

## Willingness and Expectations: Intergenerational Differences in Attitudes Toward Filial Responsibility in China

Heying Jenny Zhan

**ABSTRACT.** This paper explores intergenerational differences in attitudes toward willingness to and expectations for parent care based on survey data collected during 1997-1999 with 777 one-child generation students and 110 current familial caregivers. Findings suggest that current caregivers have very low expectations for their children's provision of elder care in the future. Children from one-child families experienced high levels of obligation to provide help although they expressed lower levels of willingness to co-reside with parents than did children from multiple-child families. Socialization factors, such as close contacts with grandparents, were negatively associated with one-child generation respondents' levels of personal obligation for parent care in the future. Structural factors, such as family income and respondents' educational levels, were important factors predicting student respondents' attitudes toward filial responsibility. The author argues that the culture of *xiao* is not declining; rather, the structural changes due to the one-child policy, increasing educational opportunity, and greater geographic mobility are going to have a greater effect on future elder care in China. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Heying Jenny Zhan, PhD, is affiliated with the Department of Sociology, Georgia State University, 38 Peachtree Center Avenue, General Classroom Building 1041, Atlanta, GA 30303 (E-mail: [sochjz@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:sochjz@langate.gsu.edu)).

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#### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The one-child policy in China, implemented in 1979, has been described as one of the "most significant and ambitious social experiments ever attempted in human history" (Ching, 1982; Falbo, Poston, Jiao, Jing, Wang, Yin, & Liu, 1989: 483). Despite its laudable goals of population control and raising per-capita living standards, unintended consequences of the policy have begun to emerge. The policy has exerted strains throughout China's social system, such as altering the family structure to a 4-2-1 (four grandparents, two parents, one child) inverted pyramid. This new family structure threatens a rupture of the tradition of filial piety crucial to familial elder care, imposes a daunting array of obligations upon the one-child generation, and raises questions even about the character and filial piety (*xiao*) of "only children." At the turn of the 21st century, as the first cohort of the one-child generation enter adulthood, many of their parents are caring for their dependent elderly grandparents. This paper explores familial and structural factors that influence the attitudes of filial responsibility between two generations: the middle-aged caregiver generation or the Chinese baby-boomers and the first maturing cohort of the one-child generation.

#### ***Studies About the Only Children***

Ever since the implementation of the one-child policy, there has been great concern about any negative impact the policy might have on the development of only children (Bian, 1987; Chow & Zhou, 1996; Feng, 1992; Poston & Yu, 1985). However, there is a paucity of research on the implications for elder care and filial responsibility. On the one hand, studies concerning consequences of being an only child have mostly drawn samples from preschool or kindergarten children and have not addressed the adult issue of filial responsibility because the research subjects were too young (Chow & Zhao, 1996; Falbo & Poston, 1996; Poston & Falbo, 1990; Wu, 1996). On the other hand, studies of socialization and Chinese culture have yet to take into account the recent but widespread phenomenon of being an only child in contemporary urban China and any implications for familial elder care (Berndt, Cheung, Lau,

Hau, & Lew, 1993; Ho 1989; 1994; Harwood, Giles, Ota, Pierson, Gallois, Ny, Lim, & Somera, 1996; Kelly & Tseng, 1992; Zhang & Bond, 1998).

As the only children mature and begin to face adult concerns, they also enter currents of rapid economic changes in China. Economic restructuring has increased income disparity in urban China. Having only one child has increased many urban families' financial well-being. Parents of the only children are found to be more eager to invest in children's education (Chow & Zhao, 1996). More and more children, especially those who are the only child in the family, are going to college and often moving out of their hometowns. Even girls in urban China are increasingly gaining equal access to higher education (Tsui & Rich, 2002). Increased family well-being and higher educational achievements of the only children, however, are not necessarily a positive factor for the future of elder care. As this first cohort of one-child generation reaches midlife, most will face the dilemmas of work and parental care. Having no siblings to assist them, a married couple (of two only children) might have to care for four elderly parents, possibly several grandparents, along with one or more of their own children. At present, as these only children come of age, their attitudes toward filial duties are influencing decisions about where to live and work. Their willingness as regards such responsibilities can help illuminate the future prospects for elder care in China. This study pioneers a consideration of how social and familial structural factors influence only children's attitudes toward filial responsibility. These factors include one-child status, family income, and educational levels.

#### *Link Between Contacts with Elders and Attitudes Toward Elder Care*

Although young adults' attitudes toward filial responsibility do not necessarily determine their actual commitment toward parental care in the future, research in the West, however, has shown evidence that contacts with grandparents in childhood can influence individuals' attitudes toward aging, elder care, and public policy on aging. Silverstein and Parrott (1997), in their study of attitudes toward public support of the elderly, found that greater childhood contact with grandparents had the effect of reducing young adults' opposition to aging policies, thus moderating age-group tension.

Several studies have found that young adults' knowledge of aging is positively related to their attitudes toward aging (Palmore, 1988; Duerson, Chang, & Stevens, 1992). However, Cummings, Kropf, and DeWeaver (2000: 87) suggest an opposite result, stating that "increased

exposure due to caregiving demands may highlight the disabling effects of the aging process." Women who had "lived experience in dealing with their own ill older relatives" in particular tended to experience higher levels of anxiety and apprehension than men. Whether it is through knowledge, family contact, personal experience, and early exposure to grandparents in the family or other elders, more knowledge and contact with elders have been found to have an impact on a person's attitude toward aging and elder care in later life.

Early research on only children in China has consistently found that only children tend to live in urban areas where they generally do not live with their grandparents in the same household (Bain, 1987; Feng, 1992; Chow & Zhou, 1996; Poston & Yu, 1985). Does this lack of contact with grandparents among only children suggest a weakening socialization process in terms of filial responsibility? Do only children express lower levels of willingness to provide parental care due to their reduced contact with grandparents? The goal of this article is to explore the relationship between children's contact with grandparents and their attitudes toward filial responsibility in the Chinese context. Findings from this study will shed light on the importance of cultural socialization in shaping children's attitudes toward filial responsibilities among the first maturing cohorts of the only children.

#### *Parents' Expectations in Relation to Children's Willingness in China*

In a survey on elder care in Beijing, Xu (1994) found that few current caregivers expected that children would take care of them in their old age. They were already aware that it was somewhat unrealistic for them to hold on to such expectation as an absolute or dependable outcome. Only 10% of current caregivers interviewed expressed the desire to rely solely on children's support. The survey offered striking evidence that many current Chinese caregivers have a bleak outlook as to their future elder care possibilities. Of those who were married, 24% actually marked euthanasia as a viable option, and among those already widowed, 41% gave a similar indication.

Treas and Wang (1993) found that there was an association between parents' expectations for filial responsibility and their description of children's actual filial behavior. They noted that elder parents who had higher expectations for support from their children reported their children providing more assistance, even when untrue. This finding offered

an astounding example of the suggestibility of current care recipients or at least their concern with "saving face."

When the above finding is applied to the future of current caregivers as care recipients of care from the one-child generation, it points to a rather linear negative premise: When current caregivers have repeatedly expressed low expectations regarding their own elder care, their children, having heard these remarks, are likely to internalize them, thereby developing a lowered sense of obligation for providing parental care. Has the one-child generation in effect retained or lost the essential willingness to commit to and carry out filial responsibilities, especially in the face of the staggering challenges ahead? Or, have the prevalent social changes in economy, society, and family begun to irretrievably upset the social order so as to make the traditions of filiality and familial elder care less viable, less efficacious, and less likely? These have been some of the major questions that this study has tried to explore.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### *Research Questions and Hypotheses*

The central research questions addressed in this study are: Do current caregivers and the first cohort of one-child generation differ in their attitudes toward filial responsibilities? If so, what are the major familial and structural factors that explain the intergenerational differences? Specifically, is the one-child policy affecting the attitudes of these two generations in their attitudes toward parent care? Five conceptually different groups of hypotheses were formulated to explore the differences and their explanations. Each group of hypotheses contains an overarching hypothesis. The first hypothesis addresses the issue of intergenerational differences in attitudes toward filial responsibilities.

*Hypothesis 1:* There is a generational difference in attitudes toward parental care: Current caregiver respondents express lower expectations than one-child generation respondents in their willingness to accept filial responsibilities.

Among the one-child generational respondents, one would expect that all respondents would continue to express a similar level of filial respect since filial piety continues to be stressed in the family and the state and familial elder care continues to be the only option for parent care. However, the one-child status could influence respondents' attitudes toward more explicit parent care duties. One would expect, for example,

being the only child can lead to greater pressure for them to work in order to make a living. Only child status can also possibly reduce levels of willingness to co-reside with parents, whether due to self-centeredness as some researchers claimed or due to increasing geographic mobility. Being an only child could lead her/him to become more aware of filial responsibilities earlier, thus feeling more obligated to take parent care responsibilities. Based on these understandings, the second hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 2:* There is a difference in attitudes toward filial responsibility between respondents from one-child and multiple-child families. Specifically, four aspects of this difference are explored: (a) There is no difference in the general attitude of filial respect between children from only-child and multiple-child families. (b) Respondents from one-child families express lower levels of willingness to sacrifice work for care than those from multiple-child families. (c) Respondents from one-child families express lower levels of willingness to co-reside with parents in the future than those from multiple-child families. (d) Respondents from only-child families express higher levels of personal obligation to provide parent care than those from multiple-child families.

As the one-child policy was implemented at roughly the same time as economic reforms, one would expect income disparity and differing educational levels start to affect the maturing cohorts of the only children. The disparity between urban and rural residence is particularly evident in current China. The third hypothesis explores the impact of structural factors on different attitudes between only children and children with siblings. These factors include family income, respondents' educational level, and respondents' rural or urban residence.

*Hypothesis 3:* Structural conditions influence respondents' attitudes toward filial responsibility. Specifically, (a) respondents with higher educational level express lower levels of willingness to sacrifice career for parent care. (b) Respondents from higher income families show a greater willingness to make job and care adjustment. (c) Urban respondents express lower levels of willingness to co-reside with parents in the future.

In explaining the potential influences in only children's attitudes, co-residence with grandparents can be understood as one of the major family socialization factors; it may exert positive or negative influence in early childhood in their attitudes toward future filial responsibility. The fourth hypothesis explores the relationship between contacts with grandparents and attitudes toward parent care.

*Hypothesis 4:* More contacts with grandparents positively influence respondents' attitudes toward filial responsibilities. Specifically, (a) co-residence with grandparents enhances young adults' sense of obligation for parental care; Those who lived with grandparents express higher levels of personal obligation for parent care. (b) Those who lived with grandparents express greater willingness to co-reside with parents when their parents become older and dependent. (c) Those who had dependent grandparents in the household express higher levels of personal obligation for parent care. (d) Respondents who have more grandparents living in the same city or geographic area express higher levels of willingness to co-reside with parents in the future.

The actual co-residence between caregivers and care recipients could lead caregivers to similar expectations for their future care. One can assume that caregivers who provided more personal care for parents must have juggled work and care; therefore, they would also expect their own children to be willing to do the same for them. The next hypothesis explores the association between caregivers' behavior and their expectation for their own future care.

*Hypothesis 5:* Caregivers who are more involved in parent care express higher levels of expectation for their future care. Specifically, four aspects of the caregiving behavior are examined in relation to their care expectations: (a) Caregivers who lived with care recipients expressed higher levels of expectation for filial respect. (b) Caregivers who lived with their care recipients express higher levels of expectation for their future co-residence with their own children. (c) Caregivers who performed more personal care for their parents express higher expectations for their children to sacrifice work for care. (d) Caregivers who performed more personal care also express higher levels of personal obligation for parent care.

To explore these hypothetical questions, two sample data are used. Sample selection process and sample characteristics are described below.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Data Collection Process*

Structured survey interviews with 110 caregivers were administered in Chinese by the author during the fall of 1997 and 1998. To qualify for the study, caregivers had to be providing financial, physical, or emo-

tional assistance to parents or parents-in-law on a regular basis, and the care recipients had to be in need of assistance with one or more activities of daily living (ADL) or instrumental activities of daily living (IADL). A snowball sampling method was used to identify the caregivers in Yiyang City, Hunan Province, and Baoding City, Hebei Province.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the caregivers' homes, although a few were conducted in the caregiver's workplace during lunch break or in an agreed-upon public meeting place. Each participant was given a questionnaire written in Chinese and asked to either complete the questionnaire or allow the investigator to read the questions and complete the form for the participant. Only 18 caregivers chose to complete the form themselves in the researcher's presence. Information collected through the interview process included basic demographic data, the health and functional status of the elder and the caregiver, caregivers' attitudes and beliefs about caregiving responsibilities, and the type and extent of assistance that the caregiver was providing to the parent or parent-in-law.

Data from 777 maturing one-child generation students were also collected during the same time period. All high school students were recruited from the same cities where caregivers were recruited. University students were found in colleges and universities located in these two provinces.<sup>1</sup> Structured survey questionnaires were distributed in 36 classrooms in 12 high schools, occupational schools, and universities. The researcher generally gave a brief self-introduction and a general description of the research before each survey. The response rate was 95%. Although the researcher stressed that students were free to leave anytime during the survey, few students actually did so, partially due to their curiosity about the survey, partially out of their respect toward the teacher who introduced the researcher. Twelve incomplete surveys were not analyzed.

Both Yiyang and Baoding are medium-sized cities located in the interior of China. These two cities were selected because they are smaller interior cities, which are not often studied but are representative of the locations where the majority of the interior urban population reside and work. It is in cities like these that the majority of Chinese who have experienced economic reforms and vigorous one-child family implementation still live in a relatively "traditional" style and where cultural norms and practices of elder care are more likely to remain relatively stable. Hence these samples provide an excellent opportunity to assess

the influence of the one-child policy and economic reforms on the changing attitudes between the generations toward filial responsibilities.

Within the context of available resources it was not possible to obtain representative samples of either caregivers or students. However, an effort was made to select a sample that was sufficiently diverse in terms of the key independent variables for both samples. To maximize the variation of class status within the sample, the snowball process for caregivers and locations of high schools for students were initiated in four districts: factories, government, residential, and college/university localities. As most families still lived in apartments assigned by work units, though purchased by employees in the mid-1990s, this method facilitated the inclusion of respondents with very diverse backgrounds. There was little variation in ethnicity because the vast majority of urban dwellers in these cities are Han Chinese, as is true for most Chinese cities.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Caregiver Characteristics*

The demographic characteristics for both the elders and the caregivers included in the sample are shown in Table 1. The majority (68%) of caregivers in the sample were female. The caregivers ranged in age from 27 to 60 with the vast majority (86%) being between the ages of 30 and 49. All but seven of the caregivers were married. Fifty-six of the caregivers were daughters assisting parents, nineteen were daughters-in-law assisting parents-in-law, thirty-three were sons assisting their parents, and two sons-in-law were primary caregivers for fathers-in-law.

Co-residence with parents or parents-in-law in this sample did not occur as frequently as in other studies, which have reported rates above 80 percent (Lavey & Ren, 1992). Nearly half of caregivers (46%) did not live with their care recipients. About a third (31%) of the caregivers lived with parents while 23 percent lived with parents-in-law. One of the major reasons for this difference in patterns of co-residence was that caregivers in this sample resided in urban interior China where elders were more likely to own apartments and live by themselves than is the case among rural elders.

The large majority (86%) of caregivers had at least a middle school education and the mean income was between 200 to 300 yuan (or \$25-\$35) per month. Nearly half (43.6%) of the interviewees reported that they were not working full-time. Most of these caregivers were laid off; however, a few reported going to the former workplace to register their presence but rarely obtained work. While most caregivers (66.4%)

TABLE 1. Characteristics of Elders and Caregivers (n = 110)

Variables	Elders		Caregivers	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Sex</b>				
Men	32	29.1	35	31.8
Women	78	70.9	75	68.2
<b>Age</b>				
20-29			3	2.8
30-39			47	43.1
40-49			47	43.1
50-59	4	3.6	11	10
60-69	46	41.9	1	.9
70-79	46	41.9		
80-89	13	11.8		
90 and above	1	.9		
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married	59	53.6	104	94.5
Widowed	47	42.7	1	.9
Divorced	4	3.6	4	3.6
Other (never married)			2	1.8
<b>Relationship between caregiver and care recipient</b>				
Daughters caring for parents			56	50.9
Daughters-in-law caring for parents-in-law			19	17.3
Sons caring for parents			33	30
Sons caring for fathers-in-law			2	1.8
<b>Living arrangements</b>				
With parents			34	30.9
With parents-in-law			26	22.7
Elders by themselves or alone			51	46.4
<b>Individual income*</b>				
None	38	33	5	7.4
Less than 200 yuan	28	25.5	23	21.5
201-400 yuan	28	25.5	39	35.5
401-600 yuan	17	15.5	41	37.3
Above 600 yuan	4	3.6	4	3.6
<b>Educational levels</b>				
No formal education	52	47.3	2	1.5
5 years or less	21	19.1	14	12.7
Middle school	10	9.1	34	30.9
High school	12	10.9	52	47.3
College	1	1.5	6	5.5
Beyond college	1	1.5	2	1.8
<b>Medical bills reimbursed</b>				
None	70	63.6	73	66.4
Some	40	36.4	37	33.6
<b>Full-time employment</b>				
Yes			61	55.5
No			49	43.6

\*At the current rate, 100 yuan equals roughly \$12.

received no reimbursement for medical expenses or doctor visits, some reported that their hospitalization would be paid by the insurance company under the new insurance program.

#### *Elder Characteristics*

Different from the United States where most elders do not become physically dependent until after age 80, a large majority of Chinese elders in this sample (87.4% were physically dependent between ages 50-79. Just over half of the elders were married (54%), forty-seven (43%) were widowed, and the remaining four (4%) care recipients were divorced. However, three of the divorced elders were remarried. Nearly half (47.3%) of the care recipients had no formal education. The mean income for care recipients was between 100 to 200 yuan (or \$15-\$25) per month, which was generally lower than that of caregivers due to the lack of pensions. Almost two-thirds (63.6%) reported having no medical coverage. In most cases, even those elders who had medical coverage relied on their children for medicines, doctor visits, and/or hospitalization due to their own meager coverage.

#### *One-Child Generation Student Sample*

Among 777 students, 395 (50.8%) were male. There were 266 (34.2%) respondents from one-child families. Approximately one-quarter (23.7%) of respondents described themselves as the oldest child in the family.

Respondents' age in the sample ranged from 16-25 (see Table 2). There were 328 (42.2%) students from high schools or occupational and technical schools. The remainder were university students. This sample excluded non-students of this cohort because of difficult access. However, students from high schools, occupational schools, and universities represented above 90% of this cohort population in urban China. The drop-out rates from junior high schools were relatively low, for example, between 3-8% in Yiyang in 1997. Although the sample is mostly urban (81.6%), it did include 142 students from rural backgrounds.

The majority (66.3%) of the respondents had no grandparents living in the same household. Around one-third (33.7%) of the students reported sharing the same household with their grandparents. Only children in this study did not live with their grandparents in the same household as often as the multiple children. While nearly 40% of children from multiple-child families had grandparents living in the same

TABLE 2. Characteristics of School Children

Variables	N	%*
<b>Age</b>		
Born in or after 1979	411	53.8
Born before 1979	353	44.5
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	395	50.5
Female	378	48.6
<b>The only child in the family</b>		
Yes	266	34.2
No	511	65.5
<b>Number of siblings in the family</b>		
None	266	34.2
One	167	21.5
Two	199	25.6
Three	106	13.6
Four	28	3.6
Five or more	9	1.2
<b>Number of grandparents in the same household</b>		
None	515	66.3
One	133	17.1
Two	104	13.4
Three	11	1.4
Four	12	1.5
<b>Number of grandparents in the same city</b>		
None	227	29.2
One	118	15.2
Two	175	22.5
Three	64	8.2
Four	186	23.9
<b>Number of grandparents who are physically dependent</b>		
None	590	75.9
One	133	17.1
Two	37	4.8
Three	7	.9
Four	9	1.2
<b>Educational level</b>		
Second year in high school	114	14.7
Third year in high school	214	27.5
First year in college	290	37.3
Second year in college	151	19.4
<b>Parents' per capita monthly income</b>		
0-200 yuan	83	10.7
201-400 yuan	149	19.2
401-600 yuan	205	26.4
601-800 yuan	190	24.3
801-1000 or above	74	9.5
Above 1000	162	20.9
<b>Area of study or interest</b>		
Science/engineering	434	56.4
Liberal arts and humanities	336	43.6
<b>Being urban or rural</b>		
Urban	625	81.6
Rural	141	18.4

\*Percentages may not sum to 100% due to missing data.

household, only 23% of only children shared the same household with their grandparents.

### *Instruments*

The measurements of filial responsibility, which were used as predictor variables, were built on the work of Harwood et al. (1996) and Ho (1994). Their measures have been applied in eight countries in the Pacific Rim. Measures used in this sample consisted of 11 items representing 4 different aspects of respondents' attitudes toward filial responsibility: filial respect (5 items), job and care conflict (2 items), co-residence (1 item), and personal obligation (3 items). For the first three measures, respondents in the student sample were asked the lead-in sentence, "When your parents become older and physically dependent, are you willing to . . ." For current caregivers, they were asked, "When you become older and physically dependent, do you expect your child[ren] to . . ." Personal obligation measures consisted of three items, testing the respondents' extent of internalization of social norms as personal obligations. Respondents used a 5-point response set ranging from strongly disagree (= 1) to strongly agree (= 5) with 3 being ambiguous.

Factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to examine the dimensionality of the measures. Reliability levels of these measures in the student sample were .68 for filial respect, .72 for job and care conflict, and .68 for personal obligation. Reliability levels for the caregiver sample were .76, .62, and .74, respectively. The measure for co-residence was a straightforward question, asking the respondent whether they were willing/expect to live in the same house with their parents/children.

Compository independent variables in the caregiver sample included caregiver's personal care, instrumental care, and monetary assistance. The measure of personal care captured the frequency with which a caregiver assisted an elder with six tasks: bathing, shaving, changing, daily laundry, toilet usage, and handling daily bills. Caregivers used a 5-point response set that ranged from once a month to everyday to respond to these items. The six-item composite score had an internal reliability score of .91.

Instrumental care was measured with 5 items, including assistance with visiting friends and families, finding maids or home care services, changing bandages or cleaning wounds, going to the hospital, and going to drug stores. The reliability level for these items was .88.

Level of financial assistance was measured by the amount of money caregivers spent on food, clothing, medicine, doctor's visits, home care, and hospitalization for one's relative. Respondents used a five-point response set ranging from "the elder pays it all" to "we pay it all" to answer these questions. The Cronbach's alpha for financial assistance was .98.

#### *Data Analysis*

Two t-tests were used to test mean differences between only children and non-only children in their attitudes and between student respondents and caregiver respondents. To understand factors that associate with these differing attitudes, bivariate analyses were conducted to examine the correlations among all the variables used in the study (these tables are not included in this paper due to space limitations). Finally, statistically significant and theoretically important factors were selected for multivariate regression analyses to explore factors that influence respondents' attitudes toward filial responsibility.

### *FINDINGS*

#### *Differences in Attitudes Between the Generations*

Data on intergenerational differences in attitudes toward filial responsibility are shown in Table 3. In every category, caregivers are shown to express lower levels of expectations than the one-child generation respondents' expression of willingness. This finding supports Hypothesis 1.

#### *Differences in Attitudes Between Children from One- and Multiple-Child Families*

In comparing the levels of expressed willingness between children from one-child and multiple-child families, only children were not found to express lower levels of willingness toward general levels of filial respect. This finding supports Hypothesis 2a.

Only children were not found to express lower levels of willingness to sacrifice job for parent care. This result rejects Hypothesis 2b. Only children, however, did express lower levels of willingness to co-reside with parents. This research result supports Hypothesis 2c.

TABLE 3. Test of Mean Differences Between Generations and Between Only and Non-Only Children

Variables	Current Caregivers		One-Child Generation Students			Only Children			Non-Only Children		
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	d.f.	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Mean	S.D.	d.f.
Filial respect	3.61	3.32	4.10	3.02	860	4.15	2.96	4.69	3.11	775	1.23
Job and care conflict	1.39	1.40	2.65	2.05	864	2.79	2.02	2.88	2.07	774	1.29
Caregiving	2.94	1.15	3.37	1.06	882	-4.978***	3.21	1.95	3.45	1.05	772
Parental obligation	4.14	1.89	4.51	1.77	883	-6.14***	4.61	1.70	4.46	1.79	774

\*\*\*p < .001. \*\*p < .01. Coefficients: Current caregivers = 1; one-child generation students = 0; only children = 1; non-only children = 0

Only children also expressed higher levels of personal obligation for parent care. This finding supports Hypothesis 2d.

Overall, there are differences in attitudes toward filial responsibility between children from one- and multiple-child families. These differences are shown in their felt sense of obligation and their levels of willingness to co-reside with parents in the future. These findings support Hypothesis 2.

#### *Explaining Attitudinal Differences: Structural Factors*

Among the three structural factors, educational level was found to be an important factor negatively associated with student respondents' level of willingness toward job and care conflict and co-residence, but positively associated with filial respect (see Table 4). In other words, although student respondents with higher educational level expressed higher levels of willingness to fulfill general duties of filial respect, they scored lower on levels of willingness to sacrifice work for care and to live under the same roof with parents. These findings support Hypothesis 3a.

Parents' income was found to be positively associated with both measures of filial respect and job and care conflict. Respondents from families with higher incomes expressed higher levels of willingness to accept general levels of filial responsibility and to juggle work and care in the future. These findings support Hypothesis 3b.

There is no difference found between urban and rural respondents in their attitudes toward filial responsibilities. Hypothesis 3c is rejected.

Overall, structural factors, particularly income and educational levels, are found to be important in predicting student respondents' attitudes toward future commitment of elder care. These findings support Hypothesis 3.

#### *Explaining Attitudinal Differences: Socialization*

Contacts with grandparents are often viewed as major socialization factors in instilling traditional attitudes of filial piety. In this study, co-residence with grandparents was negatively associated with student respondents' expression of personal obligation toward filial responsibility: Respondents who lived with grandparents scored lower in their obligation scales. This finding rejects Hypothesis 4a. Interestingly, having grandparents residing in the same household was not statistically

TABLE 4. Standardized Regression Analysis of One-Child Generation Students' Attitude Toward Filial Responsibilities

Variables (N = 777)	(A) Filial Respect				(B) Job-Care Conflict				(C) Co-Residence				(D) Obligation			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Only-child	.04	.03	.05	.07	-.07	-.07	-.09*	.01	-.11**	-.13**	-.06	.11**	.09*	.11*	.14*	
Being female	.04	.03	.03	.03	.05	.06	.05	.05	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.01	.08*	.09*	.08*	.07
Educational level	.03	.09*	.09*	.10*	-.19**	-.19**	-.19**	-.17**	-.19**	-.12*	-.16**	-.17**	.07	.07	.09	
Parents' income	.03	.08*	.08*	.09*	.16**	.16**	.16**	.16**	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.00	-.00	-.00	-.00
Urban area	-.00	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.01	.02	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04
Major	.01	.01	.01	.01	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.02	.02	.01	.02	.02	-.05	-.05	-.05	-.05
Share houses w/ GP	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.03	.05	.03	.03	.03	.02	.02	.02	.02	-.16	-.14**	-.14**	-.14**
Same city w/ GP	.02	.02	.02	.02	.01	.02	.01	.01	.08*	.09*	.09*	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06
No. of dependent GP	.02	.01	.01	.01	.05	.05	.04	.04	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.11	-.11**	-.11**	-.11**
Only child X co-residence																
Born in/after 1979																
Only child X born in/after 1979																
R square	.020	.022	.023	.023	.047	.052	.054	.060	.03	.04	.04	.05	.026	.054	.065	.066
F square change	.002	.000	.001	.001	.005	.002	.006	.001	.00	.01	.00	.01	.008	.001	.001	.001

\*\*p < .001; \*p < .01; †p < .05

significant in its association with respondents' willingness to co-reside with parents. This finding rejects Hypothesis 4b.

Student respondents who had dependent grandparents in the same household expressed lower levels of personal obligation toward parent care. This finding rejects Hypothesis 4c. Having more grandparents living in the same city was found to be positively related to respondents' levels of willingness to co-reside with parents. This finding supports Hypothesis 4d.

Contrary to socialization theory, findings in this study indicate that more direct contacts with grandparents were negatively associated with young adult respondents' attitudes toward filial responsibilities. Relatively distant and irregular contact, such as having more grandparents living in the same city or geographic district, seem to have positive effect on young adults' level of willingness to co-reside with parents.

#### *Caregivers' Care Involvement and Expectations*

Table 5 shows the multiple regression results of current caregivers' attitude toward filial responsibility. The goal is to explore the association between current care involvement and expectations for future care.

Current caregivers who lived with their parents did express higher expectations for filial respect from their own children. This finding supports Hypothesis 5a. Caregivers who co-resided with their elder parents did not express higher levels of expectations for their future co-residence with their own children; this finding rejects Hypothesis 5b. Caregivers who performed more personal care for physically dependent parents were found to express higher expectations for their own children's willingness to sacrifice work for parent care. This finding supports Hypothesis 5c. Finally, caregivers who performed more personal care were not expressing higher levels of personal obligation for parent care; rather, they expressed lower levels of personal obligation. This finding rejects Hypothesis 5d.

Overall, findings in this study indicate that caregivers' greater involvement in parent care is positively associated with their greater expectations for future elder care only in general aspects. Few current caregivers expected to co-reside with their children in the future whether or not they currently co-resided with their care recipients or were heavily involved in personal care activities. These findings only partially support Hypothesis 5.

TABLE 5. Standardized Regression Analysis of Caregivers' Attitude of Filial Responsibility on Family Background and Care Tasks

Variables	(A) Filial Respect			(B) Job-Care Conflict			(C) Co-Residence			(D) Oligarchy		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Family Background Variables</b>												
Elder's gender (female)	.33	-.27	-.27	-.02	-.06	-.13	-.13	-.16	-.13	-.21*	-.24	-.17
Caregiver's gender (female)	.18	.16	.16	.04	.02	.03	.05	.03	.07	.20*	.17	.16
Elder's marital status (widowed)	.23*	.22*	.16	.04	-.01	.05	.11	.08	.08	-.05	-.01	-.07
Caregiver with careers	.28**	.22*	.26**	.30**	.25*	.23*	.08	.06	.06	.07	.14	.16
<b>Family Structural Resources</b>												
Caregiver's educational level	-.26*	-.16	-.16	-.19	-.16	-.16	-.11	-.11	-.10	.26*	.26*	.26*
Caregiver's monthly income	.026	.04	.04	.11	.02	.05	.05	.08	.05	-.09	.00	.00
Elder's monthly pension	.086	.09	.09	-.03	.04	-.02	-.02	-.09	-.02	-.03	-.11	-.11
Number of care assistance	-.14	-.16	-.16	.15	.14	.14	.10	.11	.11	.05	.07	.07
<b>Care Task Performance</b>												
Personal care			-.13			.28*			-.05		.28*	.28*
Instrumental care			.23*			-.11			.15		.17	.17
Monetary assistance			.13			.04			-.10		-.06	-.06
R square	.18	.24	.30	.10	.16	.22	.03	.05	.07	.08	.14	.21
F square change	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06	.02	.02	.02	.02	.06	.07

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01

### DISCUSSIONS

#### *Intergenerational Differences: Is the Culture of Filiality Declining?*

Data in this study show significant differences in attitudes toward filial responsibilities between the two generations. It can be argued that current caregivers may express low expectations for their own care due to their personal experience of the demand and strain of such care; young adults are more likely to express high levels of willingness because parent care is still a distant concept and they have no specific knowledge of what care may entail. However, the reverse can also be argued: Current caregivers may express high levels of expectations from their own children due to the fact they are performing such care for their own parents. The logic goes, if we can do it for our parents, they can do it for us. And young adults may express low levels of willingness because they are too young to take the issue seriously. These speculations obviously are too general to make sense without specific cultural and social contexts.

In the cultural specific context of China, the cultural norm of *xiao* may be the major explanation for parent elder care. The argument, then, would be: If *xiao* is properly maintained, the young will fulfill the filial duties in the same way as their parents' generation. The implication of this argument is that if the young do not express a similar level of filial responsibility, then, it must be due to the decline of the culture because of socialization or social change. Data in this study showed that the young generation expressed higher levels of willingness to accept filial responsibility than the current caregivers' expectations in all categories ( $p < .001$ ). These findings suggest that the culture of *xiao* is not declining; rather, the one-child generation youth still firmly uphold the tradition. The average mean scores for one-child generation respondents' levels of willingness to show filial respect and personal obligation are 4.10 and 4.51, respectively, compared to 3.61 and 4.10 for the caregivers in their expectations. One-child generation respondents also expressed higher levels of willingness in sacrificing job for care and in co-residence (2.85 and 3.37) compared to the caregivers' expectations (1.89 and 2.84), although these scores were lower for both groups in comparison to the attitudes toward general cultural norms, such as filial respect and personal obligations. Together, these results suggest that cultural indoctrination of filial responsibilities is not declining from one generation to the other. Instead, one-child generation youth continue to hold onto the cultural norms and obligations.

The question arises, then: Do all one-child generation students share similar attitudes toward cultural norms and obligations? Is there any difference between children from one-child and multiple-child families in their attitudes toward their future filial responsibility? If so, what are the differences and why?

#### *One-Child Status and Attitudes Toward Filial Responsibilities*

As shown in the t-test of mean difference in attitudes toward filial responsibilities between only and non-only children, no statistically significant difference was found in their expressions of filial respect and willingness to sacrifice work for care. Only children, however, were found to express higher levels of personal obligation for parent care, yet lower levels of willingness to co-reside with parents.

When controlling for other familial background variables, although the negative association between only children and co-residence was no longer significant, only-child status continues to be a statistically significant factor in the expression of personal obligation toward filial responsibilities. Also, only children born after the one-child policy implementation expressed lower levels of willingness to adjust jobs for parent care. These results may suggest that only children in general are not necessarily less culturally indoctrinated about their filial responsibilities in parent care than children from multiple-child families. They expressed similarly high levels of willingness in filial respect. However, their expression of higher levels of obligation may suggest that only children have already felt the eventual pressure of financial and physical provision for their parents. Being the only child in the family, they may indeed feel more obligated to take care of their parents; and yet, they, especially those born after the one-child policy, cannot afford giving up their jobs in order to support themselves as well as their family. These only children seem to be expressing a clear understanding of the pressures to be placed upon them at both social and familial levels.

#### *Explaining Attitudinal Differences: Structural Factors*

The negative associations between educational level and job-care conflict as well as co-residence are rather troubling. As more Chinese youth are going to colleges or even graduate schools, their commitment to parent care is likely to become secondary to their career. Especially when girls in one-child families gain increasing access to higher education in urban China, as found in a recent study (Tsui & Rich, 2002), the

gendered cultural expectation for daughters or daughters-in-law to take care of dependent parents may be expected to change. As more and more urban women choose to pursue careers, they may well become physically or geographically unavailable for parent care in the future.

Family income was found to be positively associated with respondents' attitudes toward filial respect and job-care conflict. This association is difficult to interpret in this study as in many others (Falbo, 1996; Falbo & Poston, 1993). As it happens, those with higher incomes also tend to be products of urban social environments. Thus, modernization, access to different ways of consumption, and service options could all serve as confounding factors to explain higher levels of filial respect. For those whose parents have higher incomes, it may not be as difficult to foresee the relatively easier adjustment between job and care simply because they feel they could afford to do so.

#### *Explaining Attitudinal Differences: Socialization*

The prevailing assumption about the socialization of *xiao* is that living with grandparents enhances children's sense of obligation for filial responsibility due to socialization experiences. The findings in this study, on the contrary, suggest that co-residence with grandparents and having dependent grandparents in the same household had a negative effect on respondents' sense of personal obligation for parent care. Respondents who lived with grandparents and watched parents take care of grandparents were perhaps more aware of caregiving difficulties and thus scored lower in their levels of obligation for parent care in the future. This finding echoes the suggestion of Cummings, Kropf, and DeWeaver (2000: 87) that increased exposure to older adults "may highlight the disabling effects of the aging process," thereby creating anxiety and a possible desire for distance in these young adults. When young adults had more grandparents living in the same city, but not in the same household, however, they might have had more positive exchange between the generations without having to observe the pains of aging and elder care. Therefore, they may still hold idealistic views about future parent care duties.

#### *Current Caregivers' Care Performance and Expectations*

When comparing current caregivers' expectations with one-child generation students' willingness toward filial responsibility, current caregivers scored lower in every category. They particularly held very

low expectations from their children for co-residence and possibilities of sacrificing work for care. However, caregivers who co-resided with their own parents and provided more personal or instrumental care expressed higher levels of expectation for children's filial respect and sacrifice of work for care. These findings seem to suggest the continued belief in the cultural ideal of care practice: If we can do it, they should be able to do it too. Yet, in realistic terms, few caregivers expected to live with their own children in the same household, let alone more explicit personal care expectations.

#### CONCLUSION

Reviewing the findings together, it appears that indoctrination of the cultural norm of filial responsibility among the one-child generation has probably not mattered as much as the actual structural changes occurring in the family and society. This study precludes any definitive conclusions about the impact of the one-child policy on current caregivers and only children's attitudes toward elder care. However, the data do offer many insights into understanding familial and social structural factors influencing current caregivers as well as the first maturing cohort of only children's attitudes toward filial responsibilities. The findings in this study indicate that only children expressed just as much willingness for accepting general filial responsibility as children from multiple-child families. Meanwhile, contacts with grandparents did not lend support to the socialization thesis that more contacts with grandparents increase children's chances for better cultural indoctrination or stronger sense of filial responsibility. Instead, sharing the same household with grandparents and observing care provision for dependent grandparents were found to be negatively associated with young adults' attitudes toward their sense of personal obligation toward future parental care. Probably the reality of hardship in caregiving under the familial and structural constraints matters more than general cultural indoctrination of *xiao*.

As birth cohorts, children born after the one-child policy implementation may have already sensed the double pressures of work and parent care obligations. Since the one-child policy was implemented roughly at the same time as economic reforms and reopening of colleges after the ten-year Cultural Revolution, children born after 1979 are also more likely to access higher education. In the meantime, parents of only children are more able and eager to provide the only child with a good education. Yet, greater emphasis on higher education is not necessarily

positive for the traditional pattern of parental care. Given that education provides a person with greater economic and geographic mobility, parents of only children are less likely to have their only child living nearby or under the same roof, even though the familial financial situation may be better. Further, as girls from one-child families are gaining greater access to higher education, women, whether daughters or daughters-in-law, will be much less likely than in the past to abandon careers for parent care. Indeed, they may simply be geographically unavailable for parent care, having left their hometowns for better jobs elsewhere. The challenge for the future of elder care, then, comes down to redefinitions of "familial" or "filial" responsibilities.

Such a redefinition should probably be multifaceted. The process should involve a major increase in various service options for elder care, government provision of a basic safety net for the elders, and financial compensation for familial elder care. Service options would allow only-child families to purchase care for physically dependent older parents. Government provision of a safety net allows elders more independence and relieves some of the burden from the younger generation. Financial compensation for familial elder care will allow one-child families to continue the care for parents while sustain a living wage. These measures would allow familial and filial responsibilities to adapt to the pressures of social change in China, while maintaining an important semblance of essential cultural integrity.

#### NOTES

1. These two cities have only junior colleges and occupational schools (like small-town colleges in the United States); there are certainly enough students in number, but these students probably have little variance in their "willingness" and "obligation," and probably have few opportunities to work outside the same city after graduation. Therefore, I chose to select students in the larger geographic location although in the same province in order to provide greater diversity.

2. Han Chinese are the vast majority (above 90%) of the Chinese population. Because they represent the largest ethnic group, typically the adjective "Han" is not noted. Other ethnic groups include the Tibetans, Mongols, and Manchus.

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