

INCOME AND FAMILY SUPPORT AMONG RURAL ELDERLY IN ZHEJIANG PROVINCE, CHINA

ABSTRACT. This paper examines the net income of a sample of 100 elderly living in two villages in Zhejiang Province. A natural experimental study design was employed to examine village differences in prosperity while controlling for other linguistic and cultural/regional factors that might influence the economic status of the elderly. The paper examines the different sources of income for the sample elderly and assesses their general economic status. It found that while most of the income of the elderly derived from their own farming and sideline work, children also assisted elderly parents and provided a safety-net for them as their physical capacity waned. However, having many sons did not improve the economic status of the elderly and the majority of elderly now preferred only one son.

Key Words: China, elderly, economic status, family support, decollectivization

INTRODUCTION

Starting in the early 1980s, China transformed its rural economy by eliminating communes and returning to a household system of production with increasing emphasis on market economics. This shift to a more individualistic form of rural production raised questions about the economic status and security of the approximately 70 million elderly living in rural areas. This paper examines this issue by presenting data on the subsistence patterns of the elderly in two rural villages in eastern China. In particular, it examines the relationship between living arrangement and income/economic status.

FROM COMMUNES TO THE 'RESPONSIBILITY' SYSTEM

China's communal system of agricultural production was imposed in the 1950s. It replaced the traditional household system of production and dictated that individuals work under the management of a commune. The commune (and its sub-units, the production brigade and the production team) controlled the means of production and made the administrative and work decisions. Workers were paid indirectly via a system that awarded 'points' for the type of work done each day. At the end of each year, the cash value of 'point' was determined by dividing the total number of work points into the total cash value of the collective's production. Farmers, therefore, became somewhat analogous to factory workers.

This change broke the 'patriarchal autocracy' of elderly male household heads by ending their control of land, the key resource on which sons depended. In addition, the government consciously attacked patriarchy as a form of inter-generational exploitation. On the other hand, the new communist government did not provide old age pensions for its farmers. Instead it continued the

traditional system in which the family served as the primary source of social security for rural elderly. In fact, the obligation of children to respect and care for parents was codified as part of the nation's new family law (1950) and constitution (1954).

The commune oversaw the functioning of the 'family support system' and provided an independent safety net for the elderly. D. Davis (1991: 107) succinctly described the positive consequences of this approach:

"collectivization and the ideology of socialism directly increased the financial security of the old. In rural areas between 1955 and 1980, each production team was required to provide a basic grain ration to all members. In addition, most elderly could find some form of remunerative job within the village economy. Old men ... who were able to do little more than scavenge in the lanes, or stand guard at the orchard, earned work points that entitled them to a share of the team's paper year-end profits. Rural women ... earned cash by selling vegetables and pork. And all rural elderly were made more secure by the household registration system, which tethered Chinese men to the villages of their birthplace and thereby guaranteed that at least one adult son would be close by when elderly parents could no longer support themselves."

In addition, collective leaders could, and did, enforce the obligation of sons to care for elderly parents by transferring 'work points' from sons to parents if a son was not fulfilling his obligations. The collective, therefore, had the authority, power and resources to guarantee basic subsistence for the elderly.

The post-1978 reforms altered this situation by breaking up communes/production brigades ('decollectivization') and dividing their land among members. Under the new system - known as the 'responsibility' system - farmers' households became free to make their own production and marketing decisions, although each household was responsible for paying a tax and selling a portion of its grain production to the state at below-market prices. After decollectivization, therefore, local communist cadres no longer had agricultural income to draw on to meet social and welfare needs such as elderly support, although some did still have the income from Brigade enterprises.

There are contrasting opinions on the effects of this change for the elderly. One argument suggests that since peasants now work and manage their fields on a household basis, the new reforms should reinforce Chinese values on filial piety and the traditional extended family, and should add value to the labor of the elderly, preserving or enhancing their status (Olson 1990; Yuan 1987). Alternatively, it has been suggested that the new reforms are likely to worsen the security of the elderly because welfare assistance previously provided by production brigades is either no longer available or is very limited, and because the pressure previously placed on children to support parents who can no longer make an economic contribution has been weakened. Similarly, the younger generation's increased opportunities for out-migration and wage employment, and the concomitant growth of materialism and consumerism, is fostering generational conflict over spending household resources on unproductive elderly (Sankar 1989; Goldstein, Ku and Ikels 1990). This view suggests that the elderly

may be experiencing economic difficulties under the new, more individualistic, system of production.

Data relating to this issue in the rural sector are surprisingly meager and consist mainly of several large scale surveys conducted over the past eight years by Chinese scholars. A 1986 survey of 33 villages outside of Beijing, for example, reported that 78% of the elderly did not live on their own resources, and that 67% had to rely on their children to meet their basic needs (Yuan, Wang and Song 1992). Similarly, a village survey in Zhejiang Province found that 86% of the elderly lived with one of their children and were supported by them (Ibid.). A survey in rural Hubei in 1987 reported that 57% of those over 60 relied on others, and 44% stated that they had no control over the spending of family income (Davis 1991).

Davis (1991) concludes from these survey data that China's rural elderly became more dependent for survival on the support of their children after the reforms, but that they are being cared for. Two recent review articles (Yuan et al. 1992; Zhu and Xu 1992) assert that the family is the main source of support and care for the current rural elderly despite the great changes in economic and social structure in China, and suggest that filial piety is alive and well.

These data, however, oversimplify a complex situation. Information showing the percent of elderly living with sons tell us little about who is in control in these households and how the elderly are treated. And there is no reason to suspect that Chinese elderly are more homogeneous than 'American elderly'. There are likely to be important economic differences, for example, between males and females, young-old and old-old, healthy and frail, and those with and without sons.

Moreover, measuring the 'situation' or 'well-being,' or 'status' of the elderly is a difficult issue for which there is no clear agreement among scholars. Depending on whether one is interested in subjective feelings of well-being or objective measures such as cash or caloric intake, studies can vary markedly in their conclusions. Similarly, the very idea that a single construct such as 'well-being' or 'status' can meaningfully reflect the total situation of the elderly has been questioned, and some authors prefer to discuss different statuses of the elderly such as economic status, ritual status, authority status and health status since these can change independently of each other (e.g., Goldstein and Beall 1981). This paper examines the 'situation' of the rural elderly by focusing on economic status, i.e., on the income of the elderly, including non-cash income. In particular, it examines in detail how the elderly generate their income and subsistence, and the interrelationship between income levels and living arrangement.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The data were collected in 1987-89 as part of an in-depth anthropological study of elderly residing in two villages in the Yuyao area of Zhejiang Province (about 350 miles south of Shanghai) in the Peoples' Republic of China. A natural

experimental study design was employed to examine village differences in prosperity while controlling for other linguistic and cultural/regional factors that might influence the economic status of the elderly. Rural township (*xiang*)¹ level statistics on annual per capita income were used to differentiate and choose Pingyuan and Shancun,² two villages in different *xiang* in the same general administrative unit (*shi*) that differ in the degree to which they have prospered under the new economic system.

Pingyuan is located on the plains 12 miles from Yuyao city which is on a rail line, and has prospered because of the existence of a number of small scale industries (e.g., asbestos factories) that provide important sources of wage income. In 1985, it contained 755 persons and 252 households, 31% with an elderly person 60 years or older. Shancun, is located just 40 miles from Pingyuan in a mountain region with poorer transportation links to urban markets. Because of its location, it has not prospered to the extent of Pingyuan and ranks toward the bottom of the economic scale in this area. In 1985, Shancun contained 901 persons and 241 households, 29% with elderly persons. Decollectivization occurred in both villages in 1982.

A random sample of 50 elderly 60 years of age or older was chosen from each village. This sample is 52% of the elderly in Pingyuan and 60% of the elderly in Shancun. It accounts for 63% of the households with elderly persons (age 60<plus>) in Pingyuan and 71% in Shancun. Data were obtained by intensive fieldwork that included participant observation, surveys, questionnaires, and abbreviated life history interviews. Dr. Ku conducted the fieldwork for 10 months in each of the villages.

Males comprise 54% of the Pingyuan sample and 48% of the Shancun sample. The mean age of the sample in both villages is 69 years of age. Table I presents other characteristics of the sample.

Fifty-two per cent of the elderly live in single generation households of which there are 3 types – living alone, living with a spouse, or living in a 'by turns' arrangement such as eating in two or more son's households in rotation.³ Table II presents a breakdown of single generation households by village, illustrating the greater proportion of elderly living alone in Pingyuan, and the greater number of elderly using 'by turns' arrangements in Shancun. Economic disparity between the two villages underlies this difference.

Economic status was assessed by annual income data collected in monthly recall interviews with each sample household over a 12 month period. In Pingyuan, this was done from October 1987 to September 1988, and in Shancun, from July 1988 to June 1989. These interviews elicited information about income received and expenditures made during the previous month. An initial interview was conducted prior to the monthly recall visits to elicit general economic and social support data for each of the 100 elderly in the sample and their households. For analytical purposes, per capita income is presented since this facilitates comparison between elderly persons living in different types and sizes of households, e.g., alone versus with spouse.

TABLE I
Characteristics of sample population of 100 elderly by percentage

	Pingyuan	Shancun	All
Males	54%	48%	51%
Females	46	52	49
Mean age	69	69	69
60-69	66	60	63
70-79	24	26	25
80-89	10	14	12
Males - married	70	80	75
Males - widowed	22	20	21
Males - divorced and single	8	0	4
Females - married	43	23	33
Females - widowed	52	77	65

TABLE II
Household composition of single generation households
in Pingyuan and Shancun villages¹

Household type	Pingyuan	Shancun
Alone	11 (39%)	3 (13%) ²
With spouse	14 (50)	10 (42)
By turns	3 (11)	11 (46)

¹ This table is reproduced from Goldstein, Ku and Ikels, 1990.

² Rounding makes the total percentage for Shancun 101%.

'NET' INCOME

The elderly in our sample had an annual mean *cash* income of 625 *yuan* for 1988.⁴ The Pingyuan mean was 680 *yuan* and the Shancun mean was 570 *yuan*. This difference was consistent with Pingyuan's better economic situation, although it was not statistically significant.

Cash, however, is not the sole form of income relevant for rural Third World elderly. In-kind items such as the grains and vegetables people grow and consume and the cash value of gifts from relatives and children are equally important. Consequently, these were also assessed.

The value of consuming of one's own rice was determined indirectly for both villages using a system employed by Shancun village where a person aged 56 or over was considered to need a basic rice allotment of 480 *jin* of unhusked rice (1 *jin* = 1.1. pounds) per year.⁵ In Pingyuan, interviews determined that all elderly obtained enough rice from their land to meet subsistence needs, so we calculated the cash value of 'own rice consumed' to be 120 *yuan* per person (i.e., the 480 *jin* rice-standard multiplied by the government's rice price of 0.25 *yuan* per *jin*).

In addition to rice, the elderly in Pingyuan also obtained oil, vegetables and fuel from their own land. Through discussions with subjects, we estimated that for a single person these had an annual cash value of 55 yuan, so the total cash equivalent for products consumed from one's fields was equivalent to 175 yuan per person per year. Elderly subjects living with a spouse, eating in 'by turns' arrangements, or living in multigenerational households, were assigned a slightly lower equivalent – 171 yuan – because they used less fuel and oil per person.

In contrast to Pingyuan, fields in Shancun did not produce enough rice to meet the minimal consumption standard so residents there generally had to purchase rice. We estimate that elderly men and women obtained only 300 of the 480 *jin* rice-standard from their fields, the cash value of this being 105 yuan annually.⁶ The Shancun elderly also obtained fewer vegetables and less firewood than their Pingyuan counterparts, so the total cash equivalent of products consumed from their fields was 140 yuan per person (for elderly living alone). For other elderly, this amount was reduced to 138 yuan. Gifts-in-kind from other sources, such as daughters, were similarly converted to cash equivalents utilizing local prices.

However, producing one's own rice and engaging in other work such as raising pigs entailed production expenses, so we subtracted these costs from total income to create 'net income' – the basic income construct used in this paper. Mean annual per capita net income for the sample elderly in both villages was 689 yuan; 742 yuan for Pingyuan and 636 yuan for Shancun.⁷ This difference is again consistent with the different economic situation in the two villages, although it was not significant.

To evaluate the efficacy of our subjects' annual 'net income', we compared it with the mean per capita income of the two *xiang* in which they reside. These *xiang* income figures included cash plus own crops consumed, but did not subtract production costs. Pingyuan's sample elderly had a net income 4% higher than their *xiang*, and Shancun's elderly had a net income that was 20% higher. The Shancun figure, however, is somewhat misleading because it appears that local officials in Shancun were underreporting their *xiang*'s income in order to qualify for special government support for impoverished areas.

Similarly, we compared our subjects' 'net income' with the income considered satisfactory by our sample. Using a combination of the monthly expenditure data of Pingyuan elderly living alone and interviews with local elderly, a composite 'adequate living standard' income level for one person was constructed (see Table III). This figure – 620 yuan per person per year – is neither minimum subsistence nor well-to-do. Pingyuan's per capita average net income of 742 yuan was 20% higher than this, and Shancun's 636 yuan per capita net income was 2% higher. Thus, comparisons of net income with regional rural income levels and with the 'adequate living standard', suggest that the income status of the sample elderly was slightly better than average.

To understand the factors producing this level of income, the income sources available to the elderly in these villages will be considered in greater detail.

TABLE III
Annual "adequate living standard" for one person reported by elderly
in Pingyuan and Shancun villages

Item	Yuan
Rice	120
Vegetables	85
Cooking oil	11
Firewood	10
Clothing/bedding	50
Pots/bowls	3
Soap	10
Candles	5
Electricity	8
House repairs	10
Soy sauce, salt, condiments	19
Sugar	17
Meat/fish/eggs	106
Tea	11
Medical costs	50
Tobacco/wine ¹	105
Total	620

¹ Although tobacco and wine may appear luxury items, the elderly considered these basic needs and perceived anyone unable to afford these as exceptionally poor.

SOURCES OF NET INCOME

The elderly in Pingyuan and Shancun had 5 main sources of income: (1) farm production (including crops consumed and crops sold); (2) earnings from wages and sideline work (i.e., part-time work done without an employer); (3) transfers in-kind and cash from children and relatives; (4) pensions and welfare, and (5) savings.⁸ The percent of 'net income' deriving from each source is presented in Table IV.

Table IV reveals that the sample elder's net income is heavily dependent upon their own work. Forty-five per cent comes from crop sales and earnings (mostly 'sideline' work), and another 17% from the estimated cash value of consuming their own crops. Next in importance was income from children and relatives (34.5%). These three comprised 96.5% of the elderly's income. Since China has no government pension program for rural farmers, disability and pension income was insignificant, only 1% of income.

Examining these income sources reveals a number of key factors affecting income procurement.

Farming income. Seventy-eight per cent of the sample elderly earned income from selling a portion of the crops they (or their household) produced. In Pingyuan, this comprised 39.5% of their *cash* income and in Shancun it

TABLE IV
Sources of the Pingyuan and Shancun elderly's net income by percent, 1987-89

Site	Farming		Earnings		Cash and goods from children and relatives ¹			Pensions and welfare	Savings
	Own crop consumed	Sale of own crop	Sideline work	Wages from job	Sons	Daughters	Others ²		
Pingyuan	20%	29	.15	1	9	9	11	1	3
Shancun	14	14	29	0	21	2	16.6	1	2
Both	17	22	22.5	0.5	15	5.5	14	1	2.5

¹ Income in this category includes actual transfers in-kind and cash to elders as well as the elder's "paper share" of household income. This issue of "paper shares" will be discussed later in the paper.

² Includes co-resident daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren and overseas siblings or other relatives.

TABLE V
Size of land and cash income from sale of crops for elderly
living alone in Pingyuan and Shancun

Gender	Size of land holdings	Number of elders	Annual income in yuan
Female	< 1	6	17
	1+	1	0
	both	7	14
Male	< 1	3	73
	1+	4	968
	both	7	584

contributed 18.6% of their *cash* income. Table V shows the importance of the size of land holdings, revealing that the 4 males living alone with more than 1 *mu* (= 0.164 acres) of land had an average cash income from crop sales of 968 *yuan* whereas the 3 males living alone with less than 1 *mu* of land earned only an average of 73 *yuan*. Differences in land size, in turn, derived primarily from the way land division played out at the time of decollectivization. This was affected by several factors including cultural beliefs about sexual division of labor and economic differences in the two villages.

Pingyuan village

Pingyuan village had close to 1,000 *mu* of arable land to distribute. It differentiated these fields into three types: 'grain-ration' land (*kouliangtian*), 'family plot' land (*ziliutian*), and 'responsibility' land (*chengbaotian*). Two types of land, 'grain-ration' and 'family plot' land were given to all residents regardless of age and sex to enable them to produce food for their own consumption. Each individual was given roughly 0.4 *mu* of 'grain-ration' land to grow rice with the exception of individuals living alone who were allocated slightly more than 0.5 *mu*. 'Family plot' land was also allocated to each person regardless of age and sex for the purpose of growing their own vegetables. The allotment was 0.12 *mu* of land per person. These two types of land were meant to make individuals self-sufficient in basic foods so their yields were exempt from all forms of taxation or quota sales. Consequently, at the time of decollectivization, each Pingyuan elder received at least 0.5–0.6 *mu* of farmland.⁹

The remaining (and larger) portion of the collective's farmland was classified as 'responsibility land', and was given to individuals on a contract basis. Farmers taking this land were required to sell a portion (quota) of their crop yield to the government at slightly below-market prices and to pay a tax to the state.

'Responsibility land' was allocated using a point system based on the estimated work potential of individuals. Males and females from 18 to 50 years old were considered full laborers – males receiving 10 points and females 7

points. Points for persons older than 50 or younger than 18 years were discussed and decided upon by the relevant commune sub-units such as the production team. Physically fit and hard working elderly men received about 6 points each, whereas elderly women or elderly men who were not in good health received only 2 or 3 points. Women of any age living alone, however, normally were not given 'responsibility' land since the cultural expectation is that women do not farm by themselves.

After points were allocated, the amount of land set aside as responsibility land was divided by the total number of points to determine the amount of responsibility land per point. Each household was then given an allocation of this land based on the number of points it had been awarded. The land was registered on a family basis. The collective also divided its cash savings among households on the basis of the total number of *mu* of land they were given at the time of decollectivization.

In Pingyuan, some male villagers were able to acquire additional land since not all villagers took their full allotment of 'responsibility' land. Those working in factories and enterprises generally took less 'responsibility' land because of constraints on their time, and some households in Pingyuan later transferred land directly to other villagers in order to reduce the amount of land they had to cultivate and the amount of rice they had to sell the government.¹⁰

This system of land allocation in Pingyuan obviously operated to the detriment of the elderly in general, and to female elderly in particular. Elderly women living alone did not receive 'responsibility' land even if they were in good health, and received less land than males if living with a spouse. Thus, the average land holding for woman living alone at the time of our study was 0.76 *mu* whereas it was 2.25 *mu* for men. Elderly women, therefore, were limited in the amount of income they could derive from farming.

Shancun Village

Shancun village had only 700 *mu* of arable land, including both irrigated land for rice (550 *mu*) and dry-crop land (150 *mu*) suitable for growing sweet potatoes and corn. Shancun farmers also had their own tea and bamboo groves. The combination of less land and more people produced a chronic shortage of rice in this village, so a very different system of land division took place at decollectivization. Two types of land were created: 'responsibility ('rice') land with a fixed yield' (*chengbaodi dingchanliang*) and tea and bamboo grove land.

All villagers in Shancun received rice land ('responsibility land with a fixed yield') based on the amount of rice their household needed for consumption. This was done by establishing an 'average' yield for each plot of land and applying the rice consumption scheme mentioned above. Farmers did not sell any quotas or pay any taxes on this land so long as their fields did not produce more than the estimated yield.¹¹ Thus, in Shancun, there was no equivalent of Pingyuan's 'responsibility land' and no one generated substantial cash income from rice sales. Another major difference between Shancun and Pingyuan

concerns inheritance of land. In Shancun, the scarce rice land is reallocated every three years. At this time, households with rice deficits are given land from households whose size had decreased, e.g., those in which someone had died or where a daughter had married out of the village.

Agricultural income in Shancun derived primarily from sales of tea and secondarily bamboo. Unlike rice fields, these lands were allocated initially on the basis of the number of people in each household and were not reallocated every three years. The local rationale for this was that tea and bamboo took time to grow so farmers would not plant new tea bushes if they thought they would be unable to reap the profit of their efforts. Although elderly women as well as men were eligible to receive shares of this land, this did not improve the income of Shancun elderly women living alone since most had bound feet and were unable to walk to the mountain fields to pick the leaves.

In general, the absence of adequate rice land in Shancun produced important differences in income from sale of crops. Whereas elderly males in Pingyuan averaged 1,222 *yuan* per year in cash income from crop sales, elderly males in Shancun obtained less than half of that – 503 *yuan*. Women in Shancun, as in Pingyuan, were disadvantaged because they were unable to farm rice land themselves, although they could pick tea leaves.

Being unable to farm because of gender or health had a significant impact on economic status. Elders in such cases turned their land over to a son(s) to farm, but because local tradition held that son(s) were only expected to provide rice to their parents equal to the local rice standard, excess rice from that land was kept by the son(s). Given this, it was not surprising that elderly males in both areas generally opted to farm themselves until physically unable, rather than 'retire' and let their son(s) demonstrate filial piety by farming their land for them. For example, only 14% elderly male (1 of 7) living alone and 22% (5 of 23) living with spouses, were not farming.

In both villages, therefore, male elders could earn substantial income from crop sales if their health permitted them to farm. Females, by contrast, were unable to farm unless they had a spouse. Consequently, widows and frail elderly men could only expect to obtain rice (for consumption) from their land, not earn cash income.

This female disadvantage did not carry over to 'sideline' work where elderly women, in fact, had more sources for earning cash income than elderly men.

Earnings: household sideline work and employment. Only 4 (4%) elderly in the sample received income from regular employment in local enterprises or factories, e.g., in Shancun one man looked after the village's orchard, and in Pingyuan one man worked at the irrigation station and two worked in the asbestos factory.

Most earnings, therefore, derived from sideline work. Sixty-one percent of the elderly in these villages engaged in such part-time work, and another 9% had spouses who did. Some types of sideline work were gender free, for example, both males and females raised animals for sale, primarily pigs and secondarily

ducks and chickens (for eggs). Other important sideline jobs such as spinning asbestos thread and reciting Buddhist prayers were gender specific – i.e., were the exclusive preserve of women since cultural norms prevented men from engaging in these tasks.

Asbestos spinning, moreover, was an option that was available only in Pingyuan where the local *xiang* and village both operated asbestos factories. It offered women an important source of income that did not require physical strength or full time work, and one that could be done at home on a piecework basis.

Elderly women in both villages also earned cash income from Buddhist chanting. The reforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s allowed the open practice of religion, and hiring others to do prayers was one result of this. However, there is more chanting work in Pingyuan because there is more disposable income there, so this option also favored Pingyuan women. The standard payment for this work was 2 *yuan* per day. Food was also served while the chanting was being performed. This activity produced important cash income for many elderly women such as the 82 year old female living alone in Pingyuan who earned 540 *yuan* from this in 1988.

Income from Family and Relatives

Family support for the elderly is a key issue in any society, but especially so in Third World settings like rural China which have no rural pension system. In traditional China, the notion of filial piety was strongly held as the societal 'ideal' and support for the elderly was regarded as the son's responsibility. Setting aside here the question of the extent to which this was practiced in traditional China, our data show that family support from sons (and daughters) was limited, though clearly important.

Sons. The elderly received income from sons in three main ways: (1) from the wages and farm labor of married and unmarried sons living in the elderly's household; (2) from cash given directly to the elderly by sons living separately and (3) from in-kind transfers such as rice, usually when son(s) farmed the elderly's land. Sons also often helped their parents with heavy farm work.

Ninety-two percent of the elderly in both villages had living sons, the average number being 2.2 (range 1–5). On a per capita basis, the sample elderly received an average of 278 *yuan* in cash per year from their sons. This value, however, includes the elder's 'share' of household income earned by sons and consequently is misleading.

In contrast to elderly living alone where income from a son involved a real transfer of resources, in households where an elder lived with a married son this was not the case. Household income, whether derived from the work of the son or daughter-in-law or elder, was managed jointly by the household head. In such households, we calculated the per capital income of the elderly person by assigning him or her an equal 'share' of the total income earned by the household. We used the same method to calculate a share of the income earned

by the son. For example, if a son earned 1,500 yuan in a factory and the household had 5 members, the elder's share would be 300 yuan. However, in reality, this was usually only a 'paper' share since such elders rarely received any part of it. For example, in Pingyuan, none of the elderly (living with a married son) controlled the finances of their household, and 5 of 8 elderly received no pocket money at all from their son. Of the 3 who received pocket money, one, an elderly woman, said her son gave her if she asked but she also indicated that she usually felt embarrassed to do so. The other two received only a few *yuan* during the Chinese New Year.

In Shancun village, the situation was the same. Ten of the 13 elderly living with married sons were not the household head and received no pocket money from their sons. Of the three who received money, one needed to ask the son each time, one was still the household head and took care of the family's finances, and the other said the money she received from her son was not enough for her needs.

Consequently, in both villages, living together with a married son in what seemed the 'ideal' extended family was not necessarily a sign of economic well-being or good treatment. In only one instance was the elder the real head of the household, and in the majority of cases the elderly received no regular share of family income to buy even small items they personally desired.

Ironically, the situation was somewhat better for the elders living in single generation households. Among the 52 elderly living in single generation households in the two villages, 46 had one or more living son(s). Of these, 25 (54%) received cash transfers from sons – in Pingyuan, 59% (13 of 22) and in Shancun, 50% (12 of 24). However, when in-kind transfers are added to cash transfers, 73% of the single generation elderly in Pingyuan received such transfers from a son, and 79% in Shancun.

In addition to household composition, village differences in economic prosperity had an important impact on cash transfers. Table VI compares the amount of cash gifts (per capita) from son(s) broken down by household type. It reveals that Shancun's single generation elderly received less than half of what their counterparts in Pingyuan received.

The sample elderly living in single generation households also received help from their sons in farming, mainly in carrying heavy loads, as well as when they became ill/bedridden. Table VII shows details of sons' support with farming.

Chinese couples traditionally considered rearing many sons an investment whose profit would be good care and support in old age. We examined this notion by comparing the relationship between income and number of sons. Tables VIII and IX present the findings.

Comparing *net* income of the elderly and number of sons revealed no advantage to having more living sons (Table VIII). When we examined *cash* income given to the elderly by sons (Table IX), there again was no consistent pattern of more income with more sons, although elderly with only one son received the smallest cash gifts.

It is also interesting to note (Table VIII) that the elderly with no sons were not

TABLE VI
Cash income from sons by household type in Pingyuan and Shancun

Household type	Cash from sons (in <i>yuan</i>)	
	Pingyuan	Shancun
Alone	100 (N = 8)	60 (2)
W/spouse	105 (13)	24 (9)
By turns	56(3)	34 (11)

worse off in terms of net income than those with 3, 4, or 5 sons. Part of the reason for this lies in the way sons saw their obligation to their parents. As indicated earlier, sons normally provided resources in accordance with a local standard, so having more sons meant that each son had to give a smaller share to meet that standard. Having many sons, therefore, benefited the sons not the parents. The elderly in both villages were highly cognizant of this and complained frequently about the heavy burden of rearing many sons. They were expected to bear the costs of weddings whose costs often ran as high as 10,000 *yuan* and provide housing for their sons when they married, but when they became old, having more sons didn't result in receiving more income or support. In keeping with this, 61% of the elderly said it would be ideal to have only one son.

Daughters. Eighty-five percent of the sample elderly had living daughters, the average number being 2 (range = 0-5). Thirty-five percent of these elderly received cash from daughters, and 40% received goods in-kind. Forty-five percent received income from daughters in either cash or in-kind. However, with only a few exceptions, daughters provided cash and in-kind transfers on an irregular basis (generally at the time of visits), whereas income from sons was regularized, a set amount per month or per year.

Daughters, nevertheless, played a surprisingly important role. In Pingyuan their contributions equaled those of sons – 9% of the elderly's net income came from sons and 9% from daughters. In Shancun this was only 2% for daughters and 21% for sons. This difference appears primarily to be a function of the greater wealth of Pingyuan – more daughters had jobs and regular income there.

Others. Income from son-in-laws, daughter-in-laws and grandchildren represented 12.5% of the elderly's net income. However, as we saw with elders living with married sons, this figure is misleading because it derived almost entirely from the paper share of household income of elderly living in extended families. Three people also received income from relatives living overseas.

Elderly without sons. The emphasis on sons and family support in the literature on China suggests that elders without sons are at a disadvantage and subsist less successfully. We had 8 subjects with no living sons. Six of these lived in single

TABLE VII
Comparison of sons' help with farming and living arrangements in all single generation household in the two villages

Land management/living arrangement	Pingyuan Village			Shancun Village			Totals
	Alone	W/spouse	By-turns	Alone	W/spouse	By-turns	
Sons take care of land for the elderly	5 ¹	--	3	1 ¹	--	10	19
Elderly take care of land themselves, but sons help with carrying heavy load and during busy farming seasons	4	11	--	--	3	--	18
Elderly work the land themselves, but a relative helps with carrying heavy loads and during busy farming seasons	2	--	--	--	--	--	2
Sons only take care of the grain-ration land for the elderly	--	3 ²	--	2	--	--	5
No help from sons, elderly work the land themselves	--	--	--	2	5	--	7
Sons take care of wife's land, husband takes care of own land	--	--	--	--	--	1 ³	1
Totals	11	14	3	5	8	11	52

¹ All are females; ² Elderly are in poor health; ³ The wife eats "by turns" in sons' homes, but the husband cooks by himself.

TABLE VIII
Per capita net income for single-generation elderly in Pingyuan and Shancun broken down by number of living sons and village

# sons	Annual per capita net income (in <i>yuan</i>)					
	Pingyuan			Shancun		
	Alone	W/spouse	By turns	Alone	W/spouse	By turns
0	880	1039	0	500	0	0
1	0	560	0	0	638	231
2	938	841	379	389	547	362
3	564	697	451	0	596	240
4	758	696	495	0	0	389
5	525	743	0	0	0	0

TABLE IX
The relationship between per capita cash income from sons broken down by number of living sons for single-generation elderly in 2 rural Chinese villages

# living sons	Annual per capita cash gifts from son(s) (in <i>yuan</i>)	
	Pingyuan	Shancun
1	15 (n=4)	0 (3)
2	77 (10)	42 (10)
3	70 (5)	34 (8)
4	147 (3)	20 (1)
5	360 (2)	0 (0)

generation households and 2 lived with a daughter and son-in-law. Somewhat surprisingly, the mean per capita net income of the 6 living in single generation households was 806 *yuan*, 17% higher than the overall sample's net income.

Among these 6 elders, 2 had surviving daughters, 1 had an adopted daughter and 3 had no surviving children. A brief comment on the situation of each individual case will provide some context on how they managed.

(a) Two had daughters.

- The first case is a 66 year old male living with his wife. His health is satisfactory and he can still farm. He has one living daughter who lives in the nearby district center with her husband who is the head of the district court. She also works in a grocery store and is well-off economically. The subject's relations with his daughter and son-in-law are good, and they come to visit every few weeks. They also spend the holiday season with him and his wife. The daughter brings food and clothing when she comes on visits and pays for all the expenses during the holiday season – this amounted to 1800 *yuan* in 1988. The daughter also helped the couple during the peak farming season. The old couple, for their part, provided rice to their daughter for her family's use. They also earned 200 *yuan* from the sale of

- excess rice to the government.
- Another male aged 62 also lived with his wife and had one living daughter. He, however, also had several step sons and daughters from his wife's first marriage. He farmed 0.6 of *mu* of land and earned his income from tea and pig sales, and some gifts from his daughter. His per capita income was 659 *yuan*.
- (b) Three had no children.
- The first of these was a 65 year old divorced male with 2.1 *mu* of land. He had good relations with his brothers and their sons and interacted with them a lot. He took care of his own land, receiving help with carrying heavy loads from his older brother's sons who live in the village. His annual income was 900 *yuan*. He plans to give his land back to the village when he dies and give his house to his brother's sons.
 - Another 69 year old man living alone was also divorced. He did not take responsibility or rice land at the time of decollectivization, so only had 0.2 *mu* of family plot land for vegetables. He regretted this soon afterwards and was able to get another 0.7 *mu* of rice land from a neighbor. The subject had good relations with his brothers and sisters and received help carrying heavy loads from his cousin (father's brother's son) who lives nearby. He also received 120 *yuan* in welfare. However, he was in poor health and drank a lot, and sometimes could not grow much on his land due to his health, so he started using his house to host mahjong games. This activity got him expelled from the communist party, but the games were not stopped and he earned a good income from that illegal occupation -- his annual net income was 1,173 *yuan*.
 - A third male aged 65 had mental problems and was mute. He never married and survived by looking after his own land and by working for others doing miscellaneous tasks. He earned 500 *yuan*, 60 of which was welfare from the *xiang*.
- (c) One had no children but had an adopted daughter.
- A male widower 66 years old adopted a 6 yr. old girl (wife's sister's daughter) when he was 25 years of age because his wife was unable to give birth. The girl is now married and lives in the same village. However, he didn't have good relations with her so he took care of his own land alone. His adopted daughter and son-in-law helped only during the busiest part of the farming season, and then only very little. When heavy carrying was required, he made up small loads and transported them himself by making many trips from the fields. He earned 800 *yuan* from selling crops.

The elderly without sons, therefore, adapted in several ways. Those with a daughter sometimes kept her in their household, bringing her a husband who would live with them in an extended family. In other cases they separated, the daughter and her husband forming an autonomous household. Those without daughters, i.e., the childless, sometimes adopted a daughter but more often utilized other kinship relationships to receive support. Economically, the childless elderly in our sample were managing adequately, although the real problem for them would come when they became ill or too feeble to work and perform the daily functions of living.

Income from pensions and welfare. Since China has no pension system for rural farmers, this source of income represents a relatively small proportion of the

total net income. Only 4% of the sample elderly had any income from pensions. They had worked in a government office.

Similarly, only 4 elders (4%) received welfare funds, 3 in Shancun and 1 in Pingyuan. According to Chinese law, elderly persons who have no children are entitled to receive 5 types of aid – food, clothing, shelter, medical care and burial. Other poor households sometimes also receive welfare ('hardship') payments based on need. The 4 elders on welfare fell under these categories.

Welfare payments, however, were generally too low to provide adequate subsistence. The average payment to these 4 individuals was only 85 *yuan* per year, i.e., less than the 120 *yuan* per year cost of rice. Thus, individuals receiving welfare still had to generate income from other sources. This was done through a combination of farming and sideline work.

The 1978 reforms made welfare funding more problematic than during the commune era because, as mentioned above, collective officials no longer could use a percentage of the collective's farm income for welfare payments. However, some villages like Pingyuan retained control of a collective factory after decollectivization and used part of its income to provide welfare money. Shancun village had no equivalent enterprise, so its elderly welfare recipients received their payments directly from the *xiang* civil affairs office. In any case, in both villages, funds were very tight and there was not enough money to meet the needs of all the eligible elderly. Many elderly who qualified, received nothing.

A third minor source of 'welfare' came from voluntary contributions by villagers. The case of one poor elderly widow aged 62 illustrates this.

This widow was sick with TB, and was often bed-ridden. She had two sons and one daughter, and was living with her youngest son who was single. However, he was working as an apprentice construction worker so made very little income, almost all of which he drank and smoked away. The woman got very little help from her oldest son for three main reasons. First, he was quite poor. Second, when the woman's husband was ill, an agreement was made wherein the eldest son would take care of him and the youngest son would be responsible for the mother. Third, the elderly woman had poor relations with her daughter-in-law because earlier she had berated her for not bearing a son.

Her own daughter had married into a Christian family living in a village a few miles away. The daughter had a close relationship with her mother (who had converted to Christianity), and visited her weekly. She also took the old woman to her house when she was sick and her son was away working. The daughter, however, was also very poor so the Christian community occasionally helped her mother by giving her clothes and by making visits to help her with the tasks of daily life. Similarly, on one occasion when the widow was ill, a local official in Pingyuan collected donations from all the villagers totaling 200 *yuan* so she could visit a doctor and buy medicine. This suggests that support from 'non-kinsmen' sometimes occurred when people genuinely felt there was need. This, however, was said to be very uncommon.

INTRA-POPULATION VARIATION IN INCOME AMONG THE ELDERLY

The average net income data presented earlier conceal substantial internal variation. For example, the range of net incomes for our sample elderly was over 1700 *yuan/year* (173–1859 *yuan*). Table X illustrates this by presenting a breakdown of elderly by village and level of income. It reveals that 53% of the total sample had net incomes over the 620 *yuan* level, and that 6% of Pingyuan's, and 8% of Shancun's, elders had per capita net incomes over 1,250 *yuan*. At the same time, 47% had incomes under the 620 *yuan* standard discussed above – 38% in Pingyuan and 56% in Shancun.

Moreover, utilizing the mean income for entire sample to assess economic status is somewhat misleading because the 'share' of the elderly living in multigenerational households is primarily a paper share over which they have no control or access. When we examine the income levels of only the elderly living in single generation households, a somewhat different and less sanguine picture emerges. Table XI shows that the elderly in all three types of single generation households in Shancun had incomes below the 620 *yuan* standard, as did one of the Pingyuan household types ('by turn'). These represented 52% of the single generation household elderly.

TABLE X
Total per capita income (*yuan*) in Pingyuan and Shancun by income categories

Per capita net income category (in <i>yuan</i>)	Pingyuan number (%)	Shancun number (%)
1–349	4 (8%)	10 (20%)
350–619	15 (30)	18 (36)
620 ¹ –949	21 (42)	14 (28)
950–1249	7 (14)	4 (8)
1250+	3 (6)	4 (8)

¹ 620 *yuan* is the "adequate living standard" reference.

TABLE XI
Net income for single generation elderly by household type
in Pingyuan and Shancun¹

Household type	Pingyuan		Shancun	
	Yuan	Number	Yuan	Number
Alone	837	11	426	3
W/spouse	727	14	596	10
By turns	441	3	308	11
All	739	28	443	24

¹ Results of Anova testing for the effects of village and household type reveal significant main effects ($p < 0.01$) and no significant interaction.

These data also showed the impact of the differential economic status of the two villages, the Pingyuan single generation elderly had net incomes that were 67% higher than those for Shancun single generation household elderly ($p < 0.01$). When the economic status of the elderly is looked at from this perspective it is less satisfactory. We feel this is more reflective of the real situation.

Four factors played a major role in producing this intra-population income differentiation: gender, age/health, family relations, and local economics.

Assessing gender differences in income is not straightforward. Table XII, for example, presents the per capita net income figures for males and females, and reveals no consistent pattern. However, since the income of females living with spouses and in multigenerational households includes the earnings of males, the effect of gender is better illustrated when the incomes of elderly persons living alone are compared. The results of this are striking – females living alone in Pingyuan averaged 711 *yuan* less than males (1300–589 *yuan*, $p < 0.01$). We were unable to compare gender in Shancun because only 3 persons were living alone.

Table XIII assesses age differences in annual per capita net income for the elderly by 10 year age categories. It shows a general decline in income with age, but these differences were not statistically significant primarily because income is linked to age through health. Increasing age tends to decrease health and income as the elderly's ability to utilize income producing opportunities declines. But it is health rather than age per se that is critical. For example, the oldest woman living alone in Pingyuan (82 years old) was still in very good health and worked virtually full time performing Buddhist chants.

TABLE XII
Annual per capita net income by gender and site

	Pingyuan <i>yuan</i> N	Shancun <i>yuan</i> N	Both <i>yuan</i> N
Male	840 (24)	627 (24)	734 (48)
Female	651 (26)	643 (26)	647 (52)

TABLE XIII
Annual per capita net income by age and locality

Age	Pingyuan <i>yuan</i> (N)	Shancun <i>yuan</i> (N)
60–69	758 (34)	662 (30)
70–79	693 (11)	679 (13)
80+	551 (5)	554 (7)

Table XIV illustrates this by presenting the relationship between self-assessed health status and per capita net income for the 14 elderly living alone. These

TABLE XIV
Self assessed health status and annual per capita net income for elderly
living alone in Pingyuan and Shancun

Health status	Per capita net income in <i>yuan</i>
Very good	946
Fairly good	813
Average	635
Poor	175

differences were not statistically significant, but are consistent with health being positively correlated with income.

The relative wealth of the local area was another relevant factor. As we saw in Table XI, elderly living in single generation households in Pingyuan averaged income levels 67% higher than those in Shancun. With respect to own earnings and to help from sons and daughters, this disparity appeared to be related to greater local opportunities for cash employment in Pingyuan. For example, more single generation elderly in Pingyuan (60%) received annual cash payments from sons (an average of 56 *yuan* per elderly) than did single generation elderly in Shancun where only 50% received cash payments and then only 22 *yuan* per person. Further research is needed on this issue.

The fourth factor, family relations will be discussed briefly below.

POVERTY AMONG THE ELDERLY

Another way of clarifying economic status is to examine the situation of the poorest elderly. Based on interviews and household expenditure data we use an annual per capita net income of under 350 *yuan* per year to represent 'poverty'. We found that our sample contained 14 such impoverished elderly (14%)—4 in Pingyuan and 10 in Shancun (cf. Table X). Several brief examples of such elderly are provided to illustrate their situations.

- A 67 year old crippled widow from Shancun lived alone but ate in her adopted son's house. She had a net income of 231 *yuan* – 93 *yuan* earned from making soles for shoes and doing Buddhist chanting – and 138 *yuan* as the estimated cash value of the meals with the adopted son. Her adopted son and daughter-in-law recently built a new house, but they do not treat her well and did not ask her to move in with them. The daughter-in-law often scolded the old woman, and when the elder needed assistance, more often than not it was her neighbors who helped. She, therefore, represented one of the common syndromes leading to poverty – widowhood, inability to work much (because she was crippled), and poor relations with her children (adopted son and daughter-in-law). She was further handicapped by living in Shancun, the poorer village with fewer options to earn sideline income.
- Another example is a 68 year old widower also from Shancun who had been poor all his life. He lived alone but ate by turns in his two sons' homes. When his family divided some years earlier, the agreement specified that his two sons would

give him 40 *yuan* per year (20 *yuan* each). Since then, however, the eldest son had given him only 5 *yuan* and the younger son had never given him any money. The older son was trying to save money to build a new house and the younger son still had a large debt from his marriage which he paid for himself. He was known to tell his father that because he had to pay for his own wedding (when according to custom it was his father's obligation), now he had no money for the old man. The father had been sick for a long time so couldn't work. At first his sons paid the medical bills, but when the father did not recover quickly, the sons started to complain about the medical costs and stopped paying.¹² The old man still owed the village health aide money and stopped seeing him because he felt embarrassed to bother him when he could not pay. Most of his income (190 *yuan*) came from his son-in-law (his daughter had died). When he was healthy he regularly helped his son-in-law farm, and now his son-in-law provided him some help. The remainder of his net income were the meals his sons provided. He represents one of the common syndromes leading to poverty for males – too sick to work, bad relations with sons, and widowhood.

These two examples reveal the importance of another factor underlying the income of the elderly, the intergenerational contract – the quality of the elder's relations with children and other relatives. Despite Chinese ideals of 'filial piety,' support from relatives, sons, daughters and close kinsmen like nephews and grandchildren was in many cases a function of how they had treated their children in the past and the general quality of their relations over the life span.

The third case was a 62 year old Shancun widow lived alone and was deaf.

- She survived partly through welfare which provided 1/3rd of her 338 *yuan* net income – 138 *yuan* from her own crops, 100 *yuan* from *xiang* welfare, and 100 *yuan* from the sale of tea. She had 4 children, 2 sons and 2 daughters, but both sons were retarded and hadn't married. The older son lived in a different village and the younger one lived with her until he died (after the study started). One daughter married into another village and the other lives in Shancun. The old woman farmed her land with the help of a 65 year old single neighbor who is also on welfare and who is retarded and mute. She is on her own and subsists on very little, living very poorly in a ramshackle shack. She is dependent on the income from *xiang* welfare. What will happen when her health fails is not clear since it is unlikely the *xiang* will be able to increase her welfare payments.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed a series of questions dealing with the economic status of the elderly and the role of family support. The data revealed that the average income for the sample elderly as a whole was slightly above both the average local *xiang* income level and the 620 *yuan* 'adequate living standard' (Table III), but at the same time indicated that 47% of the total sample and 52% of the single generation household elderly had annual net incomes lower than 620 *yuan*. Economically, therefore, roughly half of the elderly were less than adequate. On the other hand, only 14% of the sample fell below the 350 *yuan* 'poverty' level.

The data also revealed that the situation in Zhejiang diverged markedly from the traditional Chinese ideal concerning family support and filial piety – i.e., from the ideal that elderly parents should live comfortably, securely ensconced in extended families with a son and his family.

First, the elderly's income derived primarily from the elderly's own farming and sideline work and only secondarily from children. Only 22% of the cash income of single generation elderly came from transfers from children, the remaining 78% coming from their own work.

Second, we found that roughly half of the sample elderly did not live in extended families – 52% lived in single-generation households and within that, 38% lived either alone or with a spouse. The remaining 14% lived in 'by turns' arrangements. This nucleation of household structure parallels trends in urban areas (Yuan 1987).

Third, the elderly who were living with married sons in the 'ideal' family situation had limited or no access to their household's cash income and thus generally were worse off with respect to economic independence and access to non-subsistence goods than elderly living alone or with spouses.¹³

Our findings also suggest that the importance of daughters has been underemphasized in the literature on contemporary rural China. While 16% of the net income of our single generation household subjects came from sons, this was matched by the contribution of daughters – 15%. Similarly, the data revealed that having many surviving sons did not yield proportionately greater income than having one, two or no sons. It was not surprising, therefore, that most elders in our sample frequently articulated the view that rearing many sons had negative consequences because of the high expenses involved, particularly the high cost of arranging weddings and houses. Consequently, the 'wealth flow' transition (Caldwell 1982) wherein wealth shifts from a net upwards flow (children to parents) to a net downwards flow (from parents to children), appears well underway in this area. The elderly are aware of this and 61% responded that they were in favor of having only one son.

Another unexpected finding was the verbalized preference of many elderly in both village sites for living separately from sons. The elderly saw this as a way to reduce conflicts over work, food and money and give themselves the greatest *zi you* ("freedom"), i.e., freedom from having to work and defer to the wishes of sons and daughters-in-law, and freedom from quarrels and disputes.¹⁴ This attitude reflects the elderly's perception of the changed situation they now face. Eighty-six per cent of the total sample stated that today's children were not as respectful or supportive as they had been to their parents, and for those living with a married son, 78% in Pingyuan and 92% in Shancun responded in that manner. And in response to the question 'do your children ask your opinion and listen to your views,' 48% of the sample elderly gave an unqualified 'no,' whereas only 18% gave an unqualified 'yes.'

The elderly explained this situation mainly by reference to the increased independence of the young, the changed values of today's children regarding materialism – consumption for one's own pleasure and as a marker of social

status – and the greater significance the young place on their nuclear families (husband-wife linkage versus son-parent linkage).¹⁵ These were often seen as a source of intergenerational conflict when, for example, children preferred to save money for building a two story concrete house or buying a color television set rather than provide better care for their parents. Many elderly, therefore, now saw themselves as the recipients of minimal support, often grudgingly given.

However, being able to live separately required regular cash income. This could come from the elderly's own earnings, from transfers from their sons and daughters who earned it via employment in factories or crop sales or both, or from the government via welfare and pension payments.

Health status and gender were shown to be important factors influencing the ability of the elderly to earn such income themselves. Economic conditions in the locality were also very important since they determined the extent to which there were work opportunities for the elderly (and for their children). For example, while only 11% of the single generational elderly in Pingyuan lived in the least desirable 'by turns' arrangements, 46% of the single generation elderly in Shancun did so.¹⁶ The reason for this difference, we suggest, was the greater income of Pingyuan children and concomitantly their greater ability (and willingness) to provide their parents the financial support they needed to pursue the new preferred adaptation to old age – separate residences in close proximity to children. For example, 35% of the net income of the elderly living alone or with a spouse in Pingyuan came from sons and daughters, whereas in Shancun, it was only 16%.

However, despite the elder's feelings that there has been a decline in support and respect from sons, family support for the elderly – support from sons, daughters and relatives – was still very important. It provided income and assistance to parents throughout old age and also acted as a final security net for the elderly, for example, when they became unable to survive on their own. The nature of this 'family support', however, varied tremendously. While some elderly were provided only the minimum, others received cash and quality foods. Some kinds of 'family support', therefore, left the elderly totally dependent and powerless while others allowed them to control resources and lead relatively independent lives. Consequently, assertions that the elderly received 'family support' or that the family is still the central support for the elderly tells us little about their situation or well-being. Within a single societal setting some types of 'family support' fostered independent living and others powerlessness and deference, some were desired by the elderly and some were resented by them. These findings suggest that future research on this topic will have to disaggregate 'family support' into more useful efficacious categories.

In closing, the elderly in Pingyuan and Shancun were acutely aware of the dramatic changes and discontinuities they have experienced, first as a result of collectivization and then in response to the new economic reforms, and on the whole were resentful of them. Many said they were the 'most unfortunate generation' because they were exploited in the old society, had limited opportunities during the communal era, and now when the economic rules have been

liberalized and it is considered good to make a profit and get rich, they are too old to take advantage of them. The China in which they must spend their last years is far different from the one of their childhood, despite the superficial continuity of traditional 'ideal' values such as 'filial piety'. Not surprisingly, their attitudes and strategies for coping have also changed, particularly with respect to smaller families and independent living.

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NOTES

¹ Xiang is typically translated as 'township' in the literature on China but refers actually to an administrative unit comprised of several villages.

² Pingyuan and Shancun are pseudonyms.

³ 'By turn' living arrangements refer to situations where the elderly rotate eating (and sometimes sleeping) at their married sons households. They are classified as a kind of single generation household because the elderly engaged in these are clearly not part of any of their sons' households. For a more detailed discussion see Goldstein, Ku and Ikels (1990).

⁴ One U.S. \$ was then equal to 3.72 yuan.

⁵ For the rest of the population, Shancun used the following guidelines: persons 18-55, 600 jin, children 1-2, 120 jin, children 3-4, 240 jin, children 4-8, 280 jin, and for persons older than 8, 50 jin were added for each two years of age up to the age of 18.

⁶ The Shancun rice price was 0.35 *yuan* per *jin*, i.e., higher than in Pingyuan due to higher transportation costs. Shancun elders with land insufficient to produce the basic subsistence rice were given government coupons enabling them to purchase rice up to the 480 *jin* standard at state subsidized rates.

⁷ Per capital net income was calculated by dividing net household income by the number of household members.

⁸ We were unable to collect complete data on savings.

⁹ Although land division took place at the 'production team' level, there were only very minor differences in these amounts between the teams.

¹⁰ Since there is very little demand for land in Pingyuan, households transferring land received no money for this. Indeed, they had to give the 'taker' the money allocated from the commune's savings for this land. The sole advantage to the giver was relief from the obligation of producing the quota rice (or buying rice to pay the quota or paying the rice equivalent in cash).

¹¹ For example, one extended family received 2.7 *mu* of rice land (consisting of 10 parcels spread out in different places around the village). This land was calculated to produce 250 *jin* of grain from two parcels of land located in one place and 490 *jin* of grain from three other parcels of land, located in another vicinity in the village. Another 440 *jin* of grain could be harvested from three other parcels of land located on the side of a mountain, while still another 420 *jin* could be harvested from a parcel of land far away from home. Finally, a further 280 *jin* of grain could be produced on land near their home. Thus, these 2.7 *mu* of land were specified to yield 1,880 *jin* of grain. However, in a good year, it was possible to harvest about 2,200 *jin* of rice. In addition, this family also had nine separate parcels of dry land located in the mountains. These were planted with other

crops such as sweet potatoes and corn and were estimated to yield 200 *jin*. Thus, the total grain yield for the family was 2,080 *jin*. However, the total grain consumption requirement of this family (based on the local standard) was 2,030 *jin* so they had to pay an agricultural tax on the extra 50 *jin* of grain. This amounted to 1.25 yuan in 1988.

¹² There is an old Chinese saying about this: *jiu bing wu xiao zhi* – 'In long illness there is no filial piety.'

¹³ It should also be noted that the elderly living in multigenerational households or involved in eating by turns arrangements had to work unless they were really infirm. See Goldstein et. al. 1983 for a discussion of the situation of the elderly in extended families in Nepal.

¹⁴ Another way they expressed this was that living separately is *ganjing* ('clean').

¹⁵ They also mentioned a change in respect that occurred after collectivization. The whole issue of filial piety will be examined in a separate paper.

¹⁶ We did not study this directly but are planning follow-up research to explore this issue in depth.

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