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A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE
ON FILIAL PIETY

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A Review of the Research Literature on Filial Piety

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Overview

- 1 This literature review is part of a project entitled “A Study of the Meaning and Practice of Filial Piety in the Adult Child-Parent Relationship in Hong Kong.” It covers 95 articles, most of which have been published within the last two decades. These articles are identified from the bibliographic database Sociological Abstracts, screened first using the keyword “filial piety” and then selected based on their relevancy to the main themes of the project. They include empirical studies conducted in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan and among Asian immigrants in Australia, Canada, and the United States.
- 2 The selected studies can be classified into two broad categories. The first category involves the theoretical implications of filial piety as a social construct, and the key issues are whether filial piety is a unitary concept and whether its meaning changes over time. The second category concerns filial piety as a cultural practice for ensuring elder care among the aging population, and the issues are whether filial piety is a viable vehicle for the support of elders and the identification of public policies that can complement family support.
- 3 This review is organized into seven topics: (1) The meaning of filial piety; (2) Is filial piety in decline?; (3) Filial piety in transition; (4) Intergenerational gap in filial expectations; (5) Gender roles and elder care; (6) Intergenerational coresidence; and (7) Filial piety and social policy.
- 4 The meaning of filial piety has necessarily changed over time and varies across cultures. Scholars have proposed different classification schemes that include behavioral-emotional, passive-active, and authoritarian-reciprocal contrasts of the concept, which suggests that filial piety is not a unitary concept. Measurement scales of filial piety have been developed to track changes in filial values and practices over time and to compare variations across cultures.
- 5 Scholars hold opposing views on whether filial piety is in decline. Smaller family size, greater longevity, rising female labor force participation rates, better education for the younger generation, and greater social and geographic mobility are identified as structural forces undermining family support of elders, leading to the view that filial piety is in decline. Although the new social structure has resulted in constraints on the practice of filial piety to its fullest extent, others argue that filial piety is still valued among Chinese and many other Asians and promoted in family socialization.
- 6 Many consider filial piety to be in transition rather in decline. It is still a core family value, but the competing demands of modern life have led to the modification of its expression. The contemporary version of filial piety emphasizes gratitude rather than obligation, respect rather than obedience, and reciprocal support rather than one-way responsibility.
- 7 The intergenerational gap in filial expectations points to the difficulty of synchronizing the filial claims of elders and the commitment of adult children. How people deal with this discrepancy is not fully understood. Some elders adopt a passive strategy of conflict avoidance by withdrawing from family

involvement, which suggests that a long-term, sustainable approach has yet to be developed for a mutually satisfying relationship between generations.

- 8 Gender differences in filial practices are still evident, with sons more likely to provide financial support and daughters more likely to provide care and emotional support. However, as women move up the social ladder, they offer substantial financial support to parents, blurring the traditional gender division in filial duties. The filial role of daughters-in-law may be diminishing because of the increase in female labor force participation rates, but the care provided by these women is still important to the well-being of their parents-in-law.
- 9 Intergenerational coresidence is unique to Confucian societies, but this living arrangement may be related to poverty and the lack of public support for elders. Recent socioeconomic changes have made coresidence increasingly impractical, and living near parents could become the next best alternative. Placing parents in a home for the elderly is still a sensitive issue under the current filial standard.
- 10 Sociodemographic changes make it increasingly difficult for families to take care of elderly members. Most scholars agree that there needs to be a balance between private and public responsibility in providing care for elders. Paid care is in great demand, but the private market in care services is largely underdeveloped in Asian societies, which emphasize filial responsibility. The provision of cash grants or vouchers to elders for paid services could be a viable means to stimulate the private market for the provision of competitive services, and complement family support.

1 The Meaning of Filial Piety

- 1.1 Although filial piety is a familiar concept among Chinese and many other Asians who share a common Confucian tradition, its meaning is far from clear in modern times as this value has merged with contrasting global values. Some scholars have looked to classical Confucian texts for clarification (Chow 2001), whereas others have developed measurement scales to try to capture the contemporary version of this millennia-old cultural norm (Ho and Lee 1974; Yang, Yeh and Hwang 1989; Sung 1995). Most researchers, however, agree that the meaning of filial piety has evolved over time. Yeh (2003) briefly reviewed the history of the concept from the pre-Chin (551-221 B.C.) to the modern era.
- 1.2 Based on Confucius's teaching, Chow (2001) differentiated three levels of filial piety: (1) fulfilling the material needs of parents; (2) listening to parents and obeying their wishes; and (3) pleasing and honoring parents by one's behavior. His study showed that most Hong Kong Chinese practiced filial piety at the first level, the material aspect, but neglected the other two.
- 1.3 Sung (1995) illustrated that filial piety is manifested in a wide range of value orientations and behavioral prescriptions. Among 13 indicators of filial piety ranked on a 5-point scale, young Koreans rated, in descending order, love/affection (4.72), repayment (4.44), family harmony (4.38), respect (4.28), responsibility (3.94), and sacrifice (3.81) as the most important expressions of filial piety, and as least important, family continuity (2.81), family face saving (2.23), and inheritance (1.60).
- 1.4 Sung (1995) used factor analysis to sort the six most important indicators of filial piety into two separate dimensions: (1) behaviorally oriented filial piety (loaded mainly on repayment, responsibility, and sacrifice) and (2) emotionally oriented filial piety (loaded mainly on love/affection, harmony, and respect). Hwang (1999) distinguished between passive filial piety, which involves obedience to authority, and active filial piety, which concerns benevolence, affection, and care for parents. The author observed that although the level of active filial piety is gradually diminishing in Taiwan, this cultural value remains relevant and important. Yeh (1997) proposed another scheme, which differentiates between authoritarian and reciprocal filial piety.
- 1.5 It seems logical to assume that filial behavior stems from filial attitude, but studies show that the two do not necessarily match. Ho (1996) found that filial behavior and attitude were moderately correlated with a value of approximately 0.25 in two samples from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Yu (1983) reported a similar discrepancy among Chinese Americans. Chen, Bond, and Tang (2007) found a moderate correlation between filial behavior and attitude of approximately 0.50 among two samples of college students in Hong Kong and Beijing; in addition, although the two samples displayed the same level of filial attitude, Hong Kong students were found to lag behind their Beijing counterparts in practice. These findings suggest that attitude and behavior are separate dimensions of filial piety.
- 1.6 Ho and Lee (1974) constructed a filial piety (FP) scale to measure the ethical values associated with filial piety among primary school teachers in Taiwan. The scale, which consists of 28 items of the expression of filial piety, is one of

the earliest systematic efforts to measure filial piety among Chinese societies, and was adapted by Ho (1994), Zhang and Bond (1998), and Lieber, Nihira and Mink (2004) in subsequent studies. Ho's (1994) version of the FP scale is presented in Appendix A of this report. Yang, Yeh, and Hwang (1989) developed a 52-item filial piety scale, which was later adopted by Yeh and Bedford (2003, 2004). This scale is attached in Appendix B.

- 1.7 Filial piety is generally regarded as a treasured cultural legacy that binds family members together and ensures harmonious relationships between generations. Ho (1989, 1996), however, pointed out that it has negative implications for personality, as traditional filial piety was based on "authoritarian moralism," which endorses authoritarianism, dogmatism, and conformity. Thus, Ho argued, Chinese are prone to demonstrate a passive, uncritical, and uncreative learning orientation and fatalistic, superstitious, and stereotyped beliefs.
- 1.8 *Summary.* As filial piety is a cultural construct, its meaning and practice have necessarily changed over time in tandem with different sociohistorical conditions. The various types of classification schemes, which contrast the behavioral-emotional, passive-active, and authoritarian-reciprocal dimensions of this construct, draw attention to the different aspects of filial piety that have been weakened or strengthened. Comprehensive measurement scales including those developed by Ho and Lee (1974) and Yang, Yeh, and Hwang (1989), if applied consistently over time, would be very useful tools for monitoring changes in filial values and practices.

2 Is Filial Piety in Decline?

- 2.1 Scholars debate whether filial piety still provides behavioral and orientation guidelines for societies sharing the same Confucian tradition. Of concern is the declining status of elders and whether they will be properly cared for by their families. Two main approaches are used to evaluate trends in filial values and practices: the first compares current practices with the ideals articulated in the classic statements of filial piety, while the second examines the immigrant experience, in which traditional beliefs and practices are challenged by the new values of the host society.
- 2.2 In a comparison among six cities in China, Cheung and Kwan (2009) found that expressions of filial piety, namely, caring, showing respect, greeting, pleasing, obeying, and providing financial support, were rated lower in more modernized cities. Filial piety was also weaker among people with higher levels of education. Modernization was identified as the primary reason for the erosion of filial piety. Kwan (1995) cited the increase in the number of elder abuse cases in Hong Kong as an indication of the decline in filial piety, and argued that industrialization and urbanization are responsible for this trend, as they have weakened the role of the family as the support system for elders.
- 2.3 Studies reveal a similar pattern in Japan. Ota, Giles, and Gallois (2002) compared the views of Japanese and Australian students on older generations. The latter students described middle-aged and older adults in more positive

terms than did the former ones, which suggests the erosion of filial norms, especially respect for the elderly, in Japan. Traphagan (2005) argued that Respect for the Aged Day in Japan actually reflects ambivalent attitudes toward the elderly. Yamato (2006) observed that since World War II, increasing numbers of Japanese see the dependence of elders on adult children as undesirable.

- 2.4 Migration studies show that filial piety is challenged by values in the host society. Lieber, Nihira, and Mink (2004) reported that the older generation of American Chinese are concerned about their children becoming Americanized and ignoring their own culture. Kauh (1999) revealed that this concern is also prevalent among the older generation of American Koreans: elders are typically seen by the younger generation to occupy an inferior position because of their lack of power and resources, which is in stark contrast to the Korean tradition of treating the elderly with great respect.
- 2.5 Mjelde-Mossey and Walz (2006) pointed out that East Asian immigrants to the United States invariably experience a cultural shift as their native traditions emphasize the family and a collective orientation, and do not easily fit into the host society. Detzner (1996) noted that the values of self-expression, freedom, and individuality that characterize Western societies clash with the tradition of obedience and self-denial among Asian immigrants. Chen (2006) documented the challenge of Christianity to Confucian family traditions among American Taiwanese, among whom religious discipleship, individuality, the autonomy of children, and a democratic parent-child relationship have replaced the value of filial piety.
- 2.6 Most scholars agree that modernization, Westernization, industrialization, and urbanization are responsible for the decline in filial piety. Zhan (2004a) argued that social structure, rather than socialization, determines people's attitudes toward filial responsibility. Choi (1996) suggested that greater longevity, the aging population, smaller family size, and the increase in female labor force participation rates are structural factors undermining the social position of elders in Korea. Lee and Kwok (2005) found that structural changes in families have altered the supportive function of the family in Hong Kong. They observed that older people are increasingly less likely to live with their adult children or receive their informal support.
- 2.7 The decline in fertility rates deserves special attention, and the one-child policy in China is a case in point. Both the in-depth interview and survey data of Chen (1986) point to the decline of traditional paternalism with the rise of the one-child family. The increasing devotion of parents to their only child has shifted the traditional "father-centered" family to the modern "child-centered" one. Deutsch's (2004) study of college students in China revealed that only children were more likely than those with siblings to follow their own inclinations when their career plans clashed with the wishes of their parents.
- 2.8 However, a later study by Deutsch (2006) indicated that only children in China were as likely to support their parents as those with siblings, and more likely to live near their parents. The only children also seemed to feel especially responsible for the happiness of their parents because of their singleton status. As Chinese societies elsewhere have also experienced a sharp

decline in fertility rate, studies of only-child families would help to predict the future evolution of filial piety.

- 2.9 Although filial piety is seriously challenged in the modern world, some scholars argue that it survives and continues to influence family life. Yue and Ng (1999) found that in Beijing, both the younger and the older generation held high filial expectations. Respect for parents, in particular, was still a core value. Zhan (2004b) observed that the younger generation willingly accepted their filial responsibility, surpassing the expectations of the older generation. Liu et al. (2000) noted that New Zealand Chinese retained strong attitudinal support for filial piety even though the host country did not provide any normative support for this traditional value. The same was revealed to be true among Chinese caregivers in Canada, where filial piety was found to be an important factor motivating care for the elderly (Lai and Surood 2009).
- 2.10 Deutsch (2004) argued that filial obedience is still relevant among Chinese. In a study of career planning among college student in China, the author found that students felt free to make their own choice as long as their parents approved of their plans. However, when parents disapproved of their plans, which happened quite often, students had to choose between satisfying their own or their parents' wishes. Most students did not want to defy their parents and gave up their dreams if they failed to bring their parents around to their point of view.
- 2.11 Kiang and Fuligni (2009) found that Asian immigrants typically exhibited higher levels of obligation toward parents compared to European immigrants. In a cross-national comparison of the attributes of an ideal mate, Kline and Zhang (2009) observed that college students in China rated filial piety in a future spouse more highly than did their counterparts in the United States. Socialization might explain these ethnic differences. Lam (2005) confirmed that filial piety, as a deep-rooted cultural norm, was still emphasized in family socialization among Canadian Chinese.
- 2.12 *Summary.* Sociodemographic changes have fundamentally altered the relationship between adult children and their parents. Smaller family size, greater longevity, increased female labor force participation, better education for the younger generation, and greater social and geographic mobility are examples of structural forces weakening family support of elders, diminishing the role of elders in the family, and socially marginalizing the elderly. These changes may be irreversible, and globalization has accelerated the erosion of filial piety by introducing Western ideas into the East. Although the new social structure has resulted in constraints on the full practice of filial piety, filial piety is a deep-seated value among Chinese and many other Asians and continues to be emphasized and valued in family socialization.

3 Filial Piety in Transition

- 3.1 The debate on the decline in filial piety may be misplaced if we take the evolutionary perspective. Filial piety remains a core family value among Chinese, but its meaning and practice have evolved in parallel with

sociohistorical change (Kuk 2005). Hwang (1999) commented that the traditional Chinese worldview situates individuals in a network of interpersonal relationships that are based on superior-inferior and intimacy-distance distinctions. Modern life, however, compels individuals to participate in various social organizations and establish new emotional and instrumental ties beyond the family network. Confucian ethics need to be modified to accommodate this new reality.

- 3.2 In a Taiwanese study, Yeh (1995) designed hypothetical scenarios in which respondents were forced to comprise their filial commitments. The scenarios included (1) unreasonable parental demands, (2) filial demands in conflict with personal values and goals, (3) inability to meet all filial demands, (4) filial demands in conflict with other role commitments, and (5) conflicting demands of parents. Common strategies to resolve these filial dilemmas included self-sacrifice, compatibility, and compromise. These findings suggest both continuity and change in filial orientation, with self-sacrifice representing the most traditional approach, that is, giving up personal interests (the “small self”) to foster family harmony (the “greater self”), and the compatibility and compromise approaches representing the blending of the modern and the traditional to at least partially fulfill filial norms.
- 3.3 Lewis (2008) pointed out that social change inevitably creates ambivalence in intergenerational exchanges, requiring all generations to look for creative means to blend tradition with modernity. Elders, for example, might have to consider the work demands of the younger generation before making filial claims. Ng, Phillips, and Lee (2002) suggested that living near parents, instead of residing with them, could be another expression of filial piety. They observed that not all elders preferred to live with their adult children and that having adult children living nearby was an acceptable arrangement.
- 3.4 Ambivalence, due either to East meets West or tradition meets modernity, calls for the redefinition and renegotiation of the parent-child relationship if it is to be sustained. Luk-Fong (2005) cited one example in which an interviewee subtly differentiated between traditional and modern forms of filial piety: “It is much better that the child respects the parents and shows filial piety out of gratitude rather than out of obligation.” As a cultural practice, filial piety needs to be adaptable to fit new circumstances. The author described the current practice as a hybrid form in which many of the traditional elements coexist with modern ones.
- 3.5 According to Sung (1998), Koreans still embrace filial piety as a core value, but its practice has been modified because of the constraints imposed by modern life. In Sung’s study, coresidence, for example, was not an option for many participants because of their work situation. However, adult children did make phone calls, write letters, and pay frequent visits to express love and concern for their elderly parents. Younger people tended to be affectionate and to express their respect and love in a frank, open, and friendly manner. Sung also found that intergenerational relationships were moving from an authoritarian and patriarchal style to an egalitarian and reciprocal one that emphasizes mutual help and respect, and that filial responsibilities were shared equally between sons and daughters.

- 3.6 Yue and Ng (1999) found that both young and old people in China considered filial obligations to be very important. Indicators of filial piety were ranked by subjects on a 5-point scale. Among young people, respect (4.86) was rated the highest, followed by pleasing (4.78), contact (4.78), caring (4.76), financial support (4.48), and obedience (3.18). Interestingly, elders also ranked respect as the most important aspect of filial piety and obedience as the least important. Although people might still subscribe to the same set of filial norms, they have reprioritized these norms to reflect the new reality. It is worth noting that the younger and the older generation adjusted their expectations in similar ways.
- 3.7 Wong and Chau (2006) observed that filial piety was an important motivator among adult children to shoulder responsibility for elder care in Hong Kong, but that traditional norms served as only a general frame of reference. Respondents selectively interpreted filial piety and took a relational approach in practicing it, which emphasized reciprocity rather than an intrinsic, unconditional devotion to parents. The adult children were more likely to develop strong bonds and reciprocate when their parents had made tremendous sacrifices in raising them.
- 3.8 Although filial piety is often portrayed as a one-way obligation of children to parents, studies document that many elderly parents support their adult children. Verbrugge and Chan (2008) revealed that in Singapore, elders who received financial support from kin often helped with child care and household chores. Sun (2008) found the same to be true among Taiwanese immigrant families, in which grandparents were willing to provide childcare assistance. Their help was considered to be equal in quality to the care of mothers and a preferred option to paid help. However, there can be tension between in-laws concerning the disciplining of children. Verbrugge and Chan (2008) predicted that affective giving and receiving could be as important as instrumental types of mutual support in the future.
- 3.9 Kim and Kim (2003) examined the quality of life among Korean elderly based on equity/exchange theory. They identified four types of intergenerational support: (1) giving and receiving, (2) only receiving, (3) only giving, and (4) no exchange. Those elders taking part in reciprocal exchange experienced the highest level of quality of life whereas those with no exchange reported the lowest level. The only receiving and only giving types ranked second and third, respectively. Health factors were controlled, and thus the findings were not influenced by the ability of elders to give. Jang, Haley, and Reynolds (2000) obtained similar results, finding that the active engagement of Korean elders in mutual family support helped to increase the level of their relationship satisfaction.
- 3.10 *Summary.* Filial piety is still a core family value, but the competing demands of modern life have resulted in the modification of its expression. People interpret filial piety according to their specific circumstances, and in the contemporary version of filial piety, gratitude rather than obligation is emphasized, respect rather than obedience, and reciprocal support rather than one-way responsibility. Living nearby and maintaining close contact with parents have become acceptable substitutes for coresidence.

4 Intergenerational Gap in Filial Expectations

- 4.1 The meaning and practice of filial piety have evolved, but the ability to adapt to change varies from person to person. Studies suggest that the elderly tend to hold on to the behavioral standards of their past and find themselves at odds with the current ones (Detzner 1996). Xu (1994) and Lieber, Nihira, and Mink (2004) pointed out that parents often resent that the filial behavior they practiced in the past has not been followed by their children. The management and resolution of conflicting intergenerational expectations are issues that both parents and adult children have to deal with in their daily interactions.
- 4.2 The disjuncture between cultural ideals and actual practices is best illustrated in the experience of migrants. In a study of elderly Arab-Americans, Ajrouch (2005) found tensions and ambivalence related to filial obligation and elderly home placement. The informants believed that it was their children's obligation to take care of them but worried that they would become a burden to their children. Most were reluctant to be placed in a home for the elderly but saw that such an arrangement might ultimately be necessary. These older people were uncertain of their future and did not know what to expect from their children.
- 4.3 In a study of Chinese elders recruited from social centers, Cheng and Chan (2006) measured the perceived filial discrepancy between the expectations of elders and behavior of children. Across all kinds of filial behavior, providing attention to ailing parents was perceived to be the least fulfilled expectation, while respect and care during sickness were perceived to be the two most important determinants of filial discrepancy. Because this sample may not be representative of the elderly population, it is hard to assess the actual gap between filial expectations and their fulfillment.
- 4.4 Cheng, Chan, and Chan (2008) investigated how older persons make sense of their inability to influence children and how they come to terms with this reality. Elders frequently cited social change as the cause of the generation gap. They reasoned that their lack of formal education and technological knowledge together with the obsolescence of their own knowledge and wisdom undermined their position in society. Elders also perceived that differences in values and lifestyle between the younger and older generations explained part of the generation gap.
- 4.5 Cheng, Chan, and Chan (2008) also revealed that elders understood intergenerational tension. They adopted a more passive role and put greater emphasis on the pursuit of communion to avoid potential conflict. Zhang (2004) found that among young people, old-to-young criticism was the most frequent cause of intergenerational conflict in China, which explains the passive adjustment tactic among elders to avoid conflict.
- 4.6 Groger and Mayberry (2001) reported unrealistic filial aspirations among young African Americans. Many expressed strong commitment to filial obligations but underestimated the practical difficulties of family care. Cognitive dissonance between the ideal and reality can lead to maladaptive behavior. For example, people might not be able to take up the role of primary caregiver should this suddenly become a reality.

- 4.7 *Summary.* The intergenerational gap in filial expectations points to the difficulty in synchronizing the filial claims of elders and commitment of adult children. This gap reflects to tensions between traditional and modern values. Failing to address this problem can lead to ambivalence and confusion. Studies show that both the young and the old are fully aware of the social changes that have led to intergenerational differences, but such differences in expectations remain unresolved. Some elders adopt a passive strategy of conflict avoidance by withdrawing from family involvement, which suggests that a long-term, sustainable approach has yet to be developed for a mutually satisfying relation between generations.

5 Gender Roles and Elder Care

- 5.1 In the past, filial piety was a set of gender-specific prescriptions, with sons taking up most filial duties as daughters had no economic resources and left home upon marriage (Whyte and Qin 2003). In a study of working daughters in Hong Kong, Salaff (1976) found that unmarried daughters performed important filial duties, but that parents did not expect daughters to continue to do so after marriage as their filial obligations should be directed to parents-in-law. With the rise in women's economic status, this may no longer be the case. The one-child policy in China and low fertility rate in other Chinese societies also make it infeasible for elders to rely solely on sons for support.
- 5.2 Research suggests that daughters now play a more important role in taking care of elderly parents. Xie and Zhu (2009) argued that gender norms related to filial piety have changed because of demographic, economic, and cultural changes in modern China. Survey data from three Chinese cities showed no significant gender difference in the financial support of parents (an average of 423 yuan from married daughters versus 380 yuan from married sons). Married daughters living with parents actually provided more financial support than did married sons. This new trend, according to the authors, is due to the higher level of education and income of daughters.
- 5.3 Zhan and Montgomery (2003) and Zhan (2005) argued that the one-child policy in China, which was instituted in 1979, has weakened family support for old people because there are fewer children to take care of aging parents. The dominance of one-child families has also resulted in many families not having sons to perform traditional filial duties. Based on structured interviews with 110 caregivers, Zhan and Montgomery (2003) found that compared to men, women spent more time caring for their elderly parents but provided less financial assistance. In addition, daughters were as likely to provide care for elders as were daughters-in-law.
- 5.4 Yue and Ng (1999) noted gender differences in filial practice among young people in Beijing. The top filial concerns among men were looking after elderly parents and assisting them financially, whereas women were more concerned about keeping in touch with elders. Yi and Lin (2009) found a similar pattern in Taiwan, where married sons were more likely than married daughters to endorse filial norms and emphasize provision for parents, whereas married daughters were eager to maintain frequent contact, provide

emotional support, and engage in functional exchanges such as mutual assistance in household chores. Studies conducted in Hong Kong by Chan and Lee (1995) and Ngan and Wong (1995) revealed that sons made most of the family decisions and provided financial support to parents, whereas daughters took up a bigger share of caring duties.

- 5.5 A survey of Chinese seniors in Canada by Chappell and Kusch (2007) revealed that elderly migrants still followed the traditional pattern of living with sons, meaning that sons and daughters-in-law were the key persons providing care to elderly parents. However, the authors noted that the level of the provision of care by daughters-in-law and daughters had increased, especially in terms of instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), whereas the level of involvement of sons had declined. The caring role played by daughters-in-law was secondary to that of sons and daughters.
- 5.6 The involvement of daughters-in-law in elder care has long been overshadowed by that of their husbands. Daughters-in-law are supposed to take care of their parents-in-law, but their “outsider” position can make it awkward for them to perform filial duties. Because of increased female labor force participation, the role of the daughter-in-law as the primary caregiver to parents-in-law has diminished. However, Cong and Silverstein (2008) found that in rural China, assistance provided by daughters-in-law reduced depressive symptoms among elders whereas support provided by sons was associated with no such benefit.
- 5.7 *Summary.* Gender-based division of filial responsibilities is still evident, with sons providing more financial support and daughters providing more care and emotional support. As women move up the social ladder, however, their filial role is changing. In particular, married daughters continue to provide financial support and care for their parents after marriage. At the same time, although the level of their filial involvement as daughters-in-law may be reduced, their care is still important to the well-being of parents-in-law.

6 Intergenerational Coresidence

- 6.1 Living arrangements are another important area affected by new filial standards. Living with elderly parents and taking care of their needs have long been taken for granted as constituting a basic filial duty. The figures provided by Chui (2007) for around 2000 show that intergenerational coresidence was most common in China (80%), followed by Singapore (74%), Korea (64%), Taiwan (60%), Hong Kong (57%), and Japan (55%). These figures look especially impressive when compared with those of Western countries, including the United States (25%), the United Kingdom (16%), and Canada (13%).
- 6.2 Coresidence is important to the well-being of elders. Phua, McNally, and Park (2007) reported that living with family lowered the risk of poverty among elderly Asians in the United States. Chen and Short (2008) found that in China, living with immediate family had a positive effect on the subjective well-being of elders, and that living with daughters improved the emotional health of the

elderly. Chi and Chow (1997) documented that elders in Hong Kong received a wider range of support, including emotional, financial, decision making, household, personal/health, leisure, and escort support, from relatives living with them than from relatives living elsewhere. Ng, Phillips, and Lee (2002) confirmed that elderly in Hong Kong received better daily care if they lived with their children, especially daughters.

- 6.3 Cultural values may not be the only reason for intergenerational coresidence. Zhang (2004) reported a high rate of parent-adult child coresidence in urban China despite rapid economic development. The pattern of coresidence was quite traditional, with parents more likely to live with unmarried (married) sons than with unmarried (married) daughters. However, family played an important role in elder care simply out of necessity because there was no comprehensive social security system to take care of the aging population. Logan and Bian (1999) argued that coresidence represented a strategic choice rather than a cultural preference in urban China. Similarly, Takagi and Silverstein (2006) suggested that coresidence in Japan reflected instrumental purposes rather than cultural values. Phua, McNally, and Park (2007) argued that poverty rather than filial values led to the extended family living arrangement observed among Asians in the United States.
- 6.4 Young Asians today may not see coresidence as an essential expression of filial piety; thus, the high rates of intergenerational coresidence noted by Chiu (2007) may not last. Takagi and Silverstein (2006) noted that in Japan, multigenerational coresidence has declined dramatically from 50% to 24% in just two decades, as fewer young adults put family needs above their own. Using Chinese census data from the year 2000, Yi and Wang (2003) reported that the proportion of elderly living by themselves, not with children, increased between 1990 and 2000. Chui (2007) saw this change in living arrangements as an imminent threat to the function of family as the support for the elderly.
- 6.5 Coresidence is not the only way to maintain close contact with parents. Bian, Logan, and Bian (1998) found that in urban China, 62% of parents had a child living at least within the same city district (within 20 minutes' travel time). Parents also maintained frequent contact with noncoresiding children, with 45% reporting seeing their children almost every day. Living near parents and maintaining frequent contact may represent a compromise regarding the filial demand of coresidence. However, Silverstein, Cong, and Li (2006) cautioned that in rural China, living nearby one's parents is not a substitute for coresidence in terms of benefits to the emotional health of elders.
- 6.6 A thorny issue is whether an elderly home is an acceptable arrangement for aging parents under the current filial standard. Chen (1996) observed that institutional care for the elderly is unpopular in Chinese society, considered suitable only for those with the "three nos" – no children, no income, and no relatives. Residence in such a home stigmatizes not only those who send their parents there but also the elders who live there. Consequently, the elderly home market is underdeveloped and plays an insignificant role in elder care.
- 6.7 Cheng (2009) confirmed that the public perception in Hong Kong is that residents of homes for the elderly are socially isolated. Using the social network methodology, the author found that these residents reported few

network members, just 2.6 on average. They had difficulties in developing new relationships in an institutional environment, and only one fifth of them included a social network member, usually a staff member, from the elderly home. A feeling of abandonment was not uncommon among residents, and the author recounted, “During the first few interviews with the informants, we asked why some children were not named as network members, but the respondents broke into tears and one interview had to be terminated, so the question was dropped” (p. 174).

- 6.8 Attitudes toward homes for the elderly may be changing in China. Zhan, Feng, and Luo (2008) found that institutional care for elders is becoming increasingly common. The two main reasons cited in a Nanjing study for sending parents to such homes were (1) unavailability of family care because adult children had busy work schedules or lived far away, and (2) elder’s disability, which required intensive medical attention. During the interview, the authors noticed that family members tried very hard to justify their decision to send parents to elderly homes and emphasized their continuing emotional connection. Residents of these homes accepted the institutional arrangement and did not consider their children to be unfilial, and some elders redefined filial piety in terms of frequency of visits from their children. With the cost of professional care getting higher and higher, some elderly residents saw elderly home placement as a privilege rather than a stigma.
- 6.9 Tamiya, Chen, and Sugisawa (2009) noted that in Japan, attitudes toward elderly homes have also begun to change. They found that 55% of primary caregivers decided to place older family members in elderly homes because of their own difficulty in providing care, not because of the declining physical or cognitive functioning of elders. The stigma associated with homes for the elderly might be diminishing.
- 6.10 The level of quality of elderly homes affects the attitude of elders toward institutional care. The results of a survey conducted in Tianjin, China (Guan, Zhan, and Liu 2007), showed that the willingness of elders to stay in such homes depended on their prior living conditions and the cost of elderly home placement. In a Hong Kong study, Wu, Tang, and Yan (2004) reported that only 20% of elders were willing to live in elderly homes. Respondents ranked factors relevant to their decision as follows: quality of staff (60%), presence of physicians and nurses (57%), good living conditions (57%), unrestricted visits by family members (54%), provision of necessary assistance (53%), recreational activities (43%), information on their health status and treatment plans (43%), privacy (34%), and choice of food (26%).
- 6.11 Zhan, Liu, Guan, and Bai (2006) compared the quality of government-sponsored elderly homes with that of commercial ones in Tianjin, and found that the former had more funding and staffing support, which contributed to their favorable evaluation by residents. The private market is underdeveloped and insufficiently competitive to be a strong presence in the elder care sector.
- 6.12 *Summary.* Intergenerational coresidence is a distinct feature among Chinese and many other Asian societies. Culture, however, may not be the only reason for intergenerational coresidence. Poverty and inadequate public support for elders may make intergenerational coresidence a compelling choice. Recent socioeconomic changes, however, have made coresidence increasingly

difficult, and living near parents could become the next best option and an acceptable form of filial expression. Placing parents in a home for the elderly remains a sensitive issue under the current filial standard. How to meet the increasing need for intensive care for the aging population remains unresolved.

7 Filial Piety and Social Policy

- 7.1 Filial piety is promoted as a core value throughout East Asia, which suggests that in East Asian countries, taking care of elderly parents is considered to be primarily a private responsibility (Asai and Kameoka 2005). Some countries have even legislated the performance of filial duties to ensure that adult children take care of their elderly parents, but legal measures may not be terribly effective (Gunn 1986). Filial piety is a strong motivating factor for family care of the elderly. In a Hong Kong study, Holroyd (2001) found that daughters who performed a caregiving role cared about how others thought of them in relation to the normative standard. However, Lam (2006) pointed out that the so-called “sandwich generation” in Hong Kong has failed to translate filial values into practices because they struggle to meet the competing demands of the older and the younger generation at the same time.
- 7.2 Family values may encourage adult children to take up the caregiving role but may not make their job easier. Knight et al. (2002) found that filial values did not protect caregivers against stress and the feeling of being burdened, especially under demanding situations such as taking care of parents suffering from dementia. Lai (2007) found that Chinese feel the burden of elder care even though their culture encourages such a commitment, and that a higher level of filial piety resulted in a lower level of feeling burdened.
- 7.3 Governments in South Asian countries share similar motives in upholding the virtue of filial piety. Shin and Shaw (2003) accused the Korean government of using Confucian ethics to rationalize its minimal support for elderly people and their caregivers. The authors concluded that the moral discourse on family responsibility had been a powerful force in suppressing welfare initiatives in helping the elderly, making social problems private troubles. They argued that women bear most of the burden in providing care for parents and parents-in-law.
- 7.4 Most scholars agree that there should be a balance between private and public responsibility for elder care and urge greater commitment from the government (e.g., Sung 2001; Chow 2007). Chen (2008) pointed out tensions between private and public involvement. Traditionally, filial piety demands that adult children take care of their elderly parents, regardless of how difficult that is. In Chen’s (2008) study, Taiwanese considered placing elderly parents in institutions, regardless of the circumstances, to be the most unfilial deed, and family care for frail elderly parents the proper and ideal arrangement.
- 7.5 Lan (2002) observed that paid care is a new trend in fulfilling filial duties, as adult children might not be able to care for elderly parents. Many researchers have noted that the commercialization of care services at the community level is an emerging theme in elder care. Sung (2001) argued that the privatization

of elderly services provided by the non-profit and for-profit sectors could complement family support for elders.

- 7.6 Meagher (2006), however, expressed reservations about the extent to which paid care can be a substitute for family care based on compassion and love. In her study, care receivers characterized good care as individualized, person-focused, and need-based support in contrast to routine, impersonal service. It is unrealistic to expect care workers to act as kin (see Lan 2002). Meagher also proposed that compared to help provided by family members, assistance from paid carers could minimize the sense of humiliation among the elderly of being dependent and a burden. The author advocated direct grants to disabled people for hiring a personal care assistant, as such a model would provide greater flexibility to meet personal needs on a more intimate basis than does the assistance arranged by institutions and the local government.
- 7.7 Chou, Chow, and Chi (2005) also advocated a voucher system for long-term care in Hong Kong. The principles they put forward to guide elder care services included: (1) the encouragement of family care, (2) service integration, (3) a mixed mode of financing, and (4) a small government and large market approach. They argued that a voucher system would empower elders by giving them options in purchasing support services, and that free choice would increase the level of consumer satisfaction and create a competitive market and thus better services.
- 7.8 *Summary.* Sociodemographic changes make it increasingly difficult for families to take care of elders, but the emphasis on filial piety encourages the view that elder care is a private responsibility. Most scholars agree that there needs to be a balance between private and public responsibility in providing care for elders. Paid care, although not a substitute for family care, is in increasing demand, but the private market in care services is largely underdeveloped in Asian societies, which emphasize filial responsibility. The provision of cash grants or vouchers to elders for paid services could be a viable means to complement the support provided by family and deserves further research attention.

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Appendix A Ho's (1994) 22-item Filial Piety (FP) Scale

1. Sons and daughters may protest against being unreasonably scolded by their parents. (N)
2. There is no place under the sun for both oneself and the enemy of one's father.
3. If there is a reason for doing so, one may rely on an old people's home to provide for one's aged parents. (N)
4. Any sacrifice is worthwhile for the sake of filial piety.
5. Sons and daughters should not go to faraway places while their parents are still living.
6. In choosing a spouse, sons and daughters need not follow "the parents' command." (N)
7. The main reason for sons and daughters not to do dangerous things is to avoid getting their parents worried.
8. Parents should not interfere with their children's freedom to choose a vocation. (N)
9. The great debt that you have to repay your parents is as boundless as the sky.
10. "Rearing sons to provide for oneself in one's old age" should no longer be the main purpose of raising children. (N)
11. No matter how their parents conduct themselves, sons and daughters must respect them.
12. After the father has passed away, sons and daughters must conduct themselves according to the principles and attitudes he followed while he was still living.
13. If there is a quarrel between one's wife and one's mother, the husband should advise his wife to listen to his mother.
14. After their parents have passed away, sons and daughters do not necessarily have to finish the business left unfinished by their parents. (N)
15. "Spreading one's fame to glorify one's parents" should not be the most important reason for getting ahead. (N)
16. To worship their ancestors regularly on the proper occasions is the primary duty of sons and daughters.
17. To continue the family line is not the primary purpose of marriage. (N)
18. Sons and daughters do not necessarily have to seek parental advice and may make their own decisions. (N)
19. Sons and daughters do not necessarily have to respect the people respected and loved by their parents. (N)
20. After children have grown up, all the money they earn through their own labor belongs to themselves, even though their parents are still living. (N)
21. "There is no crime worse than being unfilial."
22. As a son or daughter, one must obey one's parents no matter what.

Appendix B Yang, Yeh and Hwang's (1988) 52-item Filial Piety Scale

1. 父親交待的事，你是否真的立刻去做？
2. 你父親信教，你是否也真的信同樣的教？
3. 爲了不增加父親的困擾，你在外是否真的言行小心，少惹麻煩？
4. 父親有了違法或不當的行爲，你是否真的爲他隱瞞？
5. 在父親面前，你是否真的避免和兄弟姊妹吵架？
6. 你是否真的陪父親做休閒活動？
7. 爲了不使父親丟臉，你是否真的避免做不道德的事？
8. 你是否真的幫助父親做家事？
9. 爲了順從父親，你是否真的不守對朋友的諾言？
10. 你是否真的去做讓父親引以爲榮的事？
11. 你是否真的努力工作，力爭上游，以使父親安心？
12. 父親生病時，你是否真的多方設法醫治？
13. 選擇職業或工作時，你是否真的以便於照顧父親者爲優先？
14. 你是否真的放棄個人的志趣，繼承父親留下的事業？
15. 在父親面前，你是否真的避免和自己的配偶爭吵？
16. 你是否真的避免和父親不喜歡的異性結婚？
17. 父親去世後，逢年過節，你是否真的祭掃他的墓地？
18. 你是否真的留心父親的生活起居？
19. 父親忙碌時，你是否真的主動幫助他？
20. 父親去世後，逢年過節，你是否真的按時祭拜他的牌位或遺像？
21. 你是否真的牢記父親的生日，並加祝賀？
22. 父親不喜歡的人，你是否真的避免和他交往？
23. 爲了保護父親的面子，你是否真的爲他說話？
24. 選擇職業或工作時，你是否真的遵從父親的意見？
25. 你結婚成家後，你是否真的和父親住在一起？
26. 父親去世後，你是否真的遵從他本人的意見，妥善安葬？

27. 你是否真的與父親交談，以了解他的想法和感受？
28. 你是否真的留心父親的身體健康？
29. 如果父親叫你去做壞事，你是否真的婉轉拒絕或推拖？
30. 父親去世後，你是否真的做些紀念他的事情？