

CHINA'S REVOLUTIONS
AND
INTERGENERATIONAL
RELATIONS

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CHINA'S REVOLUTIONS AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS

Martin King Whyte

The longevity and continuity of Chinese civilization are fabled. More than two millennia ago a unified Chinese state emerged, with a set of political and social institutions and values which, with some important modifications, survived into the twentieth century.¹ Throughout the rise and fall of subsequent dynasties, through periods of disorder and rebellion, and even when foreign invasions threatened the realm, it was not until the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911 that this pattern of cultural continuity was broken. The Confucian moral order maintained by China's rulers over more than two millennia had at its core certain specified forms of family life and obligations.² Central to that family life was an ethic of filial piety, involving the absolute obligation for all Chinese to respect and cater to the needs of their elders, and particularly their parents. Well into the twentieth century, Chinese children continued to be socialized with the same sayings and lessons that had shaped the families of their ancestors many centuries earlier.

Twentieth century China was characterized by very little order or continuity. The collapse of the imperial order was followed by an era of warlordism, a fragile national unity broken by invasion by Japan, and then the victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) brought national unity but hardly settled times. CCP rule has been filled with new forms of tumult, including the socialist transformation of the mid-1950s, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the launching of a draconian family planning policy, and then the dramatic about-face represented by the post-1978 market-oriented reforms. How

have Chinese families responded to these many recent challenges? How much of the traditional set of family customs and obligations has survived to the present? Have revolutions and socialism transformed intergenerational relations in distinctive ways, so that the nature of family life in urban China today differs from the experience of Chinese living outside of the People's Republic of China? To what extent do grown children continue to feel a strong obligation to their parents, and to what extent do they fulfill this obligation? Is the welfare of China's elderly threatened by the hectic nature of social change, and by the undermining of filial obligations in particular? More generally, are Chinese family patterns today shaped more by ancient cultural traditions, by the level and pace of economic development, or by the shape of contemporary political and economic institutions? These are the central questions that motivated the research project whose results are reported in these pages.

The primary data to be used in examining such questions come from a survey conducted in the summer of 1994 in Baoding, a medium-sized city located in Hebei Province. Practical realities limited the extent to which we could explore all aspects of the "big questions" listed above. Obviously, we could not go back in time to collect information about Chinese family patterns in earlier decades or centuries. In most instances, the absence of survey research in China before the 1980s means that there are no comparable earlier data with which we can compare our results.³ It was also not possible to examine current family patterns throughout China. We are limited to profiling the complexity of intergenerational relations currently in one particular Chinese research site. Even with these limitations, we think our survey data represent the richest source currently available to those who want to know what has happened to intergenerational relationships in Chinese families.

The nature of the 1994 survey will be described in some detail later in this chapter. First, it is necessary to review the nature of the family system and values that traditionally governed parent-child relations and some of the events and forces that challenged filial obligations during China's tumultuous twentieth century.

Chinese Family Obligations and Filial Piety

In all premodern societies the family rather than the state is responsible for supporting the elderly. Naturally enough, in such societies, and perhaps

particularly in settled agrarian societies, parents devote a great deal of time and energy to teaching their children to be obedient and to be willing to support their parents in their old age.⁴ However, it is at least arguable that in China over many centuries the emphasis on subordination of the young to the welfare of their parents became elaborated to an unusual degree, and that the form of family life within which socialization for filiality occurred was distinctive. An extensive literature exists in support of these claims, and we can only scratch the surface in the present discussion.

Accounts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century contain substantial agreement about the nature of the dominant forms of Chinese family life. Ideally, the preferred form of family was the patrilineal joint family composed of parents, several married sons and their wives and children, and perhaps even spouses and children of the grandsons.⁵ In practice, at any point in time most families were more modest—perhaps a nuclear structure involving just parents and immature children, or a stem form with parents and one married son, his wife, and grandchildren.⁶ Daughters almost always moved at marriage to live with their husbands' families. They might receive a dowry from their parents as part of the marriage negotiations, but they had no claim on family land or other property, which was to be divided evenly among the sons.⁷ After marrying, a daughter was expected to visit periodically her natal family and remain on close terms emotionally, but she had no obligation to support her parents in their old age. Instead she transferred her filial obligations to her husband's parents, and the duty to support her own parents rested solely with her brother or brothers (and their wives). Only if a family had daughters but no sons and managed to persuade a young man to marry into their household would this pattern be reversed, but this eventuality was seen as highly undesirable. In the great majority of cases, the rights to family property and the obligation to support parents followed the patrilineal lines by which Chinese kinship is structured.

Regardless of whether the family structure was nuclear, stem, or joint, Chinese family relations were organized in a very hierarchical fashion. The family head (generally the eldest male) controlled all family property, including the earnings of family members, and represented the family in public. Marriages of children were the product of parental arrangement, often in an extreme, "blind marriage" form in which the children not only had no say, but did not even meet until the day of the wedding. Hierarchy was heavily emphasized throughout the kinship system, as in the separate

terms used for older and for younger brothers, for older and younger sisters, and for uncles older than one's father versus younger, and so forth.

Children were expected to respect and defer to the opinions of their parents and other elders. A period of early indulgence of babies was followed after age six or seven by a strict regimen of learning family duties and obligations, with the father expected to be a remote and severe disciplinarian. Childrearing focused on teaching obedience and conveying the message that happiness could come only through serving the interests of the entire family. Themes emphasized by modern Western parents, such as learning to think for oneself and seeking personal fulfillment, were notable by their rarity. Even if a child disagreed with a parent, he or she was not supposed to express such disagreement openly. Rather, the recommended approach was to accept the verdict of the parents while hoping that circumstances might lead the latter to change their decision later. A child who argued back to a parent was in danger of being regarded as unfilial, thus bringing shame on the whole family. Under extreme circumstances it was permissible for parents to sell or even kill a disobedient child. Corporal punishment was allowed and expected in regard to children (even adult children), but striking a parent was a capital offense in Chinese law.

Unlike the situation in most premodern European families, children did not gain substantial familial authority or attain family headship when they married. Rather, they remained subordinate to their parents and particularly their father until either death or disability caused the latter to relinquish his familial power. If a dispute arose between a man's wife and his mother, as often happened, he was expected to side with his mother and bring his wife into line, using physical force if necessary. So great was the concern about maintaining the primary obligation to parents that no sign of affection could be shown between husband and wife beyond the confines of their bedroom. Under these circumstances, a wife's primary obligations became those to her parents-in-law, rather than to her husband. Even distance did not free an adult from meeting filial obligations, and a son or unmarried daughter off working in another place or even another country was expected to send home a substantial portion of his or her earnings as family remittances.⁸

While the details of turn-of-the-century Chinese family life described so far may not be much more patriarchal than many other agrarian family systems, the emphasis given to filial piety seems more distinctive. In the Confucian scheme of things, filial piety, or *xiao*, was often portrayed as the most important value, or the root of all virtue. In voluminous writings on

the topic over the centuries, Chinese moralists stressed that what was necessary was something much more than dutiful repayment of the debt of having been born and raised by parents, and certainly much more than compensation for one's expected share of family property. Rather, what parents should strive for was inculcation in their children of a sense of love, respect, and pleasure at putting parental needs ahead of their own. Discussions of filial piety are widespread in the Confucian canon, and they are the specific focus of one of the thirteen "sacred books" of Confucianism, the *Xiao Jing* (Classic of Filial Piety), dating from the third or second century B.C.

In later centuries children were also exposed to the imperative to meet parental needs through the *Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety*, stories that generations of children learned by heart. A few examples convey the flavor of this work.⁹ Number six is Lai-tzu, who, although over seventy himself, dressed in children's clothes and played with toys to bring amusement to his even more ancient parents; number eight is Tung Yung, who was so poor that he sold himself into servitude in order to pay for a proper burial for his father; number fourteen is Yang Hsiang, who without any weapon or regard for his own safety flung himself on a tiger that had attacked his father (the tiger fled and both father and son survived); number nineteen is Wang Hsiang, who took off his clothes and lay down on a frozen river in order to melt the ice to procure fresh fish for his step-mother, even though she had used her influence to get Wang Hsiang mistreated by his father; and number twenty is Wu Meng, who let mosquitoes swarm over his body so that they would not disturb the sleep of his parents. Perhaps the most dramatic example is Kuo Chu (number thirteen), whose family was so poor that he decided it was necessary to kill his three-year-old child in order to have sufficient food left for his mother. He persuaded his wife by pointing out, "Why not bury this child? Another child may be born to us, but a mother, once gone, will never return."¹⁰ Fortunately, when digging the hole into which to bury their child, they uncovered a pot of gold and did not have to complete the act. These examples and much else in Chinese culture conveyed the clear message that a worthy child is one who gladly exerts extra efforts to meet the needs of, and provide pleasure to, parents; who places the welfare of parents ahead of the welfare of himself (or herself) and his children; and who persists in such behavior even if the parents are cranky and unpleasant.¹¹

Obligations to Chinese parents extended beyond the grave. Prolonged mourning for parents was legally required. Officials were expected to resign

at the death of a parent and don coarse hemp garments for a period of more than two years. The ancestral cult motivated most Chinese regularly to place on family altars offerings of food, spirit money, and other items needed by their parents in the afterlife. Proper rituals for parents and other ancestors were seen as necessary for the continued well-being and prosperity of living family members and future generations.¹² Failure to observe proper ancestral rituals again brought shame to entire families. When Christian missionaries came to China, they reported that popular devotion to ancestor worship was perhaps the greatest obstacle to securing conversions.

Much of the discussion so far has focused upon official ideals and classic texts, and it may be wondered how much of the ordinary population of China conformed to these lofty standards of filial behavior toward parents. It is difficult to provide a simple answer to this question, especially given substantial class and regional variation across China as well as changes over time. From early twentieth-century ethnographic evidence it is clear that in some particulars ordinary Chinese did not completely follow the strictures of Confucian moralists. For example, relatively few families achieved a complex, joint family structure for any length of time, and ordinary farmers and craftsmen did not withdraw into deep mourning for more than two years. No doubt few ordinary Chinese attacked tigers or lay naked on ice in their effort to please their parents. However, in most respects what is striking is how fully the family patterns of even relatively poor families reflected these centuries-old ideals. At the end of China's imperial era there was no sharp gap between the elite and the masses in regard to family morality, and even illiterates in isolated villages were quite familiar with, and accepting of, the core Confucian messages about filial piety.¹³ The obligation to support aging parents seems to have been willingly and unquestioningly borne by sons, while daughters assumed a supporting role in meeting the filial obligations of their husbands toward their parents. Whatever other insecurities they faced, most parents could rest secure in the knowledge that their children would place parental needs ahead of their own.¹⁴

China's Twentieth-Century Revolutions

As noted earlier, the imperial order which had fostered Confucian morality lasted until 1911. The oldest respondents to our 1994 survey were thus born into that imperial order, and Confucian sayings and lessons remained popular even after the last emperor abdicated. However, even in

the closing decades of the Qing dynasty both domestic evolution and foreign influence began to challenge some elements of traditional customs.¹⁵ The abolition of the official examination system in 1905 prepared the way for a shift to modern schools based upon foreign models, in which the classical Confucian texts would no longer be the center of the curriculum. After 1911 came much more concerted assaults on the traditional legacy. The new republic established in 1912 rapidly fell into chaos, with only a tenuous national unity restored in 1927. During the intervening years, China was characterized not only by battles between rival warlords, but also by a searching reexamination of the traditional cultural legacy.

During what became known as the "May Fourth Period" (after a patriotic demonstration held on that date in 1919), young Chinese intellectuals influenced by Western ideals attacked Confucian values and family morality as sources of China's backwardness. Freedom to choose one's mate, gender equality, sexual freedom, and many other ideas found their champions, and filial piety was attacked as conducive to fatalism and passivity in the face of China's many challenges.¹⁶ China's most famous modern novel, Ba Jin's *The Family* (originally published in 1933), had as its theme the struggle by several sons in a wealthy family to resist the demands of the family patriarch.¹⁷ This period is also referred to as the Chinese Renaissance, since one of the changes carried out at the time was a shift from use of classical Chinese texts to writing in vernacular Chinese. With this change the memorization of classical Confucian texts, including those associated with filial piety, gradually went out of style.

Both liberal and radical challengers of China's Confucian legacy came of age during the May Fourth Period. For example, Hu Shih, a leading liberal and champion of language reform, described in 1919 his tortured and only partially successful attempt to follow modernized funeral observances at the death of his mother.¹⁸ On the radical side, in the same year Mao Zedong made one of his first appearances in print in a series of articles detailing the tragedy of a prominent young woman who committed suicide rather than enter into a marriage her parents had arranged for her.¹⁹ One may question whether these new intellectual currents had much impact on the family practices of ordinary Chinese. However, the collapse of the imperial order combined with such criticisms and increasing contacts with the West at least served to undermine popular confidence that the ways families had been ordered and children reared in the past were the only proper ways to do so.

After the Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-shek achieved national unity in 1927, much of the enthusiasm for reform of family customs abated in favor of a concern for promoting order by allowing or even fostering traditional morality. However, new forces continued to threaten traditional family norms even in the absence of a strong official commitment to family change. The growth of industry, the emergence of other new forms of employment, and the spread of Western ideas and institutions provided Chinese youths with new opportunities to live and work apart from their families, and with new support for individualistic inclinations. Studies conducted during this period report a variety of signs of change in Chinese family life, particularly the beginnings of an erosion in the custom of parentally arranged marriages.²⁰ Then, more than a decade of warfare, famine, and hyperinflation from 1937 to 1949 disrupted many families and made it difficult to fulfill filial obligations.

The successful ascent to power of the CCP in 1949 provided China with more political unity than that society had known for more than a century.²¹ However, as indicated earlier, CCP rule also brought new challenges to traditional family customs. The new government was hostile to much of China's Confucian legacy. Many traditional family customs were regarded as "feudal" and backward, in need of being replaced by modern "socialist" family norms modeled after those in the Soviet Union. For example, the entire set of funeral and mourning rites practiced for centuries was targeted for elimination in favor of a modern set involving armbands, a memorial meeting, and cremation with no subsequent ancestral rites.²² Similarly, wedding ceremonies, which traditionally had focused on a family feast and often included rituals of filiality (such as the bride kowtowing and serving tea to or even washing the feet of her new in-laws) were to be replaced by civil registration followed by simple tea parties.²³

As in the Soviet Union, a comprehensive set of institutions was set up to indoctrinate the younger generation into a new set of values.²⁴ Central to those institutions was an effort to persuade young people that loyalty to the nation, the CCP, and to Mao should come before loyalty to one's own family. In some highly visible cases, young Chinese were induced to publicly denounce parents who had fallen out of favor with the new regime.²⁵ Most Chinese were not put to so severe a test, but such examples forcefully conveyed the message that parental authority was no longer absolute.²⁶

The socialist transformation completed during the period 1955–1957 also served to undermine parental power. With all factories, shops, farms,

and other employment now controlled by the state, and with family property reduced to insignificance, parents no longer commanded the resources that their children depended upon to become adults. Increasingly state-run educational institutions and bureaucratic assignment to jobs and housing replaced job training and inheritance from parents. By the same token, in China's cities the security and fringe benefits which came with state employment provided many parents with pensions and other resources for their old age, potentially reducing their need for support from their children.

Although many of the new forces unleashed by the CCP potentially threatened filial obligations, there is another side of the picture. Although the 1950 Marriage Law of the PRC continued the May Fourth spirit by attacking arranged marriages and advocating sexual equality and increased freedom of divorce, at the same time that law made it a legal requirement for children to support their aging parents (as well as for parents to support their children).²⁷ In addition, the CCP not only denounced Confucian ideas, but also Western values. Within a year or two of assuming power in 1949, the CCP forced out of the country Western missionaries, businessmen, and other bearers of Western ideas. For a generation or more (until the launching of the open-door policy in 1978), Chinese were largely shielded from Western culture and family morality.²⁸ During this period a powerful force that has challenged traditional conceptions of family life throughout the world was temporarily held at bay.²⁹

Furthermore, the CCP at no point systematically attempted to get young Chinese to reject filial obligations. The main brunt of the CCP's effort in regard to family change was directed at the custom of arranged marriage. Even that effort was reined in somewhat after the early 1950s, in part due to signs of resistance from the new government's poor peasant allies in the countryside.³⁰ Although attacking arranged marriage certainly constitutes a threat to parental control, at the same time the CCP reinforced the obligation of children to support their aging parents, as noted above. And at no time was there any official attempt to discourage grown children from living with their parents. Moreover, as the chapters in this volume will show in some detail, in most periods the new bureaucratic systems developed by the CCP kept many grown children close at hand, rather than inducing them to move away and to make an independent life for themselves. These tendencies, in combination with the longer life spans brought by health improvements and the increased security of urban employment, arguably

made it more rather than less likely after 1949 that the Chinese elderly could achieve the sort of security and filial regard traditionally cherished.³¹

However, new threats to Chinese families arose in the latter years of Mao's rule. Although the class struggle and mass production campaigns of 1957–1958, which culminated in the Great Leap Forward and its ensuing famine, shook the new social order the CCP had created, these events disrupted urban families far less than did the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao and his radical supporters in 1966. The details of this tumultuous campaign are too complex to go into here. However, the specific events and policies that had the most impact on urban families deserve some attention. The encouragement of youthful Red Guards to rebel against authorities in their schools and workplaces sometimes spilled over into homes. As in the early 1950s, some youths whose parents had become targets of the Cultural Revolution were put on the spot and pressured to denounce them publicly. In a few instances a child even participated in the "Oppose the Four Olds" Red Guard raid on a parental home, helping to retrieve and confiscate treasured family heirlooms that were judged unsuitable to the new Maoist order.³² Even parents not targeted for criticism faced anxious times as their adolescent children rejected words of caution and went off to engage in Cultural Revolution battles.

These strains on parent-child relations were only a hint of things to come. Toward the end of 1966, millions of adolescents left home to travel over the face of China to "exchange revolutionary experience."³³ Subsequently, many parents became so embroiled in Cultural Revolution struggles in their workplaces that they came home irregularly, and those who became targets of struggle were confined to "cowsheds" (makeshift jails in work units) and were unable to come home at all. Starting in 1968 millions of urban adolescents were required to leave their cities of origin and become rural laborers for extended periods of time, far from home and family.³⁴ During the same period millions of intellectuals and bureaucrats were also required to spend several years engaged in agricultural labor in "May 7th Cadre Schools," again without accompanying family members.³⁵ As a result of these policies, large numbers of urban families were torn apart for a period of years. Some children too young to have been Red Guards or to go to the countryside spent several years as unsupervised street waifs, without either parents or older siblings to supervise them.³⁶

Family bonds and obligations were strained at other points by the events of these years. In the disorder and violence of the Cultural Revolution, some

individuals died and were collectively cremated, without any opportunity for family members to arrange for funeral observances or even to collect the remains. When a deceased parent or a child of that parent was in political difficulty, it was virtually impossible for family members to arrange even the minimal sort of memorial meeting observance allowed by the state. Many urbanites remember with anguish their inability to meet funeral obligations for family members during those troubled years.³⁷ Even though the factional violence of the Cultural Revolution was reined in by 1969, the prolonged separations and disruption of family lives continued for many families until after Mao's death in 1976.

In many respects developments during China's reform era since 1978 constitute a rejection of the social order of the late Mao years. Once again these developments are too complex to describe in detail here, but their potential implications for urban families need to be considered.³⁸ With the repudiation of the Cultural Revolution and the rehabilitation of its victims, many of the disruptions of family life of the Mao era were ended. The majority of the youths who had been sent to the countryside were allowed to return to the cities and obtain urban jobs; parents who had been sent to the countryside or incarcerated for alleged political faults were allowed to resume their lives; and the official renunciation of class struggle campaigns indicated to the populace that families could plan their futures somewhat more predictably.³⁹ Equally important was the modest relaxation in control over culture and private lives allowed by the CCP. As the political system became less totalitarian, families had more privacy and autonomy to arrange their affairs as they saw fit, without constant fear of being criticized for being insufficiently "proletarian." In this more relaxed setting, revivals of traditional family customs flourished, although more so in the countryside than in the cities.⁴⁰

One of the most notable rehabilitations during the reform era has been that of Confucius himself. The attitude of Chinese officialdom toward Confucius and his doctrines has shifted from total hostility toward ambivalent tolerance or even implicit encouragement. As CCP leaders during the 1980s recognized that acceptance and promotion of Confucian values has gone hand in hand with rapid economic growth in places like Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore, they began to contemplate whether the PRC might follow the same path. With the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1989–1991 and the ensuing loss of faith in Marxism-Leninism within China, Confucian doctrines have become an obvious contender in the search for new sources of political legitimacy. As a result of these shifts,

Confucian shrines have been refurbished and reopened, Confucian texts have been republished, and international scholarly conferences have been convened in China to consider the positive legacy of Confucian doctrines.⁴¹ Within this more approving atmosphere, it has become common to see public discussions of the virtues of filial piety and other traditional familial values, with suggestions that promotion of traditional virtues will help not only with economic growth and political legitimacy, but also in combating such problems as juvenile delinquency and the rapid growth of China's elderly population.

Balanced against such potential trends in support of filial obligations are a number of other forces that may threaten those obligations anew. First, as indicated earlier, in the years since 1978 China's open-door policy has ended China's isolation from Western contacts and ideas. Furthermore, modern communications mean that awareness of the very different forms of family life prevailing in the West can spread much more widely than was the case prior to 1949. Young urban Chinese are growing up immersed in a popular culture influenced by Hong Kong, Taiwan, and world media images, a culture that is very different from the one in which their parents and grandparents were reared. Conservative elements in China regularly contend that reform era trends such as increases in premarital sex and divorce are attributable at least in part to "spiritual pollution" emanating from Western societies. There is also a widespread, popular perception that respect for the elderly has been declining, again at least in part due to the more individualistic values flooding into China from the West.

The economic reforms themselves present potential threats to Chinese filial obligations. There is substantial evidence from around the world that economic development tends to weaken filial obligations as it strengthens conjugal and individualistic orientations.⁴² The fact that China's economic growth since 1978 has been so rapid also increases the chances that China's young people will feel that the experiences of their elders are out of date and irrelevant, rather than objects of respect. In addition, the shift from state allocation to allocation controlled by markets in distributing employment, housing, and other resources means that young people have increasing options and are becoming less dependent upon both their parents and the state in planning their lives. Market reforms are also encouraging materialistic and acquisitive values among the young that contrast sharply with the Spartan socialist values in which their parents were reared and the moralistic Confucianism of their grandparents. In several related ways, then, market

reforms may be undermining the likelihood that urban youths will readily subordinate their interests to those of their parents.

One additional potential threat to filial obligations involves China's increasingly strict family planning policy. As chapter 2 notes, most of our Baoding respondents escaped the full effects of the "one child policy," which was launched in 1979. The youngest respondents in our survey, those in their 50s, started their families when urban residents were allowed to have two children, and older respondents completed their fertility before there were any strict limits on fertility.⁴³ Therefore, very few of the parents we interviewed had only one child. However, if present trends continue urban China will eventually consist almost entirely of parents with only one child. The potential implications of this rapid and dramatic shift are unclear but potentially monumental. In barely a generation, China has gone from a situation in which aging parents (such as those in the Baoding survey—see the discussion in chapter 2) have several grown children who can support and assist them in their old age, to a looming situation in which most aging parents in urban areas have only one child, and that child's filial attentions will have to be shared with another set of parents (their child's parents-in-law). There is a popular impression in China that the way children are being reared is changing in ways that may magnify the impact of altered demographic situation. If, as is commonly believed, parents of only children indulge and spoil their "little emperors," then it may be questioned whether those children will be willing to shoulder the heavy burden of filiality once they are adults.⁴⁴ In sum, recent changes in demography and childrearing practices may be undermining filial obligations even more than the political and cultural turbulence described above. However, any examination of the impact of the one child policy on filial obligations is of necessity a task for future research.

Also beyond the scope of the present study is the question of the impact on intergenerational relations of further economic reforms carried out since 1994. In ensuing years many aspects of urban life have undergone changes and become more competitive and insecure, with large-scale layoffs from state enterprises, market-based reforms of urban housing and medical care delivery, and in general a weakening of the "iron rice bowl" of security that was still largely unbroken at the time that we conducted our Baoding survey. Although we cannot be certain how these more recent changes have affected intergenerational relations, we will periodically offer speculations in the pages that follow. In the final chapter of this study we will return to the question of whether the nature of relations between parents and their grown

children that we observed in Baoding in 1994 was a very temporary product of the special circumstances operating at that time, or reflects deeper and longer-lasting forces.

The Baoding Survey

The social world faced by older Chinese today is vastly different from that experienced by their counterparts in earlier generations. Powerful forces that have reshaped family patterns in other societies—revolution, economic development, the spread of Western ideas and values, and state-directed family engineering—have swept through the lives of today's Chinese elderly in successive and overlapping waves. The impact of these tumultuous changes on intergenerational relations and filial obligations has been the subject of considerable speculation among outside observers as well as analysts within China. The research reported in the chapters that follow was designed to replace speculation with evidence. As part of a larger project on continuity and change in urban Chinese families, a survey was carried out in Baoding in 1994 to try to gain a clearer picture of the current state of relations between elderly residents of that city and their grown children.

The 1994 survey involved a complex collaboration between researchers affiliated with the University of Michigan, the Department of Sociology at Beijing University (Beida), and the China Research Center on Aging (CRCA).⁴⁵ At the suggestion of the Beida Sociology Department, Baoding was selected as our research site, since that city had already been used for research practicum exercises by students in that department. In retrospect we came to feel that the selection of Baoding was fortunate. In part this feeling stems from the excellent cooperation we received from local authorities in that city, which enabled us to carry out our survey there very efficiently. However, we also feel that the very ordinariness of Baoding is an advantage. While obviously no single city can be taken as representative of all of urban China, arguably a middle-sized city such as Baoding (whose urban population at the time of the 1990 census was just over 600,000) is more "typical" than are the cities in which most social surveys have been conducted, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin.⁴⁶

Baoding is located about 100 miles southwest of the national capital, Beijing. The city has a history which can be traced back at least to 300 B.C. It became a regional capital during the Ming Dynasty (A.D. 1368–1644), and for extended periods during the Qing dynasty (A.D. 1644–1911) and up

through the 1950s it served as the provincial capital of Hebei Province (known earlier as Zhili), the province within which Beijing is situated. In 1965 the Hebei provincial government was relocated from Baoding to Shijiazhuang. In the early twentieth century Baoding was the site of the Baoding Military Academy, the second most important such institution in China (after Canton's Whampoa Military Academy). Baoding was also the site of significant Christian missionary activity, with a notable presence of Catholics in particular.

After 1949 Baoding went through the same basic transformations as other cities in China, which were designed to make them into industrial growth centers.⁴⁷ By the early 1980s, Baoding had over 500 key industrial enterprises, such as the Baoding Petrochemical Factory, the Number One Cotton Factory, and the State Bank-Note Paper Mill. One large plant, the Film Production Plant of the General Plastics Factory, produces about 60% of all the movie film and 25% of the commercial color film for the entire country. Industrial expansion led to the creation of an additional residential district (New District) to supplement the two existing urban districts of Baoding (North and South Districts), and by 1990 New District contained 44% of the city's total urban population.⁴⁸ Because of this profile of heavy reliance on state enterprises, Baoding has not been notable for its early or pioneering embrace of market-based reforms. Baoding is also located on one of China's major railway trunk lines, with all trains traveling between Beijing and Guangzhou stopping in Baoding. Several important higher educational institutions are also located in the city, including Hebei University, Hebei Agricultural University, and North China Hydroelectrical University. Even though the Baoding Military Academy no longer exists, military presence is still an important part of the Baoding scene, with the 38th Army based in the city. During the Cultural Revolution, Baoding fell under the influence of radical leftists, in particular Chen Boda, and was racked by intense factional infighting.⁴⁹ It is not obvious whether or how these distinctive features in Baoding's profile and recent history would make intergenerational relations in Baoding families in 1994 much different from the patterns to be found in other medium-to-large sized Chinese cities.

Once Baoding had been selected as our research site, probability sampling procedures were used to obtain a representative sample of individuals over age 50 residing in the three main urban districts of the city. The sampling was carried out in two stages. First, 30 residents committees (out of the total of 225) were selected using probability-proportional-to-size procedures. Then

household registration records were used to construct a list of all individuals residing in those thirty residents committee areas who were born before June 1, 1944. This enumeration produced a list of 11,389 eligible older Baoding residents in these thirty neighborhoods.⁵⁰ Then simple random sampling was used to select forty-five persons from each residents' committee, or a total of 1350 potential respondents. Last-minute checks prior to the interview stage determined that quite a few individuals on this list had either died or moved out of the city, reducing the number of eligible respondents to 1160. Utilizing two classes of undergraduate sociology students from Beida as well as selected graduate students and young researchers from both Beida and CRCA, the project interviewed 1002 of the selected individuals. Thus the effective response rate for older Baoding residents was 86.4% (1002/1160). (While this is a very high response rate compared to surveys in Western societies, it is lower than the close to 100% rates typical of many officially sponsored surveys in China.⁵¹) For each older respondent one grown child living in Baoding was randomly selected, and we managed to interview 753 of these grown children. The response rate for grown children was lower than for parents, about 69%, largely because a considerable number of the selected children were away from Baoding during our interviewing period. The idea of interviewing both parents and grown children about intergenerational relations was inspired by project member Albert Hermalin's pioneering surveys in Taiwan using a similar design. This design enabled us to examine how parent-child relations look to both generations, rather than having to rely on the perspective of only one or the other.

While we feel that our parent and grown child samples can be accurately taken as representative of the population in Baoding's urban districts, there are some distinctive characteristics of the sample that should be noted. As will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, it turns out that 52.5% of the Baoding parents we interviewed were male. When studying an older population, one normally expects to find a greater proportion of females, given the longer life spans of women in most societies, including China. We were concerned that the presence of more males than females in our final parent sample indicated a sampling bias problem. However, closer examination showed that in both the full lists from which the parent sample was drawn and in figures from the 1990 census for Baoding, there was also a slight excess of males over females in this age range.⁵² Our final sample does not contain significantly more males than we would expect, given the underlying characteristics of residents of Baoding over age fifty. However, we are

not certain why Baoding itself appears unusual in not having more older women than men.⁵³ In any case, our survey meets the highest standards for sample survey research in any country. Even though the Baoding data are cross-sectional (i.e., they come from a single survey in 1994, rather from repeated measurements over time), we feel they provide a useful basis for judging the state of intergenerational relations at that time in urban China, and a possible baseline for judging future changes.

Plan for the Volume

Through the remaining chapters, some of the primary results of our Baoding survey are presented and discussed and then placed in a comparative context. The three chapters in Part II of this book consider the general situation of the Baoding older residents we interviewed. Chapter 2, by Yuan Fang and Martin Whyte, presents an overview of the Baoding parents we interviewed in 1994.⁵⁴ The figures presented there on the family composition, marital status, employment status, health, and other social background characteristics of Baoding parents help to provide a context within which to place the more detailed analyses in the chapters that follow. This chapter also presents the first evidence that most Baoding parents feel good about their lives, and that continued close relationships with, and support from, grown children are primary sources of this satisfaction. In some sense most of the remaining chapters in the volume are devoted to analyzing in greater detail the robustly strong intergenerational relations that are the dominant pattern in our data and puzzling out how and why the threats to filial obligations detailed in previous pages have not had as much impact as expected.

Chapter 3, by Wang Feng, Xiao Zhenyu, and Zhan Jie, examines in greater detail the employment situation of older Baoding residents and the influences determining whether or not they remain in the work force. This issue is central to determining whether particular aging parents maintain their own sources of income or become dependent upon their children. As expected, factors such as age and gender have a powerful impact on labor force participation, since employed women generally retire at least five and often ten years before men.⁵⁵ The analysis in chapter 3 also reveals that multiple factors influence whether older individuals remain employed (or return to work after retirement), with aspects of human capital and job skills generally more important than financial need. The data on wages and on pensions presented in this chapter reinforce an important conclusion in

chapter 2 regarding intergenerational relations: The large majority of older Baoding residents continue to have their own sources of income and may even have higher incomes than most or all of their children. For most parents, then, any financial support received from grown children tends to be supplementary, rather than their primary means of support.

The issue of generational contrasts in attitudes and values is examined in chapter 4 by Martin Whyte. That chapter shows that parents and their children disagree fundamentally about some things but agree on others. In many realms grown children give less support to "traditional" values (both Confucian and socialist) than do their parents. However, when it comes to family obligations and filiality, children are if anything even *more* likely to voice support for traditional views than are their parents. A variety of tests designed to check whether this pattern of strong support for filial obligations among children might be biased or inaccurate yielded negative results. In general these robustly strong filial orientations appear grounded in a number of factors, and particularly in a recent historical pattern of intense mutual interdependence between generations.

The chapters in Part III of the volume then analyze the nature of the exchanges between generations, exchanges which appear to be both a source of, and reflection of, continuing strong filial obligations. In chapter 5, by Albert Hermalin and Shiauping Shih, the exchanges between parents and children in regard to physical care, help with household chores, financial assistance, and the provision of food or other goods are analyzed in detail. The general picture presented in this chapter reinforces the account in chapter 2, with most parents (and children) enmeshed in complex webs of intergenerational exchanges. Although there is some indication in these data that children claim they provide more support to parents than parents report receiving from them, at the same time very few parents claim they have needs for assistance that their grown children are not meeting.

In chapter 6, by Shengming Yan, Jieming Chen, and Shanhua Yang, a comparison is made between the adult children who live together with their parents and those who live separately. While in some realms, and particularly in helping with household chores, coresidential children do more than those who live elsewhere, the surprise in the Baoding data is that in so many other realms it seems to make little difference whether a child is living with the parents or not. Looked at from another angle, this finding indicates that parents do not have to bind their children to them in a joint residence in order to have the close emotional ties and receive the support and assistance

that provide satisfaction and security. Filial obligations can be fulfilled "at a distance," and they do not require that parents and grown children live under the same roof.⁵⁶

Chapter 7, by Martin Whyte and Xu Qin, compares the pattern of support received by parents from their daughters vis-a-vis their sons. While data from the Baoding survey echo earlier studies in showing that it is about three times as likely for parents to live with a grown son as with a grown daughter, when it comes to the provision of support and assistance, no such gender gap is visible. Most Baoding parents receive support from daughters as well as sons, and relative to their abilities, daughters provide just as much or even more. These findings indicate that although the traditional obligation to support aging parents appears not to have weakened, the pattern of who provides that support has altered dramatically. This conclusion provides strong evidence in support of earlier research which claimed that the patrilineal basis of Chinese kinship has been breaking down in urban areas.⁵⁷

In chapter 8, by Jieming Chen, some of the family dynamics that have produced the sustained pattern of support for parents from grown children are probed. In addition to general features of the social order of contemporary Chinese cities that help sustain filial obligations, Chen's analysis suggests that parental investment strategies are also involved. Those parents who at early points in their children's lives provided considerable help and assistance are likely to receive more support from grown children today than are those who provided less. Urban Chinese parents may have lost much of the property and power used in the past to command filial obedience, but interdependence of the generations keeps these bonds strong.

Together, the analyses in Part III lead to a conclusion that Baoding parent-child exchanges in 1994 do not indicate that traditional patterns of behavior have survived unchanged throughout all the turmoil that has characterized China's twentieth century. Rather, what is notable is that dramatic changes have occurred in the nature of parent-child relations—particularly reductions in the proportions of parents who live with and rely primarily on grown children for support and a major increase in the support received from married daughters. However, the net result of these markedly changed patterns is that most aging parents feel that their needs for support and assistance are well met, and this situation contributes to their physical and emotional well-being. Thus, while the outcome suggests cultural continuity, that continuity has in fact been achieved by adapting to changed circumstances.

It should be noted that there is some overlap between the various analyses presented in the chapters in Part III. For example, the support provided by daughters versus sons is the special focus of chapter 7, but a "child gender" variable is included in the statistical models of most of the other chapters as well. This tendency is unavoidable since we are all working from the same rich set of data to ask a variety of questions. These overlapping findings should not be regarded simply as duplications of effort. Rather, since the authors of these chapters tend to use different samples and subsamples of the Baoding data and employ somewhat different sets of variables in their statistical models, the similarity of findings across chapters can be seen as indicating the robustness of the conclusions we draw from these data.

The three chapters in Part IV focus on a comparison of intergenerational relations in Baoding and in urban Taiwan. Chapter 9, by Martin Whyte, Albert Hermalin, and Mary Beth Ofstedal, is an extended consideration of the contrasting development paths of these two Chinese societies. As indicated earlier, portions of the Baoding survey design and questionnaires were based upon a series of surveys that Albert Hermalin and colleagues conducted in Taiwan beginning in 1989. Although the Baoding survey was not an exact replication of those Taiwan surveys, enough common or similar questions were used to permit limited comparisons of results. Since Taiwan and the PRC share a common cultural heritage but have had very different recent histories and possess quite disparate contemporary institutions, this comparison presents a rare opportunity to explore the extent to which current attitudes and behavior regarding intergenerational relationships are rooted in cultural traditions versus the nature of the current social order. Chapter 9 reviews the recent history of these two Chinese societies in order to highlight contrasts that might be expected to influence the nature of parent-child relations.

Chapter 10, by Albert Hermalin, Mary Beth Ofstedal, and Shiauping Shih, then compares the pattern of exchanges between parents and grown children in Baoding and in urban Taiwan, in a manner somewhat parallel to the one presented in chapter 5. In chapter 11, by Jennifer Cornman, Jieming Chen, and Albert Hermalin, several categories of attitudes between parents and children of Baoding and urban Taiwan are compared, in a manner somewhat parallel to that presented in chapter 4. In general, the results presented in these chapters show that while strong filial obligations and extensive exchanges between generations are characteristic of both Chinese

settings, at the same time there are a number of ways in which the results in urban Taiwan and in Baoding diverge. To oversimplify somewhat, we found that although Taiwan is clearly a more economically developed locale than the PRC or even Baoding specifically, in certain ways the patterns in the Taiwan data appear more "traditional" than their counterparts in Baoding.

The volume concludes with a postscript chapter designed to sum up the most important conclusions of the Baoding survey project and the Baoding-urban Taiwan comparison. There we conclude that the variety of motivating puzzles with which we began this research project, as listed at the beginning of this chapter, can be boiled down two major questions:

1. To what extent have strong obligations for grown children to support their aging parents survived the tumultuous changes of recent Chinese history?
2. To what extent are family patterns in urban China today distinctive because of the legacy of revolution and socialism?

Using data from the 1994 Baoding survey as well as the comparative evidence from Taiwan, we attempt to provide answers to these fundamental questions.

NOTES

¹ The political unification of China was achieved by the emperor Qin Shihuang in 221 B.C. Although Qin Shihuang campaigned against the ideas of Confucius (551–479 B.C.) and Mencius (372–289 B.C.), with his death and the succession of the Han Dynasty in 206 B.C., Confucian teachings became the foundation for state orthodoxy in subsequent dynasties, including those based upon foreign rule, the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty of A.D. 1271–1368, and the Qing (Manchu) dynasty of 1644–1911. Important elements of Chinese culture and institutions can be traced back even further, into the Zhou dynasty originating more than three millenia ago, or even into the Shang which preceded the Zhou.

² The dates traditionally given for Confucius's life span are from 551–479 B.C. The versions of Confucian ideas that influenced social life in late imperial China reflected subsequent interpretations and codifications over many centuries. Particularly influential on the emergence of a revived Neo-Confucian orthodoxy were the writings and interpretations of the Song Dynasty philosopher, Zhu Xi (A.D. 1130–1200).

³ We note that on Taiwan, where systematic social surveys began earlier than in the PRC, it is possible to make such comparisons over time. One such effort, involving a 1963 survey in the capital city of Taipei, which was replicated in 1991, found clear signs of weakening of a variety of filial attitudes over this time period. See Robert M. Marsh, *The Great Transformation: Social Change in Taipei, Taiwan since the 1960s* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), chapter 6.

⁴ See, for example, various contributions to *Aging and Generational Relations over the Life Course*, ed. Tamara Hareven (New York: de Gruyter, 1996). The emphasis on children as insurance against old age is central to many accounts of high fertility in preindustrial societies. See, for example, J. C. Caldwell, *Theory of Fertility Decline* (London: Academic Press, 1982).

⁵ In fact the ideal was often stated as "five generations under one roof," but limited life spans made this achievement extremely rare.

⁶ Under some circumstances Chinese families of other kinds, such as parents residing with a married daughter, were observed, but in most locales the patrilocal form was very strongly preferred. See the discussion in Burton Pasternak, *Kinship and Community in Two Chinese Villages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Arthur Wolf, "Chinese Family Size: A Myth Revitalized," in *The Chinese Family and its Ritual Behavior*, ed. Hsieh Jih-chang and Chuang Ying-chang (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1985.)

⁷ Marriage in China has long been virtually universal, particularly for women. This pattern means that there were very few daughters who remained unmarried and potential claimants on family resources, unlike the pattern in Western societies. For a discussion of the basic differences between Asian and Western European family patterns in the premodern era, see John Hajnal, "Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation Systems," in *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, ed. R. Wall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.)

⁸ For a particularly dramatic example of this propensity to send remittances home, in this case from workers in successful London restaurants to their kin in a village in Hong Kong,

see James L. Watson, *Emigration and the Chinese Lineage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). For a comparison of the similarities and differences between parental authority in imperial China and the preindustrial West, see Gary G. Hamilton, "Patriarchalism in Imperial China and Western Europe," *Theory and Society* 13 (1984): 393-425.

⁹ Both the *Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety* are translated by Ivan Chen in *The Book of Filial Duty* (New York: Dutton, 1910). This source dates the compilation of the *Twenty-Four Examples* to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644); however, at least some of the included examples were well known during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) or even earlier.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹¹ For a review of survey evidence on filial attitudes in recent times in Hong Kong and Taiwan, see David Y. Ho, "Filial Piety, Authoritarian Moralism, and Cognitive Conservatism in Chinese Societies," *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs* 120, no. 3 (1994): 349-65.

¹² See the discussion of mourning and ancestral observances in Hugh Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), chapters 4-5.

¹³ Early ethnographic studies of village life that support this conclusion of popular compliance with Confucian family norms include Daniel Kulp, *Country Life in South China* (New York: Teacher's College, 1925); Fei Hsiao-t'ung, *Peasant Life in China* (London: Routledge, 1939); Francis L. K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948); and Martin Yang, *A Chinese Village* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945). For a description of some of the mechanisms used in the imperial period to ensure transmission of Confucian orthodoxy into rural China, see Kung-chuan Hsiao, *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960).

¹⁴ A greater threat was posed by the possibility that a family would have no grown sons available to support parents in their old age. Fear of this possibility was conveyed in the statement attributed to Mencius that the most unfilial act a son could commit was the failure to produce any heirs.

¹⁵ One example of the weakening strength of traditional family customs concerns foot-binding. Infant daughters in a substantial portion of Chinese households had for centuries had their feet tightly bound, producing the tiny, deformed "lotus feet" in adult women that were the cultural ideal. In the last half of the nineteenth century, Chinese reformers and foreign missionaries joined forces to combat this practice, which began to disappear early in the twentieth century. However, one can still see some older women in China with bound feet.

¹⁶ The classic study is Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

¹⁷ Pa Chin [Ba Jin], *The Family* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964).

¹⁸ Hu Shih, "My Reform of Funeral Rites," in *Autumn Leaves*, translated by E.T.C. Werner (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1928), 69-95. Hu wanted to adopt the black armband then

being popularized in place of hemp mourning garments and to omit all offering of sacrifices in honor of his mother. However, after pleading from his grandmother he allowed one consolidated sacrifice, but donned only a portion of the customary hemp garments, and would only bow rather than carry out the full kowtow expected.

¹⁹ See Roxanne Witke, "Mao Tse-tung, Women and Suicide in the May Fourth Era," *The China Quarterly* no. 31 (1967): 128-47.

²⁰ See the discussion in Olga Lang, *Chinese Family and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946); Marion J. Levy, Jr., *The Family Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949).

²¹ During the period after the Opium War (1839-1842), imperial China lost territory and ceded extraterritorial privileges to foreign powers, while enduring the Taiping Rebellion and several other major rebellions. During the Nationalist era from 1927 to 1949 the central government held only nominal power over a number of outlying provinces still ruled by warlords, and then lost major territory to the Japanese invasion after 1937 and to the CCP in the Civil War after 1946.

²² See the discussion of these reforms in Martin K. Whyte, "Death in the People's Republic of China," in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, ed. James Watson and Evelyn Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). By the 1980s these changes had largely been accepted in China's large cities, but were only beginning to be implemented in Chinese villages.

²³ The difference between a bow and a kowtow may be indicative of the greater stress on deference toward parents in China than elsewhere. A kowtow involves kneeling and bowing the head to the floor, in the most exuberant form with the head knocking against the floor.

²⁴ For details on the Soviet ritual reform effort, see Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

²⁵ In one account of the "thought reform" process carried out by the CCP in the 1950s, the denunciation of a parent is portrayed as a culminating event leading to full submission to the world view of the CCP. See Theodore Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960).

²⁶ In the traditional Confucian moral code, only in the event of a child's treason against the state was a parent obligated to turn in the child; parents were obligated to conceal any lesser crime by a child and could be punished for failing to do so.

²⁷ See the discussion in C. K. Yang, *The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1959); M. J. Meijer, *Marriage Law and Policy in the Chinese People's Republic* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1971). A 1980 revised version of the Marriage Law contains only minor modifications of the provisions of the 1950 statute, and continues the legal obligation of children to support aging parents.

²⁸ During the 1950s a version of Western family ideas as conveyed in the Soviet model did have influence. However, after the withdrawal of all Soviet advisors in 1960, China's isolation from Western culture and communications was fairly complete.

²⁹ See the classic discussion of the combined impact of economic development and Westernization on family life in many parts of the world in William J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns* (New York: The Free Press, 1963).

³⁰ In particular, rural males and aging parents in general found the associated promotion of freedom of divorce threatening. After about 1953 the official stance shifted from promoting freedom of divorce to making it very difficult to get a divorce. See the discussion in Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

³¹ The major existing study of China's elderly presents substantial evidence that on balance China's revolution has made it easier for China's elderly to achieve the sort of old age that was traditionally valued. See *Long Lives: Chinese Elderly and the Communist Revolution*, ed. Deborah Davis-Friedmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983; revised, expanded edition, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

³² The campaign against the four olds took place during the fall of 1966, and Chinese traditional art, classical and Western books, insufficiently proletarian clothing, and many other items were confiscated.

³³ During this period Red Guards were able to ride for free on China's trains and buses, and many also undertook new "long marches" to important revolutionary sites. A series of mass rallies were held in Beijing during this period, each attended by something like one million or more Red Guards.

³⁴ See the discussion in Thomas Bernstein, *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

³⁵ For an account of life in such an institution, see Yang Jiang, *A Cadre School Life: Six Chapters* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1982).

³⁶ A recent Chinese film, *Yangguang Canlan de Rizi* (The Days When the Sun Was Shining), directed by Jiang Wen, portrays the life of these Cultural Revolution-era street waifs.

³⁷ For one vivid account of such difficulties of a woman intellectual who had been declared a rightist in 1957 and whose mother died during the Cultural Revolution, see Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakemen, *To the Storm* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 187-93.

³⁸ Several general accounts of China's reforms exist. See, for example, Harry Harding, *China's Second Revolution* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1987). For a collection of essays dealing with the impact of reform era developments on family life in general, see *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era*, ed. Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrell, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³⁹ For those charged with Cultural Revolution crimes and association with the purged "Gang of Four" (Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, and three other radical leaders, who were arrested one month after Mao's death in 1976), however, life during this period became much more perilous and unpredictable.

⁴⁰ For example, in rural areas traditional wedding and funeral rites, ancestor worship, and building of new lineage halls and ancestral tombs have been widely reported.

⁴¹ For a fascinating account of the post-1978 efforts to rebuild Confucian temples in one village of his descendants, see Jun Jing, *The Temple of Memories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

⁴² See the discussion in Goode, *World Revolution*.

⁴³ The story of the phases of China's family planning effort is a complex one. After debate and indecision during the 1950s about whether China had a population problem, a vigorous family planning program began on a voluntary basis during the 1960s. Although this effort was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution, starting in 1970 a renewed and now much more mandatory effort was launched aimed at limiting urbanites to two children and rural residents to three children. In every year since 1974, fertility levels in Chinese cities have been below replacement level. (See the discussion in Judith Banister, "The Aging of China's Population," *Problems of Communism* 37, no. 6 (1988): 62-77.) In 1979 Chinese leaders decided that even this strict policy was too lenient, and they launched the "one child policy." That policy has produced fairly thorough compliance with the one child target in China's large cities, but compliance among China's rural residents has not been good, with many rural families failing to stop even at two children. According to one calculation, during the mid-1980s only 10-15% of residents of large Chinese cities were proceeding to have a second child, but at the same time 75-85% of rural residents were doing so. See Griffith Feeney and Wang Feng, "Parity Progression and Birth Intervals in China: The Influence of Policy in Hastening Fertility Decline," *Population and Development Review* 19 (1993): 61-101.

⁴⁴ To date existing research casts doubt, however, on this popular stereotype about the one child policy leading to selfish and spoiled children. See, for example, Dudley Poston, Jr. and Toni Falbo, "Effects of the One-child Policy on the Children of China," in *The Population of Modern China*, ed. D. Poston, Jr. and D. Yaukey (New York: Plenum Press, 1992). See also Jun Jing, ed., *Feeding China's Little Emperors* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁵ The project was supported generously by a Luce Foundation grant to the University of Michigan. Supplemental support for the conference at which most of the papers included here were originally presented came from the Beijing Office of the Ford Foundation. All involved are very grateful for the support and encouragement provided by both foundations and their responsible officers. The large cast of characters involved in the project made the management structure complex. The author, formerly a member of the faculty at the University of Michigan, coordinated the overall project with the able assistance of Wang Feng and Chen Jieming. The primary responsibility for the project at Beida fell to Yang Shanhua, and at the China Research Center on Aging to Xiao Zhenyu. Hao Hongsheng, a former student at the University of Michigan now affiliated with People's University (and since 2000 working on leave at Westat, in Rockville, MD), was responsible for the sampling design and administration. The project also involved an earlier Baoding survey conducted in 1991 dealing with mate choice and marital relations, but only the results of the 1994 survey are dealt with in this volume.

⁴⁶ The three cities listed are not only China's largest, with over 10 million persons each, but are classed as "national-level" cities, which means that they have the same

administrative rank as a province. (Another of China's largest cities, Chongqing, achieved this rank in 1997.) Beijing also is particularly distinctive as the site of the national capital.

⁴⁷ For a general account of these transformations, see Martin K. Whyte and William L. Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁴⁸ As with other cities in China, Baoding has long contained suburban counties within its administrative area. The predominantly rural population in these counties is not included in the totals given here.

⁴⁹ Mark Selden, personal communication, based upon research for his forthcoming coauthored book manuscript (with Edward Friedman and Paul Pickowicz), *Revolution, Resistance, and Reform in Village China*. Chen Boda, a former personal secretary of Mao Zedong and key radical figure during the Cultural Revolution, was arrested along with the "gang of four" after Mao's death and tried and condemned to prison for his role in fomenting radicalism. The 38th army based in Baoding was long associated with Lin Biao, China's Minister of Defense after 1959 and Mao's radical "chosen successor" during the Cultural Revolution, who died in a mysterious plane crash in 1971.

⁵⁰ The use of household registration records has important implications for the nature of our sample. In recent years all Chinese cities have seen the influx of large numbers of migrants from the countryside. These members of the "floating population" are an increasing presence in urban life, but because they are not legally registered as urbanites, they are ineligible for inclusion in a sample based upon urban household registration documents, as was our study.

⁵¹ We were pleased with our "low" parent response rate, since it indicated that the sort of official control and compulsion that produces 100% response rates did not characterize our survey.

⁵² Due to our concern about the possibility of sampling bias, we asked our collaborators from Beida to carefully check the original sampling records and make revisits to Baoding in 1998 to inquire about the preponderance of males. Their recheck indicated that in the sampling lists from the 30 selected neighborhoods, the two genders were almost equally matched (males=49.6%), rather than showing the normal excess of females among those over age fifty. In the largest of the three districts sampled (New District), there was a slight excess of males (males=51.1%). Random sampling from within these neighborhoods produced a slight male preponderance (males=50.9%, New District=55.2%). A slight female excess in the number of chosen respondents who could not be interviewed raised the final figure to 52.5% male in the sample.

⁵³ One additional trait of our sample is related to the relatively even sex ratio. Only 11.2% of our respondents were widowed, while fully 88.4% were currently married (with the remaining 0.4% divorced), which represents a higher rate of marriage than is usually found in studies among older populations.

⁵⁴ For shorthand here and elsewhere we refer to our older Baoding respondents as parents. In fact there were a very small number of these older respondents (only 3 out of 1002) who reported that they had no living children.

⁵⁵ China since 1949 has followed Soviet-type gender differentiated retirement, with state enterprises decreeing that men should retire at age 60 and women at 55 (if in a mental labor job) or 50 (if in a manual labor job).

⁵⁶ It should be noted, however, that the "distances" involved for the majority of non-coresidential children are quite modest. As the evidence presented in chapter 2 and analyzed in more detail in chapter 6 shows, very few grown children of the parents we interviewed lived outside of the Baoding city limits.

⁵⁷ This claim was made in a number of earlier studies based on less systematic data, including Martin King Whyte and William L. Parish, *Urban Life in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). In China's rural areas, in contrast, available evidence indicates that the obligation to support aging parents still falls overwhelmingly on sons and not daughters. See, for example, Hongqiu Yang, "The Distributive Norm of Monetary Support to Older Parents: A Look at a Township in China," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58 (1996): 404-16. It should be noted that the finding that daughters provide as much support as do sons reinforces the claim in chapter 6 that coresidence is not a vital factor in intergenerational exchanges.