

Ageing and familial support: A three-generation portrait from urban China

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Research on ageing in China has been preoccupied with the unsolved question of whether traditional filial piety is eroded or sustained by societal modernization. This paper engages with ongoing debate on modernization and family change, but seeks to go beyond the prevailing dichotomous conclusion. Rather than focusing on one intergenerational relationship between ageing parents and their adult children – a common formula in the existing literature – this paper draws upon 120 life history interviews, involving both genders and three generations in three cities, and examines how old age support practices have shifted across three generations, as well as between sons and daughters across time. It reveals that the complex shifts and continuities are the outcome of a combination of state policies, evolving filial norms, gender and demographic forces, as well as reflecting the broader structural consequences of China's shift to a market economy. By systematically comparing old age practices by generation and gender in both Mao and Post-Mao Eras, this paper makes a major empirical contribution to the study of ageing in urban China. From a theoretical perspective, it contributes to the global debate on modernization and ageing by emphasizing the uneven processes in which social change interacts with family life within a single country, when viewed through generational and gender prisms. In so doing, it highlights the ways in which old age support trajectories are firmly grounded in local history and cultural, economic and demographic forces.

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Jieyu Liu is Reader in Sociology of China and Deputy Director of China Institute at SOAS University of London. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, family and generation in China. She is the author of two research monographs: *Gender and Work in Urban China* (Routledge, 2007) and *Beauties at Work* (Palgrave, 2016). Her recent research has expanded into contributing to the understanding of rapid demographical transitions and social change in China – this appeared in leading international journals such as *Sociology*, *British Journal of Sociology*, *Geoforum* and *Journal of Aging Studies*. Currently she is the principal investigator of a five-year European Research Council funded project examining Chinese family relations and practices.