability of family support given the decreasing moral motivation to adhere to the Confucian tradition of filial piety. As some researchers have expressed concerns about the negative effects of legislation mandating that families support older parents (Ting and Woo 2009), the government may need to provide incentives for family members to provide support for their older dependents, rather than laws. For example, the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) offers tax deductions and credits to adult children supporting elderly parents. In the United States, the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 allows workers to take job-protected family leave to care for older parents (Park 2015). Geissler and Pfau-Effinger (2005) described informal care provided by older people's spouses or adult children and partly financially supported by state programs like the "semi-formalisation" of family care. Currently, rural-urban migrants experience many financial constraints on their capacity to provide old-age support, such as low wages, high housing

prices and expensive childcare. Such constraints not only limit the ability of adult children to support their rural older parents but make older people feel like a burden on their migrant children. Providing incentives such as subsidies for caregiving may reduce rural older people's feelings of indebtedness and guilt at burdening their children by compensating children for their time and effort.

In addition, the government could improve and simplify China's existing rural health care system by lowering medical costs and providing tailor-made professional caregiving for older people who are temporarily hospitalised. Such measures would reduce older people's financial and physical independence on their adult children. Previous studies have revealed a complementary relationship between formal and informal support. The introduction of formal support would also lighten the workload of informal caregivers and enable them to focus on other forms of care such as the provision of emotional support (Armi, Guilley and D'Epinay 2008, Litwin and Attias-donfut 2009). This is precisely what the respondents involved in this study desired. However, the question of which strategy is more feasible or efficient in improving rural older people's well-being in the wake of their children's migration needs to be further explored in future research.

Limitations of the study

Although this study answered some important questions relating to the support for and help-seeking behaviour of migrant children's older parents, it had some limitations. First, due to limited time and resources, the study covered only older people living in rural areas; urban elderly people were not surveyed. Yet urban to urban migration also causes older people to be left behind in urban areas. It is believed that the experience of being supported by migrant children may differ considerably between urban and rural areas, due to the huge differences

in social infrastructure and welfare policies between urban and rural China. It would be very helpful to compare these two groups of older people to generate new findings in this field of research.

Second, the study did not involve migrant children and thus failed to provide comparative insights into the attitudes toward Confucian filial piety of rural older parents and their migrant children. It would also be very useful to explore the differences between these two generations in their financial, physical and emotional needs and support behaviour. In addition, the older people's poor memory made it difficult to determine how different jobs held by migrant children affected the content of support they gave their parents.

Third, the study addressed only two rural villages in a single province. Provinces in China are well known to differ in socioeconomic status. For example, there are many factories even in coastal rural villages, which employ many rural migrants from hinterland provinces. Such areas are entirely different from the two sites investigated in this study. These differences certainly lead to variation in the provision of old-age support and the development of welfare policies targeting older people. To gain new insights into social welfare policy development, it would be helpful to compare the support provided for older parents living in different provinces.

Finally, it is worth noting that the study's findings may have been affected by the limited time spent on the fieldwork. The difficulties involved in accessing and building a rapport with the respondents were mentioned in the methodological chapter. The study's focus was family support, which is a private and sensitive issue. Inappropriate behaviour may lead to family conflict. Therefore, the respondents were very careful when talking to me, even when I gained access to the study site as an insider. Due to this constraint, I too had to be very careful when carrying out the interviews, and only interviewed those who had close relationships with the

gatekeepers. If there had been more time to build a rapport and trust, a more comprehensive sample could have been obtained.

Directions for future studies

In this study, qualitative in-depth interviews were used to explore the extent and dynamics of social support provided for migrant workers' older parents in rural China. The findings revealed an emerging group of older migrants as well as changes to the Confucian tradition of filial piety in the context of rural-urban migration. More research should be carried out to accumulate knowledge in this field and thereby gain a more up-to-date understanding of filial-piety practices in different social, economic and cultural environments. The findings also indicated directions for further studies. First, it will be useful to pay more attention to the emerging group of older rural-urban migrants. One of the specific research areas to address is the phenomenon of co-residence between rural older parents and their migrant children in cities. In addition, it will be valuable to compare the needs of this group with those of local older people and make suggestions for meeting such needs from the perspective of formal support. Finally, as mentioned in the section above, this study was limited by its sole focus on older parents. Future researchers should consider surveying migrant children to gain a fuller understanding of the changing dynamics of family support and practices of filial piety among younger generations.

Appendix A: Semi-structured interview guide (English)

Semi-structured interview schedule

To obtain consent before conducting the formal interview and then ask the following question:

Do you have any query concerning the interview? If not, let's start now.

Part I: Basic information

1. Age
2. Marital status
3. Types of households (single or living with a spouse)
4. Education
5. Religious beliefs
6. The number and composition of children and their marital status, residential proximity, occupations, economic situation, the number of children in their families
7. Physical conditions
8. Living arrangements

Part II

General questions

1. How is it the same or different from the daily life that before your children's migration?
2. Do you encounter any difficulty, confront any burden or face any stressful event because of this?

(Use the following prompts if necessary :)

- In what aspects: financial, health-related, emotional or any other aspects.
- Which one is your most concern?

Financial support

3. What are your sources of income?

4. Do your family members provide financial support to you?

- Who are involved (sons, daughters, sons-in-law or daughters-in-law)?
- Under what circumstance and when your migrant children give you financial assistance?
- What kinds of financial support they have provided to you? In what means?
- In what ways have your migrant children's financial support helped you?
- What is your expectation from them?
- What is the gap between your expectation and reality?
- What is your opinion about your children's financial support?

5. Apart from the people you mentioned, who else will give you financial help?

- Who are those people?
- How do they become involved?
- Where are these people?
- What kinds of financial support these people have provided to you?
- In what ways have their financial support been helpful to you?
- What is your feeling after receiving financial support from other people?

Health-related support

6. Do you have any major health problem this year?

- In your opinion, which aspects of support or help to be in need of in these situations?
- Have there any people helped you?
- Who is the first person you approach?
- Why do you choose this person rather than others?

- How does he/she react to your request?
- In what ways have their support been helpful to you?

Emotional support

7. Do you have times of unhappiness, worries or feel lonely?
8. How do you handle it?
 - Who is the first person you talk to?
 - Why do you choose talking to that person, not others?
 - How do you express your emotional difficulties to him/her?
 - In what ways have his/her support been helpful to you?
9. Do you contact your migrant children?
 - Under what circumstances and when do they contact you?
 - What are their responses to your unhappiness or worries?
 - What are your feelings after you talk to them?

Other aspects

10. How do you manage your daily life activities and farming work?
 - Do you complete them independently or with help?
 - Who is the first person you would like to ask help from?
 - Why do you choose to ask help from that person, not others?
 - How do you talk about this issue with her/him at the moment?
 - Could you recall the detailed situation when you receive help from him/her?
11. During previous year, was there anything else that you ask for help from others?
12. Have you ever asked help from government such as village committee or township government?

- What is it?
- How have they responded to you?
- What are your opinions on their response?

13. Do you think the government such as village committee should help you get better?

- In what areas?

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview guide (Chinese)

半结构访谈

在开始访谈之前，确定参与者在知情同意书上签字并再次确认：

您对本次访谈还有什么顾虑吗？如果没有，我们就开始吧。

第一部分：基本信息

1. 年龄
2. 婚姻状况
3. 教育程度
4. 宗教信仰
5. 子女的数量、婚姻状况、居住地点、职业、经济状况以及她们的子女数量
6. 身体状况
7. 居住方式

第二部分：

8. 您平日的生活在您子女外出务工之前和之后有什么不同吗？
9. 由于子女外出务工，您遇到什么困难或压力？
 - 在什么方面哪？比如财务、健康、精神或者其他.
 - 您最担心哪一个？

经济支持

10. 您的经济来源都有哪些？
11. 家庭成员有没有给您提供经济上的帮助？
 - 都有谁帮助您（儿子、女儿、儿媳或者女婿）？
 - 在什么情况下您外出打工的子女会给您经济上的帮助？
 - 她们都给您什么样的经济支持？通过什么方法？
 - 在您看来，您外出打工的子女的经济支持都在哪些方面帮到了您？
 - 您对她们都有什么期望？
 - 您的期望和实际情况有什么差别吗？
 - 您对子女给您提供的帮助的感受是什么？
12. 除了刚刚提到的人给您的经济支持，还有其他人吗？
 - 她们都是谁？
 - 他们是怎么被涉及到这个事情来的？
 - 这些人都住哪里？
 - 她们都给您提供了什么样的经济支持？
 - 您觉得她们给你的经济支持在哪些方面对您有帮助？
 - 在得到别人的经济帮助后您有什么感受？

健康支持

13. 近段时间您有没有比较严重的健康问题？
 - 在您看来，您身体不舒服的时候您都需要哪方面的帮助？
 - 有没有人给您提供这些帮助？
 - 谁是您寻求帮助的第一选择？
 - 您为什么选择这个人而没有选其他人？
 - 这个人都给您什么回应了？
 - 您觉得他们都在什么方面帮到了您？

情感支持

14. 您有没有悲伤、担忧和孤独的时候？
15. 您是怎么处理这些情绪的？
 - 谁是您寻求帮助的第一选择？
 - 您为什么选择这个人而没有选其他人？
 - 您是怎么向他表达您情绪上的问题？
 - 您觉得他们都在哪些方面帮到了您？
16. 您有没有联系您外出打工的子女？
 - 在什么情况下以及什么时候她们会联系您？
 - 她们对您的负面情绪是怎么回应的？
 - 您在跟她们沟通完有什么感受？

其它方面

17. 您是怎么处理您的日常生活和农活？
 - 您是可以自己完成还是在别人的帮助下完成？
 - 如果您需要别人的帮忙，您第一个选择谁？
 - 您觉得是什么原因让您选择了那个人而不是其他人？
 - 当您在向别人寻求帮助的时候是您都是怎么表达的？
 - 您能不能回想下别人帮助您具体过程是怎么样的？
 - 在过去一年，您有没有因为其他事情而向别人寻求帮助？
18. 您有没有向村委会或者乡政府这些类似的政府机构寻求过任何帮助？
 - 您都是为了什么事情？
 - 她们都是怎么回复您的？
 - 您对她们的回应有什么样的感受？
19. 您觉得这些政府机构有没有责任给您提供帮助让您过得更好？
 - 您觉得应该在什么方面？

Appendix C: Participant information and consent form (English)

Participant Information and Consent Form

This form will provide you with information about the research.
Please read through all the details carefully.

Hello, my name is Yuandong Liu and I am a UK PhD student. I am investigating the support network of migrant workers' older parents in rural China. You will therefore be invited to take part in an interview and talk about your own experience about coping financial, health, emotional and other difficulties and your experience of asking for assistance.

Interviews will be last 60 to 75 minutes and the whole process will be audio recorded for the purpose of data analysis. The digital recordings of interview data will be transferred on to a password protected lap-top (which only I have access to). In addition, transcribed data will be kept in a locked drawer. Your name will be removed from the transcripts and a coding system will be used to link your name to the transcript. Therefore, your information cannot be tracked back directly. The list of codes and names will be stored separately and securely. In addition, the coding key will be destroyed at an appropriate point towards the end of the research. Other copies of digital recordings will be deleted following successful transcription. Transcripts will be copied to DVD for secure storage on completion of the research.

All data collected from this interview will not be used for any government organisations. Only I will use these data to complete my final PhD report and parts of the report may be published in academic journals. In the write up, your name and any other name mentioned will be anonymised and only the name of place will be remained.

Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. During the interview, you will be asked some questions about support and assistance from your migrant children, and this may bring up sorrow and unhappiness. Please let me know if you would rather not answer some of the questions put to you. You also have the right to withdraw at any time during the interview and for any reason. In addition, if you would like to change something or withdraw something you have said after the interview, I will happy to oblige. However, please notice that the decision to withdraw or change data must be made within 30 days from today.

If you would like to take part in this research please sign and date below. If you have any questions regarding the research, please do not hesitate to contact me on the contact details below.

Agreement to consent

By ticking the box and signing this consent form you will be agreeing to understand the following:

1. I understand the purpose of this research and I understand that I will be discussing issues which may be emotionally sensitive to me; ☐
2. I understand that I have right to withdraw at any time and to refuse answer any questions at any point; ☐
3. I understand that any name mentioned will be anonymised, only the name of place will be remained; ☐
4. I understand that all data will be only used for the researchers report and will be stored securely; ☐
5. I understand that I have 30-day time limit to request the withdrawal or to make changes of any information that I have given; ☐
6. I agree to take part in this study. ☐

Signature of participant

Date

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant

Researcher's signature

Date

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Contact details:

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Appendix D: Participant information and consent Form (Chinese)

邀请函和知情同意书

您好，我是刘远东。我是在英国读博士研究生，目前在做一项关于中国农民工父母的支持网络的一项调查。我想邀请您参与到这个调查并且对您进行一次采访，谈谈您在平时生活中遇到的财务、健康、情感和其他困难，以及您在寻求帮助的过程中的经历。

访谈会持续约 60 到 75 分钟，为了数据分析的准确性，整个访谈过程会被录音。录音资料将会被保存到带密码的笔记本电脑上，只有我可以打开此电脑。另外，录音会被转录为书面材料并且将被封存。您的名字在书面材料里被替换为代码。这个代码会被单独保存以保障您的个人信息安全。所有的访谈录音以及代码会在相关工作完成时销毁。被转录的书面材料会在研究报告完成后刻录为 DVD 保存。访谈中所涉及的材料谨用于完成研究报告和相关学术期刊的发表，不会泄露给任何政府机构。论文撰写的过程中，所有有辨识度的信息将会以匿名方式呈现。

您对本调查的参与完全自愿。在访谈过程中所谈及到的家庭事物可能会引起您的感情波动。您有权利拒绝回答任何问题在任何时间基于任何理由。另外，在采访结束之后的 30 天之内，你有权利要求更改或者收回任何您所提供的信息。

如果您愿意参与此次调查，请签字确认。如果您对本研究有任何疑问，请直接联系，不要多虑。

知情同意书

请勾选相关选项和签名，以确保您已经了解此研究和您作为参与者的权利，同时也是确认您愿意参加本调查。

- 7. 我理解本调查的目的并且知道访谈的内容可能会引起我的情绪波动; ☐
- 8. 我了解我有权利退出本研究和拒绝回答任何问题在任何时候基于任何理由; ☐
- 9. 我知道我的任何信息都会被保密和匿名，只有地名会被保留; ☐
- 10. 我知道这个研究获取的信息只会被用于研究报告并且会被安全的保存起来; ☐
- 11. 我知道我可以在 30 天的时间内提出要求去更改或者收回我提供的信息; ☐
- 12. 我同意参加此次调查。 ☐

参与者签名

日期:

我确认我已经将以上信息提供给参与者。

研究人员签名

日期:

谢谢您的合作！

联系方式:

研究人员:

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Appendix E: Lists of participants

Demographic information of participants in Peiying						
Name	Gender	Age	Single	Couple	The number of children	
					Son	Daughter
Ms Feng	Female	63	√		1	0
Ms Mei	Female	68		√	2	0
Brother Gang	Male	67		√	1	3
Mr Chang Pei	Male	62		√	1	0
Sister Li	Female	61		√	1	2
Ms Li	Female	62		√	1	1
Ms Ning	Female	65	√		1	2
Mr Jian Pei	Male	63	√		3	1
Old sister Wang	Female	76		√	4	2

Demographic information of participants in Rangdong						
Name	Gender	Age	Single	Couple	The number of children	
					Son	Daughter
Mr Dao Li	Male	67		√	2	0
Mr Xin Li	Male	61		√	1	0
Ms Qin	Female	67	√		1	2
Ms Zhang	Female	74		√	2	0
Ms Li	Female	61	√		1	2
Mr Guo Li	Male	63		√	2	2
Mr Qi Li	Male	76		√	1	0
Sister Hong	Female	70	√		2	2
Ms Mao	Female	72	√		2	2
Ms Little Mao	Female	68	√		1	1
Mr Gong Li	Male	76		√	3	0
Ms Ai Li	Female	69		√	2	2
Mr Wen Liu	Male	67		√	1	5
Ms Ying	Female	65	√		1	2
Ms Yao	Female	67	√		2	0

Demographic information of participants in Rangdong						
Old sister Zhou	Female	74	√		4	0
Ms Juan	Female	62	√		1	0
Mr Ming	Male	65		√	2	0
Ms Fan	Female	69		√	1	2
Mr Fu Li	Male	70		√	2	0

Appendix F: Abbreviations and currency exchange

Abbreviations

ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NHFPCC	National Health and Family Planning Commission of the People's Republic of China
CNY	Chinese yuan
US	United State
UK	United Kingdom

Currency exchange

9 CNY \approx 1 GBP

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