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ON AGING IN HONG KONG.

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URBANIZATION AND MODERNIZATION:
THE IMPACT ON AGING IN HONG KONG

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation demonstrates how urbanization and modernization have affected the coming of age in a contemporary Chinese society. The data derive from 20 months of field work in Hong Kong and are based on visits with nearly 200 elderly informants including those living with their families, on their own, or in institutions. Both structured and informal interviews were used to gather information on household composition, economic circumstances, social relationships, and health status. Certain informants were visited numerous times in order to obtain extensive life history data, and the longitudinal nature of the study also made it possible to observe the coping strategies of others as they grappled with the consequences of change in health, residence, or employment status. The majority of these informants are from low or middle income backgrounds and thus must function under greater constraints than the more affluent residents of Hong Kong.

In the traditional village context in which most of the present generation of elderly grew up, the material, social, and ideological facts of life were mutually reinforcing. That descendants were the key to security in old age was so integral a part of the culture that simply marrying and raising a family led almost automatically to this result. The only individuals compelled to give careful consideration to other options were those who lacked descendants. Even these individuals, however, could choose from among culturally prescribed alternatives. Thus they could adopt children, bind themselves to their natal families, establish fictive kin ties, or otherwise become involved in long-term

social relationships with neighbors, employers, and co-workers. The stability and homogeneity of the village population meant that a cohesive public opinion backed up the mutual responsibilities that such relationships entailed.

In contemporary urban Hong Kong, however, the material, social, and ideological facts of life are shifting and contradictory. Independent residence of adult children is increasingly the norm while at the same time few elderly parents receive pensions and have little choice but to rely upon their children. Old people are especially concerned about the nature of their relationships with their children because they know that should their children become alienated from them, there are few sanctions in Hong Kong which they can apply to awaken them to their filial responsibilities. The relatives who in the village provided additional support to the family are largely absent from Hong Kong. The offending child may live elsewhere, have secured employment on his own, and appear a normally responsible person to his peers and neighbors who have no contact with his parents. As others have pointed out, this "individuated" quality of the urban family guarantees it privacy and freedom of action, but it also means that the most vulnerable members of the family have no extra-familial supporters who will readily act on their behalf. While few descendants take advantage of their parents' helplessness, enough do to result in newspaper stories of abandonment which give every old person cause to ponder.

Those without descendants are in an even more precarious situation. In the village there were culturally prescribed alternatives--various forms of long-term social relationships--upon which they could elect to rely,

but attempts to follow these alternatives in Hong Kong today are less likely to meet with success. Many natal kin have been left behind in China; others have emigrated to the United States or Great Britain. Public opinion which in the village witnessed and enforced the obligations of fictive kin is weak. Reliance on neighbors is threatened by urban renewal and resettlement policies. The coming of age in this Chinese society is increasingly viewed with apprehension.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THEORY AND METHODS

1. Theoretical Framework

One of the most fundamental problems faced by every individual as he approaches the later stages of the life cycle is to guarantee himself at least a minimal level of personal security when no longer able to provide for his own needs. While there is tremendous individual variation in the rate of aging and in the extent of physical deterioration, each older person nevertheless suffers a loss of vigor relative to his younger self. For most older people the essence of the solution lies in accommodating to the shift from self-reliance to reliance on others. Just who these others will be depends partly on cultural definitions and partly on personal resources. For example, old people with families can choose supporters from among their kin. If they have money, they can also choose to buy care from professional care-givers. If they have neither kin nor money, perhaps they can draw on friends and neighbors or community associations. In affluent countries, they may have automatic support through pension systems or social security programs.

The availability of care-givers is not sufficient to ensure their use by older people. The values of the older person and of the society at large also play a major role in how the individual chooses among the alternatives available to him. In looking at values, for example, we can assume that the emphasis a society places on the value of self-reliance will affect the willingness of a person to yield his independence. Presumably the greater the emphasis on self-reliance the greater the

reluctance of the older person to assume a dependent role, e.g., Clark (1972). In the U.S., with its traditional emphasis on self-sufficiency, extreme exponents of this point of view can be found in the form of elderly couples or widows who, though frail and impoverished, refuse to give up their homes and move in with their children or to accept public aid. Alternatively, the greater the emphasis placed on interdependence the easier it will be for the older person to yield to the authority of others.

There is, of course, another side to the coin, and that is that the values of a society also affect the willingness of potential care-givers to discharge their responsibilities. In a society with homogeneous values, care-givers and care-receivers should be willing to assume their reciprocal roles at about the same time. In a society with competing value systems, however, there may be serious differences of opinion as to when it is appropriate to activate these roles and even as to whether the parties involved have the respective obligations and rights associated with these roles. In the absence of strong cultural supports or meaningful sanctions, the elderly may find themselves in a precarious situation if the expected care-givers are unwilling to assume their responsibilities.

To understand the contexts in which people adopt strategies to provide for their support and protection in old age, I think it is useful to consider the models proposed by LaPiere (1965:89-102). Starting from the perspective of structural-functional analysis, LaPiere describes the three states of stable congruence, static incongruence, and dynamic incongruence, any one of which may characterize a particular social system. The first state, stable congruence, implies a balance or harmony among the

various elements which comprise the system. The second asserts that a condition of imbalance (incongruence) has developed among the parts and that this incongruence remains unresolved for a long period of time:

either because the social system fails to produce individuals who are motivated to work such change or because the organizational and ideological components of the society as a whole operate to discourage change (1965:93).

Dynamic incongruence, on the other hand, is a condition in which the psychological tensions generated by the incongruence are so great that efforts are made to bring about a new functional relationship among the elements.

LaPiere is not particularly concerned with what has brought about the state of incongruence. He does not emphasize the primacy of the technological dimension as Ogburn (1922) or White (1959) does nor the independent effects of ideology as Weber (1930) does. He acknowledges that change can develop in either of these dimensions and that it may be generated from within or without the social system itself. In speaking of internally generated change, Moore (1963:12-16) points out that all societies contain within themselves the seeds of change in the form of systemic "flexibilities." The fact that role behavior is not rigidly specified for every situation but leaves room for individual interpretation is one such "flexibility." The fact that there may be a range of alternative solutions to a particular problem is another.

In his analysis of the process by which incongruence yields to a new balance, LaPiere follows closely the thinking of Firth (1963) and Barnett (1953). Both of these anthropologists have emphasized the role of the individual as a change agent. Firth, for example, warns that it is misleading to focus on ideal patterns and to believe that the actual

behavior of individuals is simply a reflection of standards which are socially set. Instead, he indicates that it is equally important

to stress the way in which social standards, the ideal patterns, the sets of expectations, tend to be changed, recognizably or imperceptibly, by the acts of individuals in response to other influences, including technological developments (1963:31).

Barth (1966) goes even further. Utilizing the concept of transactional analysis, he studies how new forms are generated in the dynamic of social intercourse.

A focus on the individual as an agent of social change is especially pertinent in my study because I am concerned with how old people (and their families) generate new social forms in an environmental context very different from the one in which they grew up. Traditional village China has long been regarded as a place in which old people, protected by the value of filial piety and the practice of ancestor worship, had an enviable position, e.g., Hsu (1953). To use LaPiere's terminology, traditional China was in a state of stable congruence, and a person could predict his future security on the basis of the number of his male descendants.

By the middle of the twentieth century, however, this stable congruence no longer existed. Instead the People's Republic of China (PRC) is probably best described by the phrase "dynamic incongruence." At present the Communist Party intends major changes in ideology and social organization to bring about equally major changes in the material sector, i.e., in the production and distribution of goods and services, Hong Kong, on the other hand, is more representative of a state of static incongruence. As I will demonstrate in the course of this dissertation,

there have been major changes in both the material and the ideological spheres in Hong Kong, but the social sphere has "lagged" behind. Hong Kong also lacks the dynamic leadership of a powerful and ideologically-committed party. As a consequence, it is difficult to predict what changes are most likely to occur, and in such an uncertain context, it is very difficult to plan for one's future. The major portion of this dissertation is concerned with demonstrating the particular circumstances of Hong Kong, how they are different from traditional China, and what these differences mean so far as strategies for aging are concerned. Are new forms being generated or are people still following the conventional wisdom of dependence on sons?

As an example of how new forms can be generated, I offer the following illustration of how changes in intergenerational residence patterns have come about. Ideally, in traditional China, male descendants and their families remained together with the parents so long as the latter survived. In fact, economic hardship and demographic factors meant that this ideal often went unrealized. Nevertheless, the united household was recognized as valid and appropriate. In contemporary Hong Kong, a united household of this sort (two or more married sons and their families living together with their elderly parents) is very rare. Wong (1969:138) found only one percent of her sample and Hong (1970:98) found only two percent of his to be living in such joint households.

In the past the economic facts of life, that is the dependence of the family members on working the land cooperatively, encouraged sons to remain with their parents, and public opinion sanctioned this practice. Even so, "flexibilities" within the system allowed some sons to leave the village

for work elsewhere if opportunities were more promising. Now, in Hong Kong, the greater application of this flexibility is generating a new norm, namely, independent residence of the two adult generations. Some sons exit the parental household shortly after joining the labor force though most remain until they marry. New cultural values to which the young are especially attracted encourage romantic marriage and independent residence. At the same time the incentive to remain in the parental home is lessened as it is no longer the center of productive activity. According to my informants the value of filial piety is not violated by the absence of co-residence; it is violated by the absence of economic assistance. Now parents and children in Hong Kong have come to expect that for at least part of their adult lives, they will reside independently of each other. A new norm has been established.

Until recently, anthropologists have not been much concerned with what happens to the elderly in societies undergoing change. In the past older people played a role in anthropological research primarily as informants whose memories were utilized to reconstruct a less contaminated past or to provide life history data illustrative of the culture (Langness 1965). Unless age was a highly salient status principle, as in societies with age-grades, old people have rarely been studied for themselves (Clark 1973:79). Perhaps this relative neglect is understandable given the anthropologist's traditional concern with depicting whole socio-cultural systems, systems in which old people constituted only a tiny fraction of the total population.

For many years researchers seeking information about the comparative status of the elderly in preindustrial societies were restricted to the

findings of Simmons (1945) who, using the Human Relations Area Files, studied the role of the aged in 71 "tribes." Drawing primarily on the work of Simmons as well as on additional studies, Rosow (1965:21-22) concluded that the relative position of the aged is stronger if:

1. They own private property (or control it) on which younger people are dependent.
2. Their experience gives them a vital command or monopoly of strategic knowledge of the culture, especially in preliterate societies.
3. They are links to the past in tradition-oriented societies, especially when they are crucial links to the gods in cultures with ancestor worship.
4. Kinship and the extended family are central to the social organization of the society.
5. The population clusters in relatively small, stable communities (gemeinschaft societies).
6. The productivity of the economy is low and approaches the ragged edge of starvation.
7. There is high mutual dependence among the members of a group.

As I shall demonstrate in the following chapter, all seven of these factors were present in traditional China and, under ordinary circumstances, operated to ensure a secure old age for most Chinese.

Also starting with Simmons' observations as a base, Cowgill and Holmes (1972) investigated the status of the elderly in societies undergoing modernization. They see level of technology, degree of urbanization, rate of social change, and degree of westernization as the specific factors involved in modernization. For my own purposes modernization implies industrialization, urbanization, increasing literacy, the development of mass media, and a reduction in mortality with a consequent

restructuring of the population pyramid. After investigating more than ten societies at different stages of modernization, they made a number of generalizations of which the following are of interest to this study:

1. The status of the aged is highest when they constitute a low proportion of the population and tends to decline as their numbers and proportion increase.
2. The status of the aged is inversely proportional to the rate of social change.
3. Stability of residence favors high status of the aged; mobility tends to undermine it.
4. The status of the aged tends to be high in preliterate societies and to decline with increasing literacy of the population.
5. The status of the aged is high in societies in which the extended form of the family is prevalent and tends to be lower in societies which favor the nuclear form of the family and neolocal marriage.
6. Disengagement is not characteristic of the aged in primitive or agrarian societies, but an increasing tendency toward disengagement appears to accompany modernization.

They also made two generalizations specifically relating values to the situation of the elderly.

7. The status of the aged is high in societies where there is reverence for or worship of ancestors.
8. The individualistic value system of western society tends to reduce the security and status of older people,

The present generation of the elderly in Hong Kong grew up with traditional expectations of how and with whom they should be spending the later years of their lives, but they have become old in a very different context. They can no longer take for granted the presence of their kinsmen and the companionship of their neighbors. Even as nuclear families and the value of self-reliance become popular in Hong Kong, they

are accompanied by the belief that old people in the West lead bleak and dismal lives.

Cowgill and Holmes view their generalizations as still subject to testing, but the testing of their propositions is made difficult by their unfortunate choice of the phrase "the status of the aged." Sometimes writers using this phrase are concerned with prestige; at other times they are concerned with power or economic resources. Furthermore, the category the aged lumps together two quite distinct kinds of old people who are dealt with as if the one were a simple extension of the other. Too often writers assume that the "status of the aged" in the family, i.e., among "familiar," can be used as a measure of their status outside the family --as if the filial piety owed to parents somehow overflows and generalizes to all elders in the community. It is my contention that such a generalization does not occur in large-scale societies.

In villages of a few hundred households where one has spent all of one's adult life such a generalization may be more justifiable. After all, one is bound directly or indirectly by personal ties to almost all one's co-villagers, and as Levy (1949) indicates below (see Chapter II, page 44), personal ties generate respect and a sense of responsibility. Also an aged person in such a context is known as a particular individual with a particular history which is not the case for the anonymous aged encountered on crowded city streets. The relative absence of a sense of community in highly mobile urban societies can mean the absence of a sphere beyond the family and immediate neighbors in which the old person feels comfortable. Worse yet, the reduced contact of the aged person with the outside world and vice versa can easily lead, as it has in the U.S.,

to the development of negative stereotyping. A massive Louis Harris and Associates Study for the National Council on the Aging (1975:231) showed that in the U.S. old people themselves take a negative view of anonymous old people and often have tremendous misconceptions about their peers. These misconceptions, however, are even greater among the young. Because the mass media give disproportionate attention to the problems of aging and to needy old people, the lack of extensive personal contact with the elderly outside of the family makes the acceptance of such negative stereotyping an easy matter.

My own observations suggest a similar split between familial concern for aged parents and generalized unconcern for those other, unfamiliar aged, who, lacking kin or local ties, may be assigned to the care of public agencies when no longer able to satisfy their own needs. But even old people with kin may become dependent on non-familial assistance. In the absence of a wider sphere of activity, the aged can become increasingly dependent upon their families for emotional and social gratifications. Such increased dependency can lead to frustrations for all family members. As burdens on individual families become too great, certain responsibilities may be transferred to others. For example, if an elderly parent requires considerable personal care while other family members are employed outside the home, it may become necessary to bring in a community or private nurse or send the parent to an institution. Precisely what circumstances constitute too great a demand on the family and what intervention is most desirable can be matters of considerable dispute. The community, the family, and the aged person himself may all provide different answers.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation seek to achieve two objectives: (1) to provide as realistic a picture as possible of what it means to be old in Hong Kong today, and (2) to determine what strategies old people are following to guarantee themselves a secure old age in a context of changing material circumstances and changing values.

2. Methodology

In order to achieve these two objectives it was necessary first to define the eligible population, i.e., to establish criteria by which an individual would be identified as old or not-old, and secondly to locate members of the eligible population willing to participate in the study. In the West it is customary to take the age of 65 as the official lower bound for entry into old age, and most statistical data in the West divide the elderly from the non-elderly at this point. In Hong Kong, however, the boundary varies. A person is eligible for public assistance on the grounds of "old age" when 55, but is not eligible to enter a home for the aged until aged 60, and it is at 65 that he is considered a candidate for "geriatric medicine."

Traditionally the sixtieth birthday or the fifty-ninth birthday by Western reckoning (since the Chinese consider a child a year old at birth) was an occasion for special celebration because, in a sense, the individual was reborn on this birthday. The traditional Chinese calendar consisted of 60 year cycles, thus, the sixtieth birthday marked the beginning of a new calendrical cycle. Every tenth subsequent birthday was also regarded as a "big birthday" and was ideally marked with a banquet or festive meal with family and friends. Some of my own informants had celebrated such "big birthdays" when they were the

recipients of "long life noodles." Occasionally the fiftieth and sometimes even the thirtieth birthday marked the beginning of the ten-year celebrations, but the sixtieth was by far the most common.

However, most of my informants indicated that at least in so far as terms of address were concerned, they were elevated to the category of senior some years before the sixtieth birthday. The common address terms for older people are in the case of men abaak, which in its most restricted sense refers to one's father's older brother, and in the case of women apoh, which similarly restricted refers to one's mother's mother. Most of my informants were so addressed when they were in their fifties and sometimes even in their forties, and they usually attributed their new address status to physical changes such as gray hair. Regardless of her actual age, a woman who became a grandmother through a daughter would automatically be addressed as apoh when the grandchild was able to speak.

My own definition of an old person derives from the calendrical cycle; all of my informants are 60 or more years old by Western standards or 61 or more by Chinese standards. The ages I use in this paper are the Chinese-based ages of my informants since this was the usual age reference they provided me. Since some Chinese also count the passage of the first lunar new year as another birthday and since the Chinese year is variable in length--two lunar new years may be celebrated before the passage of 365 days, it is possible that some of my informants are as much as two or three years younger than a Westerner would reckon.

Elderly Chinese themselves are sometimes confused by the dual counting systems operating in Hong Kong. For example, a person might regard himself as 75 years old at which time he becomes eligible for a

public monthly grant known as the Infirmity Allowance only to discover that the government is operating with a Western definition of 75. In addition, many older people gave younger than their actual ages when they applied for their Hong Kong Identity Cards long ago because they knew employers preferred younger workers. Now, in their old age, they find that they have inadvertently excluded themselves from a source of income. Most of the old people, born in Chinese villages, have no birth documents to help resolve these inconsistencies.

When in the summer of 1973 I spent three months in Hong Kong investigating the possibilities for research into the situation of the elderly, I found that I had serendipitously chosen a topic of considerable public concern. At that time, the government itself was awaiting a report from a special Working Party on the Future Needs of the Elderly. In addition, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the coordinating body for most of the voluntary agencies in Hong Kong, had created a committee to look at both community and institutional services to the elderly. Given the atmosphere of public awareness, I had little difficulty in gaining access to publications and reports on the elderly.

At that time I limited my own research to residents of homes for the aged and was able to visit most of the homes and to talk with supervisory personnel. After visits to 19 establishments were completed, I returned to six of the homes to interview some of the residents. The six homes visited included one large home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, one Buddhist home for men, one Buddhist home for women, one home for men run by a Christian agency, one home run by a rural committee, and one best described as a block of sheltered apartments but known

locally as a hostel. All of the homes with the exception of that run by the Little Sisters of the Poor required new admittants to be free of infectious diseases, capable of self-care, and usually in serious economic difficulty.

I interviewed a total of 78 residents, 33 males and 45 females. This sample in no way represents a cross section of the elderly population of Hong Kong nor even of the residents of old people's homes. First, less than 1.5 percent of the elderly population of Hong Kong is institutionalized, and secondly, the residents interviewed were more likely to be those in good health and possessing extroverted personalities. Preliminary results of that summer's study have already been published elsewhere (Ikels 1975).

In the summer of 1974 I returned to Hong Kong with the intention of establishing contact with non-institutionalized old people living in the urban areas. Since I was especially interested in pursuing coping behavior, I wanted to locate people likely to be experiencing a problem in the near future. However, I was not interested in pursuing extreme problem situations but rather "normal" problem situations such as adjusting to changes in residence. Since at that time the Hong Kong Housing Authority provided accommodations for more than 40 percent of the residents of Hong Kong and since another high percentage of the population were applicants for public housing, I decided to approach the Housing Authority (then known as the Housing Department) for its help in locating old people likely to move. I was most fortunate in being able to interview in their homes 60 people who were on the waiting list for public housing and five people living in "temporary" relocation sites prior to moving to more permanent housing.

Since I knew that most of the people on the Housing List were likely to be in their sixties and early seventies (a simple reflection of the age distribution of the older population) and I wanted to know about the "older" old as well, I decided to contact the Department of Social Welfare. At that time, the Department was already planning to do a study of public assistance and infirmity allowance recipients, so they drew an extra sample of infirmity allowance recipients whom I was allowed to contact. I was ultimately able to interview 34 of the 60 individuals drawn in the sample and thus to acquire information on a larger proportion of people over age 75 than otherwise.

Both groups of potential informants received preliminary letters from me explaining how I had obtained their names, that I had no official connection with either government department, my own background and the purpose of the proposed interview, and a statement that I would be in their neighborhood the following week and hoped that they would be willing to talk with me. A number of informants immediately got in touch with me to schedule an interview, but most simply acknowledged receipt of the letter when I knocked at their doors and permitted me to enter. Thus the respondents played a major role in deciding whether and to what extent they became involved in the research.

In the course of the summer of 1974 I was able to gather residential, health, and kinship data from these 99 old people. The hour to hour and a half interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents often with other family members present and participating. The informants were located throughout the urban districts of Kowloon, especially Mong Kok, Yau Ma Tei, Shamshuipo, Tokwawan, and Hung Hom, and the older parts of

Hong Kong Island such as Western and Sheung Wan districts. Economically they ranged from middle class to public assistance recipients with the majority, like the majority of Hong Kong residents, being working class. Most of the people whom I interviewed were already out of the work force.

When I returned to Hong Kong for a 15 month stay in 1975-76, I re-established contact with 75 of these informants. Of the remaining 24, seven had died; 13 could not be relocated, and four did not wish to be re-interviewed. I gathered additional and comparative information on health, family relations, and social activities from these 75 people and later gathered much more intensive life history data from 12 of them. In the fall of 1975 I also contacted 24 residents of a hostel for the aged and collected the same sort of information as I had in 1974 from the 99 community dwellers, and I also selected three of these residents for additional life history interviewing.

The data presented in subsequent chapters are drawn primarily from the 99 people visited in 1974 and the 24 people in the hostel visited in 1975. Comparative data, such as changes in health and employment status, are based on the 75 individuals who were interviewed at least twice, once in 1974 and again in 1975-76. Data based on the residents of homes for the aged visited in 1973 appear only in the chapter on kin relations. The data are intended to demonstrate the range and variety of adaptations of aged Chinese to a modernized urban context. Since the informants are disproportionately drawn from those who are poor or living in overcrowded circumstances, the findings cannot be treated as if representative of the elderly population as a whole.

3. Organization

The remaining six chapters describe the life styles of elderly Chinese and the strategies they adopt under varying circumstances to provide a measure of security for their later years. Chapter II introduces a comparative perspective by providing data on traditional Chinese life and values as they pertain to the elderly. Utilizing a variety of literary sources to identify the values and anthropological literature to illustrate how the values were translated into everyday life, the chapter then relates the values and their expression in everyday life to the material conditions of the traditional village. The chapter also attempts to assess the life of the elderly in traditional urban China though there is a scarcity of material on this topic. In the People's Republic of China there is considerable evidence for the persistence of traditional strategies of aging. Despite initial all-out attacks on many aspects of family organization, the family continues to be the major care-provider for the elderly. This is true in both the city and the countryside though particularly the latter because the material conditions of life do not allow for full expression of the official values. The final section of the chapter looks at a modernized society, Hong Kong, and provides some evidence that although there have been changes in values leading to an increasing emphasis on self-reliance and self-fulfillment, the material facts of life in Hong Kong do not make it possible for old people to be self-reliant.

The remainder of the dissertation looks closely at the everyday lives of some of the elderly residents of Hong Kong. In Chapter III two major characters, Mr. Go and Mrs. Wong, are introduced to illustrate the

diversity of life styles which exists among the elderly and some of the historical experiences which distinguish the present senior generation from those which will follow it. The different strategies followed by Mr. Go and Mrs. Wong derive from a number of variables: sex, educational background, availability of kin, and economic resources to name but a few. The chapter concludes by providing a statistical overview of the elderly population of Hong Kong.

Chapter IV looks closely at the kin relations of older people particularly at patterns of household composition, the distribution of power and authority in the family, and the roles of collateral kin. The lack of foci for patrilineages has contributed to their non-emergence in urban Hong Kong. Extended kin now seem to be of significance primarily for those with no descendants. One of the most significant findings of this chapter is that despite the economic hardships many families face, parents continue to look to their male descendants for support in old age, and they continue to receive it. Changing residence patterns of married daughters while providing them increased opportunities for interaction with their natal families have not yet led to greatly increased expectations of support.

Chapter V investigates the roles played by friends, neighbors, community associations, and public agencies in the everyday lives of older people. In a stable village, there are many opportunities to develop relationships with neighbors over a long period of time. In a village, community organizations consist of people one already knows and flow naturally out of ordinary interaction. In the city, however, where there is considerable residential mobility, it is difficult to depend

solely upon the passage of time for the development of friendships. Furthermore, one's neighbors may be involved in unfamiliar lines of work and speak unfamiliar dialects which hamper interaction. Since most community organizations in Hong Kong are artificially stimulated by outsiders, either the government or volunteers, they do not flow naturally from everyday life and consequently are unable to attract many members. All of these factors contribute to a lack of community spirit and to possible isolation of residents.

Chapter VI examines health and medical concepts as employed by the elderly including beliefs about prolonging life, ensuring good health, diagnosing illness, and treating ailments. The diversity of medical services available and the way in which old people choose among them are also covered. The role of ill health in contributing to an increasing suicide rate among the elderly reveals the inadequacy of support networks or services in times of need.

The final chapter reviews some of the findings presented earlier and demonstrates that despite the greater affluence of Hong Kong, old people continue to rely on traditional means of support in their old age. Those unable to do so for lack of descendants or other kin must in the long run fall back on community assistance. For some elderly this means the assistance of other old people or kindly neighbors. For many more it means depending on formal organizations for financial support or institutionalization. Despite values of individualism and the desire of younger couples for accommodations independent of their parents, lack of adequate financial resources on the part of the parents makes it

impossible to maintain this independence in crisis circumstances.
Neglect of parents who have no alternatives open to them remains a
cardinal sin for modern Chinese.

CHAPTER II

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

1. Traditional China

A common Chinese saying states that "Of all the teachings in the Classics, filial piety comes first." The tremendous sense of gratitude that a child was supposed to feel for its parents ideally found its expression in the three years of mourning which followed a parent's death--the three years corresponding to the three years the child had spent in its parents' arms. But one did not need formal instruction in the Classics to appreciate the emphasis Chinese culture placed upon responsibility to one's parents. Even the child of an unlettered family knew the inspirational stories of the Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety. One of my own informants recited the following such tale to me.

There was once a young boy whose mother loved to eat carp, but it was the dead of winter, and the carp lay under several inches of ice. Discovering that he could not chop a hole in the ice to get to them, the young boy, being resourceful, came upon the idea of removing his shirt and lying down on the ice. Thus the heat of his body melted a hole in the ice through which he was enabled to catch the fish for his mother.

Another such story tells of a family so poor that they could not afford mosquito netting. Every summer at night the mosquitoes descended. Little Wu Mang who went to bed early allowed the mosquitoes to feast on

his blood until they were sated. Thus, when his parents went to bed, the mosquitoes had no desire to bite them.

An important key to understanding intergenerational relations in the Chinese family is the element of reciprocity as implied by the three year mourning period. In the Introduction I mentioned that the relative weights a society assigns to the values of independence and dependence can affect the provision of care for the aged, but in the case of the Chinese the concept of interdependence provides a more flexible tool with which to analyze social relationships. There is both long-term and short-term interdependence: the first operating primarily in the family context, the second operating in the peer context.

In the early years of the parent-child relationship, the parents are clearly the providers of care, but ideally later when parents are elderly, they are succored by their children. In the case of peer relationships, on the other hand, the interdependence is expressed less over a long period of time and more through behavior on discrete occasions. For example, if today one party borrows from the other, then tomorrow or next week, the other borrows from the first. If one party helps the other find a job or a place to live, the other will do so later should the occasion arise. Thus, the dynamic operating between the generations is different from that operating between peers. The one is based on the expectation of an ultimate pay-off on the initial investment of care whereas the other is based on a much more immediate expectation of reciprocity. One can determine very quickly whether a peer takes reciprocity seriously, and if he doesn't, can take steps to replace him with someone more reliable. With children the situation is different. One

may find out too late that they are unreliable but also irreplaceable. Therefore, it is extremely important to make it clear to children very early by means of ideology and strong sanctions that support of parents is not easily shirked.

As Doolittle (1966 I:140) points out, the entire community was expected to play a role in ensuring that children fulfill their obligations.

If a son should murder his parent, either father or mother, and be convicted of the crime, he would not only be beheaded, but his body would be mutilated by being cut into small pieces; his house would be razed to the ground, and the earth under it would be dug up for several feet deep; his neighbors living on the right and left would be severely punished; his principle teacher would suffer capital punishment; the district magistrate of the place would be deprived of his office and disgraced; the prefect, the governor of the province, and the viceroy would all be degraded three degrees in rank. All this is done and suffered to mark the enormity of the crime of a parricide.

That these sentences were ever carried out is doubtful, but they illustrate how seriously such a crime was viewed and that a vigilant community had the responsibility to check unfilial conduct long before it reached the point of parricide. A young man with a notorious reputation would have difficulty obtaining a wife or maintaining his business relationships. In public discussions his opinions would be ignored, and he would have little choice but to reform or leave the village. Ideally then children, particularly male children, were the basis of security in old age.

But what of people lacking male descendants? Where could they turn for support? One of the most obvious alternatives was to rely on daughters and sons-in-law. Hopefully, parents could persuade one daughter to remain at home by bringing in a son-in-law, either an orphan

or someone with many brothers, who freed of the responsibility of providing for his own parents could devote himself to his parents-in-law. In the absence of any descendants, one could adopt a child, preferably a fraternal nephew if one's brothers have several sons of their own (Levy 1949:127). This strategy minimized dispersal of the ancestral estate.

Another alternative especially for those who remained unmarried or were widowed without children was to bind themselves to their natal or spouses' natal families as dependent aunts or uncles. During their productive years, they would share the fruits of their labor with these natal units. In old age they would be sheltered by their nephews.

Other social relationships, beyond the family, could also be drawn on in times of need or old age. There are at least two forms of fictive kinship in Chinese society: the first, "sworn" sibling relationships, are characteristic of age peers while the second, kai relationships, are characteristic of partners of different generations. The model for "sworn" relationships is the oath taken by the three principal figures in the novel The Romance of the Three Kingdoms whereby the three heroes swear eternal brotherhood, but the model is not restricted to males. "Sworn" sisterhoods appear to have been common in the silk-weaving districts of Kwangtung province during the first few decades of this century. Women usually joined these sisterhoods at an early or middle age. Ideally they lasted until the partners died, but according to some observers (e.g., Sankar 1977), they were frequently unstable unless formally institutionalized by co-residence and economic interdependence.

In any case, since they were associations of peers, the needs of the last survivor fell outside their scope.

There were a variety of kai relationships in which the common theme was that of need on the part of one and nurturance on the part of the other. A sickly child, for example, might have been kaied to a god or to an adult who had been conspicuously fortunate in the rearing of his own children. In neither case did the natural parents give up the child, but on significant occasions such as rites of passage the attentions of the patron god or kai parent would be sought. The kai relationship of greatest significance for the elderly was that in which an older person kaied a young adult, preferably a young adult without parents of his own. The two would exchange gifts publicly, and in the early years of the relationship, the senior provided services to the junior, but in the later years, the junior provided services to the senior. Supernatural sanctions and the strength of public opinion encouraged the participants to fulfill their obligations.

Less personalized means of gaining support included relying on community organizations. In villages with strong lineage systems, a person could appeal to the lineage head for some support if only to the right to live in the ancestral temple. A wealthy lineage might even have provided additional care through the proceeds of ancestral land held in common by the lineage (Chen 1936:27). Monasteries or nunneries, less common than ancestral temples, also provided some accommodations for destitute elderly. Less regularized support could also be obtained from neighbors or through begging in public areas or around temples during festivals or the new year. In harsh times, however, and these

seem to have been frequent, community support would be curtailed first, fictive ties suffered next, and in the end only family members could be trusted.

Conspicuously absent from the sources of support in old age was self-support. In the traditional rural village, few people were able to amass sufficient capital or property to live off its interest (e.g., Chen 1936:103). Those who were able to do so generally made their wealth available to their descendants, for those who were wealthy had no difficulty in acquiring descendants. A concubine could readily compensate for an infertile wife, and there were no shortages of adoptable children. Generally speaking, those who had wealth in old age also had descendants. Those who had no descendants were generally poor, and what little money they could put together went towards their funerals. Thus, social relationships were the main basis of support in old age, and villagers of all ages shared the ideology of interdependence.

The dues of filial piety continued to be paid even after the ending of the three year mourning period (which, in fact, was usually considerably shorter), for the care and respect owed to parents was continued in the form of ancestor worship. In many societies, ancestors take on a malignant aspect, scrutinizing the behavior of their descendants and wreaking punishment for even minor infractions. Chinese ancestors, however, were usually perceived as benign and helpful although they too were concerned with the morals of their juniors (Freedman 1967). Good behavior was owed to the ancestors; bad behavior brought shame to them and caused a loss of face in the spirit world. To bring shame to the ancestors or to still-living parents was to brand oneself a truly inferior person.

In ceremonies paying respect to the ancestors, the senior male of the senior generation was the ritual leader. Since he himself would soon become an ancestor, this role was especially fitting. However, it is important to note that there were socioeconomic differences in ancestor worship (e.g., Hsu 1940:130; Ahern 1973). A wealthy family would be particularly attentive to the ancestors, for the family's present wealth was presumed to be due in part to the influence of these ancestors. A poor family, by its very poverty, had reason to doubt the abilities of its ancestors to aid their descendants, and a poor family had neither the time nor the money to divert these resources into such relatively unproductive ceremonies. Large ancestral halls and branch halls were symptomatic of wealthy lineages. Jordan (1972:101) found that in contemporary village Taiwan, ancestor worship beyond the immediate family dead was either uncommon or purely mechanical.

When describing the social position of the elderly in general, most writers on traditional Chinese society emphasized the prestige associated with old age (Doolittle 1966; Hsu 1953). Becoming a village elder entitled one not only to an extra share of meat at all ritual feasts but also to the unqualified respect of one's juniors. However, if we can extrapolate at all from contemporary village Taiwan, it appears that there was considerable variance in how closely reality approximated this ideal. According to Diamond (1969:44):

Because of the emphasis on work, there is a falling off of prestige as the person moves into old age. K'un Shen gives lip service to the Confucian ideas of respect for age, but in actuality there are few people of advanced years who can attract respect and maintain authority, unless they belong to the small group of educated property owners. They then continue to have a voice as village leaders and mediators.

In other words it appears that respect was not an unqualified award. One either remained physically active or in some other way contributed to the welfare of the family or community.

Another interesting feature of the attitudes towards the older members of the village was the comparative license they were given to indulge themselves. For example, according to Doolittle (1966 II:253-254) the village elders:

if of active habits and good health . . . usually interest themselves in the affairs of their neighborhood, and crowd themselves into other people's society much oftener than is agreeable. . . . It has become allowable for the elders to invite themselves (if they please to do so, and if they do not receive an invitation) to attend any festive occasion which may occur in their own neighborhoods . . . On account of their venerable age, they are permitted to take liberties in their own community, and to enjoy privileges which would not be tolerated in young men.

Referring to contemporary Taiwan, Gallin (1966:215-216) reported:

Unlike younger people, the old are not under pressure to adhere to the proprieties of life. Old women smoke in public, appear at public dinners normally attended by men only, and are generally outspoken. Old men frequent banquets and festivals held in Hsin Hsing and even surrounding villages. On such occasions they care little how much they eat and frequently gorge themselves with the good food. Their juniors watch and say nothing, and in fact seem to enjoy watching the old men behaving in ways that they cannot When old people talk, even though the younger people may consider their words pure nonsense, they merely smile and agree. When the evening is over there is usually some young grandchild waiting to lead the old man back over the dark paths to his house.

The exact reasons behind such license are not clear, but apparently at this stage of the life cycle, the restraints otherwise applied were lifted. Simmons (1945:63-66) found this same phenomenon in a number of the societies he studied. The old person, having married off the children and greeted the arrival of the third generation, had fulfilled

the obligations owed to the previous generations. No longer responsible for rearing and providing for a family and unlikely to get into serious mischief, he could be granted a vacation from restraint and self-denial in old age.

In a society with high mortality rates, the mere fact of being old suggested that the individual was in some way special or at least quite different from those many others who had not survived. Perhaps the elderly had special knowledge about the preservation of health and the lengthening of life. The Taoists were famous for their pursuit of the pill of immortality and for their many exercises designed to conserve the vital force (Gruman 1977). The Buddhists had a somewhat different explanation for a long life. While it was generally agreed that one's life was measured out by the fates before one was born, it was also believed that meritorious acts such as kindness to beggars could sometimes lengthen it. Thus special knowledge and/or special virtue were attributed to the elderly. However, as the proportion of old people in the population increases, their individual specialness is likely to decline.

In traditional China, literacy was the luxury of a few. Most families did not have the resources necessary to spare even one son from labor in the fields. Under these circumstances, most people acquired knowledge either from direct experience or through others with direct experience. The longer one had lived, the greater one's wealth of experience--at least in relatively stable societies. Thus, the elderly were considered the repositories of wisdom or, at the very least, experts in some areas of knowledge such as medicinal herbs or

ritual. A host of Chinese proverbs testify to this view of the elderly. "Employ a young carpenter, but an old physician." "It's the old horse that knows the road." "If you wish to succeed, consult three old people"; and "He who will not accept an old man's advice will some day be a beggar." All my informants were familiar with the expression "An old person in the family is like a precious stone" and readily explained it in terms of the value, i.e., knowledge, of the old person. Several added that this expression is not applicable in present-day Hong Kong.

The above examples depicting the old person as the recipient of filial piety, the indulged free spirit, and the epitome of traditional knowledge have convinced many contemporary Chinese--and non-Chinese--that in the old days, parents had no fears of abandonment, and old people in general received the respect of the community. There are, however, a number of proverbs and folk characters suggesting an occasional darker side of the picture. For example, "With nine sons and twenty-three grandchildren, a man may still have to dig a grave for himself"; "Grown-up sons run things their way, and grown-up daughters stroll on their own." "There are only affectionate fathers and mothers, but no affectionate sons and daughters." "Long disease wears away a child's filial devotion," and "Old men and yellow pearls are not worth much."

According to Smith (1914:272-274) a common figure of ridicule was the Old Lady, e.g., "An old lady trying to bite with her teeth forgets that she has none" said of those who make purchases and then find that they have no money or "An old lady wearing spectacles--all for show" meaning that since she cannot read, the glasses are useless and thus said of useless things or people. Smith also reports on the Old Man or

the Old Villager whose ignorance of the world is so great that he is constantly being surprised or making foolish errors, e.g., "The old countryman having an interview with the Emperor--very little talking and a great deal of head-knocking" used to ridicule people who are slow of speech and who merely assent to what others say or "The old villager having never seen a peacock--what a big-tailed hawk!" used to ridicule people of great pretensions. These two figures, the Old Lady and the Old Villager, suggest that while there may indeed have been respect for the wisdom of the old, it was tempered by the recognition of its limitations.

It is a commonplace of anthropological theory that the values of a society, at least during relatively stable periods, must in some way function so as to promote the survival of that society. If this is so, then filial piety and generalized respect for the aged must have had a functional basis in traditional village life. In investigating this functional basis, let us first review (See Introduction, page 7) the seven factors which Rosow found relevant to understanding the welfare of the aged and relate them to the conditions of village China.

Rosow's first variable is an economic one--the extent to which the old own or control private property on which the young are dependent. In village China the economic relationship between fathers and sons contributed greatly to the sense of obligation to parents. A son usually owed his occupation to his father or other close kinsman. In the case of a peasant, he inherited land or tenancy rights from his father; in the case of a craftsman, he usually owed his training to his father or other male relative (e.g., Lee 1953:274; Fer 1946:141, 143; Chan 1953:

208). His tools, his skills, his clientele, his trading partnerships: all were owed to his senior kinsmen. Furthermore, so long as the father remained alive, he usually retained legal right to the land. Ideally family property was not divided up among the sons until after his death. If division did occur earlier, it was normally with a stipulation regarding the care of the parents. The son assigned this particular responsibility could expect to receive a larger share of the estate than his brothers (Levy 1949:137). Thus, sentiment aside, Chinese sons had very practical reasons to fulfill their filial obligations.

The residential family and the economic family were not necessarily co-extensive, and caring for parents did not always mean co-residence. In land-poor villages, a son frequently had to migrate to the city and send money back to his parents. In other cases where responsibility was rotated among a number of sons, the parents might live alone or with one of them, in their shop for example, but take meals on a regular basis with the others (Hsu 1971:114; Cohen 1946:74-75). The significant point was the provision of care not the co-residence.

The second variable, monopoly or control of strategic knowledge, operated to ensure the elderly a needed place even when their physical strength had declined. Although traditional China was by no means a preliterate society, the relative scarcity of formally-educated people meant that personal experience and the experiences of others were the major sources of knowledge (e.g., Yang 1953:91-92).

Rosow's third variable, the extent to which the elderly are links with the past, is of particular significance since pre-modern China is well known for its focus on the past. From the time of Confucius onward,

philosophers preached that peace and harmony would reign only when the people returned to the ways of their ancestors. The Chinese took special pride in noting their links with the past in the form of genealogies stretching back 20 or 30 generations. The achievements of the ancestors were spurs to achievement for the descendants (e.g., Hsu 1971). The elderly themselves were soon to join the ancestors and thus to be in a position to exert influence on behalf of family members. Alternatively, should the behavior of the descendants be offensive, it was not unknown for them to return as vengeful ghosts (Ahern 1973:199-203). Strong supernatural sanctions reinforced the practical reasons behind filial piety.

Fourthly, kinship and the extended family were central to the social organization of the Chinese village. Most Chinese villages were composed of the members of a few lineages, the founders of which had migrated to the area many years before. Some villages, especially those in the southern provinces such as Kwangtung, consisted of the male members of a single lineage plus their wives and unmarried daughters (e.g., Freedman 1970:1). In such circumstances, one's neighbors were also very likely to be one's kin as lineage and village membership were nearly co-terminous. In this context, the misbehavior of any one person was an insult to the ancestors of everyone else and could jeopardize the relations of the entire community with the supernatural. Furthermore, the neglect of elderly lineage members, the last survivors perhaps of a nonproductive branch, reflected on the morality of the entire group. Therefore, there was a major incentive to develop collective solutions to provide for their needs.

Fifthly, Chinese villages varied in size from several hundred to several thousand members. In most cases, it was possible to know something about everyone in the village or at the least to be able to get such information at will. Anonymity was impossible, and serious delinquencies followed one for life. In addition, while some members left the village for employment in the cities, their families usually remained behind (e.g., Lang 1946:82). Village growth came about as the result of reproduction and not as the result of in-migration. This stability of personnel meant that debts and favors were long remembered, and that over the course of a lifetime an individual probably developed personal ties with nearly every family through one of its members. In times of need such as a luckless old age these personal ties could make the critical difference.

Rosow's sixth variable, the inverse correlation between local productivity and care of the aged, seems at first glance paradoxical, but it is here that the significance of the principle of interdependence again becomes clear. In a marginal economy the contribution of every person to the small gross product is highly valued. Elderly Chinese gathered firewood and medicinal herbs or tended chickens, and they could frighten birds away from the fields. So long as productivity exceeded consumption, there was a place for the old. Under conditions of prolonged hardship, however, the elderly could be among the first sacrificed (e.g., Turnbull 1972) unless, as in China, there were additional factors operating to protect them.

The seventh variable, the degree of mutual dependence, also operated to protect the aged. In the Chinese village, for example, the

irrigating and draining of the rice fields required extreme coordination and cooperation on the part of the villagers. Similarly, intensive cooperative labor was essential during the harvest particularly if the weather threatened (e.g., Pasternak 1972:20). In some parts of China, inter-village rivalries were so intense that pitched battles occurred necessitating the formation of village patrols (e.g., Freedman 1970: 105-111). The need for cooperation put high priority on such character traits as reliability and loyalty. The way in which an individual treated his parents indicated the strength of these traits in his personality. Clearly any person who was not good to his parents was also not good for the community, and it is this linkage which partly explains the community's interest in the strength of filial piety.

In summary then practical economic considerations, supernatural sanctions, strong cultural supports, and the force of public opinion all combined to ensure that the village elderly were granted their due. But perhaps we have overlooked another very significant motivator--namely, self-interest. Any person who failed to provide for his parents was not setting a good example for his own children and thus undermined his own security in old age.

I have so far said little about the situation of the elderly in the cities of pre-modern China. The reasons for this omission are two: (1) there is a relative scarcity of material on this topic, and (2) there was a relative scarcity of the old in the cities. Clearly the first reason derives from the second. The pre-modern Chinese city was populated primarily by the young and middle-aged most of whom were males unaccompanied by their families. According to Skinner (1977:535) in

Canton in 1895, the sex ratio was 168 males per 100 females for the northeastern "gentry" districts of the city, and 224 males per 100 females for the southwestern "merchant" districts. Most men were in the city as sojourners sending their money back to the villages and returning annually for the ancestral festivals or the new year and most men expected to retire to their villages in their old age. Even as late as 1936, Lang (1946:82) found that in Peking, a nonindustrial city:

Wage earners and members of the lower middle class have intimate contacts with the soil. Many workers, apprentices, riksha coolies, servants, and others of this class belong to families living in the country: they send money to their rural homes, leave their wives and children with their old folks, and regard their sojourn in the city as temporary, even when they spend their entire lives there. Evidently a nonindustrial city does not induce many peasants' sons to establish their families in it, although there are exceptions.

Those who did spend their final years in the city did so because they either had family in the city or had no one willing to provide for them in the countryside. This latter category faced a problematic future (Skinner 1977:545).

Ideally the values operating in the urban context were the same as those operating in the rural: interdependence, filial piety, and respect for the past and those associated with it. However, given the fact that the social organization was so very different with regard to community size, stability of residence, and familiarity of neighbors, it was impossible to know the personal histories of everyone let alone to have personal ties to them. In this context, an anonymous older person was assumed to be someone else's responsibility. The city was not, of course, so totally atomized as to lack personal relationships and notions of mutual assistance; it was rather that one had to make more conscious efforts to develop such relationships.

Newcomers to the city usually went first to live with relatives or fellow-villagers who had gone before them, and some, in old age, were able to derive considerable support from such familiars. For others, however, a larger population base was necessary to provide some measure of social welfare, and this larger base could be found in district and surname associations (e.g., Crissman 1967:15). In a provincial city, these district organizations usually consisted of the natives of a county or a cluster of neighboring counties. In a metropolitan city such as Peking or Shanghai, the inclusive "district" might have been an entire province. The surname associations recruited people with the same patrinyrn regardless of place of origin and were in essence clan associations. Even though no genealogical connections could be traced, the members were all considered descendants of a common ancestor, and families with the same surname could not intermarry.

Both district and surname associations provided a means of keeping in touch with the home community by the channeling of remittances and the dissemination of news. They also sponsored credit associations and, of great interest to the elderly, burial societies. In exchange for monthly payments up to a certain amount, the participant was guaranteed a coffin, funeral, and transport back to the village or local burial. These organizations also introduced the newcomer to opportunities for building up his social networks, for in the city just as in the countryside, enduring personal relationships were the key to security in time of need.

Some old people gained a modicum of security through their work contacts. While craft and trade guilds were run by and for the business

owners and were primarily concerned with business matters, they would on occasion perform meritorious acts such as providing a free burial or helping out a widow (e.g., Rhoads 1974:104 and Skinner 1977:533). But these formal organizations did not really offer much security for the ordinary aged worker. No union contracts provided for pensions or unemployment compensation. At best, the larger firms made lump-sum payments to retiring workers and considered their obligations at an end. Instead the ordinary worker had to depend on personal relationships built up over a long period of time (e.g., Lamson 1934:138 and Fried 1953:152). For example, a shop employee who had worked for the same owner/manager for 30 or 40 years was not simply discharged as his usefulness declined. Normally his duties and remuneration were gradually reduced until perhaps he became little more than a "night watchman" sleeping on the floor in the front of the shop in exchange for his meals. Similarly, a woman who had faithfully served one master and his household for many years was not turned aside in her old age. For all practical purposes such long-term servants were members of the family and as such were kept on although their duties were greatly lessened.

Let me here stress the point that in the pre-modern period, the elderly constituted a very small proportion of the urban population (and of the rural population also), and the period between the cessation of their "usefulness" to their employers and their deaths was usually quite short. Anyone so debilitated that he or she could perform no services about the house was an easy target for infectious diseases. Furthermore, since most of the elderly retired to their native villages, few employers had to worry about the build-up of a large group of aged employee-

dependents. The elderly also consume considerably less food than either adolescents or working adults so providing them with meals was unlikely to have a great impact on business or household economics.

Workers could also rely on each other in old age. A worker with a family in the city might shelter another older worker, particularly if they were co-villagers. Temporary domestic servants sometimes maintained quarters to which they could retire between jobs or in old age. These so-called jaai tohng (lit. vegetarian halls) could be religious or secular in nature (e.g., Yap 1962:448-449). Another possibility was to establish fictive kinship ties (kai relationships) with someone younger, but their endurance in the city was more doubtful than in the countryside as the partners were not so susceptible to public scrutiny.

Those in the weakest position in the city were elderly refugees and those with irregular employment histories. Refugees from famine in the countryside were not welcomed in the cities regardless of their age, and at such times the streets were crowded with desperate beggars (e.g., Skinner 1977:346). A worker lacking adequate skills, a laborer whose strength was impaired by injury, or a servant who was insufficiently accommodating found employment infrequently. As soon as their services were no longer needed, they were discharged. Under these circumstances, they were never in a position to build up the emotional dimensions of the employer-employee relationship, and thus found themselves helpless in old age.

In summary then cities lacked substantial elderly populations. Most old people retired to their native villages. Those staying on were most secure when their families also lived in the city or when they

had been able to establish long-term personal ties with employers or co-workers. Those lacking these personal relationships, an almost impossible situation in a village, were dependent upon the generosity of neighbors or the occasional welfare acts of formal organizations. For some the only certainty in old age was a burial.

2. The People's Republic of China

"From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs." This basic Communist tenet suggests that the elderly in the People's Republic of China (PRC) have no reason to fear for their later years. Even presumable non-Communist Americans profess their admiration for the way old people are treated in the PRC. A number of prominent Westerners who have recently made visits to China have publicly stated that the situation for old people, even now under a very non-tradition-oriented regime, is superior at least in some ways to that in the West. In a Honolulu Star-Bulletin interview in June 1977, Maggie Kuhn, the founder of the Gray Panthers, an activist organization of the elderly in America, stated that "We could certainly apply the way in which the old people in China are represented in their government to our system. . . . The old are concerned not only with the nurture of small children, but they have a lot to do with the judication of neighborhood disputes."

Journalists frequently point at the General Committee of the Communist Party as an indicator of the high status of the aged since the average age of the leaders is quite high. In the recent past this phenomenon in China has in large part been a function of the age of the revolutionary generation. Many of the founders of the PRC were in their forties and fifties when they first came to power. Now nearly 30 years

later, the remaining members of that original power elite are in their seventies and eighties. But looking at the membership of the highest political organ of a country does not really provide a valid index from which to generalize about the status of the elderly in local politics or in non-political spheres. The average age of national leaders in modern industrial societies, particularly in the legislative branch where power in the government often correlates with seniority as in the United States, is also quite high though associated with low status of the elderly in general. Since so much local decision-making occurs at the levels of the production brigade and team from which old people are usually retired, it is difficult to imagine their power over the community as a whole being very great.

Nevertheless the favorable publicity continues. After being sworn in as chief United States envoy to the PRC, Leonard Woodcock announced that he was "happy I'm going to a society that respects old age" (Star-Bulletin: July 12, 1977). A September 1977 Star-Bulletin editorial based on the findings of a group of Hawaiian educators and media personnel recently returned from China reported that China "keeps its older people involved and occupied. Even retired people do some work and thus feel needed. The result seems to be greater alertness and satisfaction and less senility than in the United States. There's no trash heap for Chinese elders."

Of course, the reasons for the greater involvement of old people in the economic life of the PRC are straightforward economic reasons having little to do with Western notions that old people must be kept active for their own peace of mind. The need to utilize the labor power of every

individual, especially in the countryside, means that the labor power of old people is also required. Besides the devaluation which can occur with the loss of productivity means that old people do not dare to sit around in idleness (Kallgren 1968:267; Liu 1976:69). The relative ease with which old people can obtain exit visas from China is less a reflection of the humanitarian attitude of the government than it is of a desire to remove those no longer able to contribute to the economy. Especially during periods of economic distress, such as the late 1950s and early 1960s, old people, including some of my informants, were encouraged to emigrate as social welfare resources were inadequate to provide for those who were ill or otherwise unable to work.

Likewise few visitors to China report on the availability of medical services for the long-term ill. According to a number of visitors and refugees from China with whom I talked, when serious illness strikes an older person, the individual himself or his family will take it for granted that the person should not apply for extensive medical care. The costs of such care are borne by the commune, and an individual's need for removal to a special medical facility is reviewed by the commune medical staff (Smith 1974:430 and Lin 1974:16). Given the very small surplus which the communes are able to use for this purpose and the shortage of such facilities, the old are reluctant to make demands. Unless they have savings of their own, the elderly are unlikely to receive long-term care from other than their own family members. Indeed, according to one of my informants (Mrs. Wong), during the hard years of the early 1960s even acute care was not provided to the elderly. When her mother-in-law injured her leg in a fall, Mrs. Wong was unable to

locate a doctor who would treat her because they were afraid that they would be criticized for keeping alive "useless eaters of rice." Mrs. Wong's mother-in-law died within a week of receiving her injury.

Similarly Westerners hear of pensioned retirement at the age of 55 for men and 50 for women but do not realize that this applies primarily to workers in the industrial sector and not to the vast majority of the agricultural population, still 80 percent of the population (Kallgren 1968:101 and Liu 1974:76-77). Despite the problems encountered by old people in Hong Kong, most of my informants considered themselves better off than their counterparts in China. They did not have to worry about rationing and shortages in Hong Kong such as they knew of in China. While a number of my informants return to China on annual or biennial visits, few wanted to return to China to live. While some informants saw ways in which China was superior to Hong Kong such as the relative absence of crime and of interpersonal violence, neither of these features was considered sufficient to counterbalance the low standard of living. Thus while the situation for old people in Hong Kong is less than ideal, their own knowledge of the circumstances of their peers in China contrasts sharply with the opinions of many in the West.

What about the role of values in contemporary China? Attacks on the traditional value system did not begin with the establishment of the PRC. As far back as the last decades of the nineteenth century when facing the European challenge, Chinese reformers were already talking about "the need to change in order to preserve." Beginning around 1919, the May Fourth Movement expressing the views of the educated vanguard of youth attacked the power and authority of the

extended family, the basic unit of Chinese social organization. The power of parents to require youth to marry unknown partners for the good of the family was especially decried. But generally speaking this assault on the core values was limited to city and upper-class youth (e.g., Chow 1967).

In the meantime, major social changes were playing havoc with the fabric of Chinese society. According to Levy (1949:305) by late Republican China, the splitting of old people into two distinct categories, parents and others, was already well-advanced.

While the "traditional" family values required that one would support one's own parents, it said nothing of one's obligations to support aged persons unrelated by kinship. Therefore, if an old man's sons do not provide for him, no one else in the society feels responsible for him. Now the cases are becoming more and more common. Local charity cannot handle the burden, and the general members of the community feel no responsibility for an old person unless bound to him by personal ties. No adequate government provision is being made at present, although the problem is fast exceeding the ability of private charity to meet it.

The Communist regime inherited and intensified this chaotic situation with even broader attacks on the tyranny of tradition and faced unanticipated consequences. According to Chen and Chen (1959:176) the neglect of old people, including old parents:

became so serious that the Communists found it necessary to inaugurate a campaign to emphasize respect and support of parents. From October 1956 to the early part of 1957, the Chinese Communist press and periodicals abounded in articles exhorting young people to love and support their parents. The articles censured the younger generation for maltreatment and cruelty toward their parents.

Nevertheless, the assaults on the old values and old forms of social organization have continued. Over the past nearly 30 years there have been several campaigns culminating in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution whose objectives have been the destruction of the old

order politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Free marriage, population control, greater equality between the sexes and the generations: all potentially undermine the traditional organization of family life (e.g., Yang 1953). The communization of land means that parents no longer control their children's access to a means of livelihood. At the same time the power of the lineage has been broken: its lands taken away, its ancestral temples converted to meeting halls and schools. As literacy among the young increases, the gap in knowledge between old and young grows though the old are still called upon to "speak bitterness," to tell of the terrible times before Liberation. Yet despite all this Davis-Friedmann (1977) finds that the strategies of the elderly have changed scarcely at all. How can this be?

In answering this question I draw heavily on conversations with Davis-Friedmann as well as on the material she presents in her 1977 article. Perhaps two factors are of greatest importance: (1) the traditional value of interdependence both between parents and children and among the villagers as a whole has never been attacked, and (2) the economic conditions in China, and in rural China in particular, provide the elderly with opportunities to contribute to household income while at the same time making it impossible for them to go it alone. The majority of able-bodied adults are expected to work on the production teams and brigades which are composed of their co-villagers. The contributions these labor units provide to the commune determine the quantity of grain which the commune assigns to them. While each individual is awarded his share of the harvest on the basis of work-points accrued during the year, the sum of the individual contributions

determines the team's over-all award. Therefore, the teams and brigades are very concerned with individual output. On the other hand, consumer items such as bicycles and radios must be purchased out of individual or household savings. These purchases encourage the pooling of family resources, and the family that stays together has more resources to pool.

When the elderly are finally exempted from working in the fields, they do not quietly retire on pensions, but are deemed the dependents of their sons. They are, however, free to pursue potentially lucrative sidelines such as pig-raising, gathering medicinal herbs, or, most important of all, tending private vegetable plots and selling the produce on the open market. These are all cash sidelines. They may also choose to continue in the work-point tradition by working at other less physically demanding tasks such as in nurseries. A person with sons would find it very difficult to make it on his own because he would be ineligible for communal support. Though the Constitution of the PRC proclaims equality of the sexes in terms of obligations to parents, daughters are rarely held responsible for such support. Thus only old people without sons and of "good" class background, e.g., not former landlords or Nationalist Party officials, are eligible for the "Five Guarantees" of food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and burial which are supposed to be provided locally. However, depending on the size of the surplus available for welfare purposes, a commune sometimes has to redefine its program to the "Four" or even "Three Guarantees." Clearly it is best to remain with the family. Those without families are frequently encouraged to emigrate.

The situation of the elderly in the cities is somewhat different. On the one hand if employed in a large-scale state enterprise, they are entitled to some form of pension when they retire. On the other hand there are fewer opportunities to engage in lucrative sidelines. Although the kind of economic interdependence which binds a village together is lacking in the city, there are two circumstances which serve to bind urban neighborhoods together which did not exist in the pre-modern Chinese city and which do not exist in Hong Kong today (Salaff 1971). First, the Chinese government does not encourage residential mobility. In-migration from the countryside is officially, if not always successfully, opposed, and even migration within the city is restricted. Secondly, the neighborhood is the unit responsible for the adjudication of disputes and the determination of eligibility for welfare services. The relative stability of the neighborhoods plus their increased involvement in the lives of the residents provide a greater sense of community than existed under previous regimes.

But are old people without families content to rely on the bare subsistence provisions of the "Five Guarantees"? Generally they are not; women, in particular, attempt to make use of the traditional strategy of fictive kinship by recruiting allies from among the "sent down youth." Since the late 1960s, the Chinese government has been actively re-settling ("sending down") urban youth in the countryside. Ostensibly this practice enriches the villages by providing them with higher skilled labor than is locally available, but it also removes a potential source of instability from the cities which, in fact, are unable to absorb all of their middle school graduates (Chen 1972). In the villages, then,

these youths are the functional equivalent of orphans and as such are suitable partners for childless old people. Unfortunately, the duration of these alliances is unpredictable as most "sent down youth" are anxious to return to the cities. While some have accepted and, indeed, even volunteered for a lifetime of service in the countryside, others hope to be recalled after a three or four year tour of duty. A decision by the government to push for industrial development would provide them the necessary opportunities to return to work in the cities.

Urban old people without families also utilize fictive kin ties, but they have additional resources as well: neighbors and institutional facilities. The "costs" to neighbors of casual attention to the elderly are not as great as in the village. First, since urban people have fewer opportunities for cash sidelines, they are giving up less when they spend time tending a sick neighbor. Secondly, the greater affluence of the cities means more extensive "back up" services such as nursing homes, hospitals, and cadres specializing in welfare work. Thus, neighbors need not fear being locked in to providing care should a temporary illness turn into a long-term one.

In summary, although many of the values of traditional China, such as respect for the past and the ideology of the patrilineage, have been greatly weakened, the underlying value of greatest importance to the elderly, that of interdependence, has not only not been attacked but has been expanded to the team and brigade levels as well as to the entire society. Elderly family members benefit from their eligibility to make special contributions to their households, and the kinless elderly through their eligibility for welfare services organized by the commune and neighborhood committee benefit from the greater consciousness of the

need to "serve the people." In contemporary China with its economy still operating at a level very close to subsistence, the satisfying of the material needs of life is generally considered ample grounds for contentment in old age.

3. Hong Kong

The British Crown Colony of Hong Kong contains over 4.5 million people and lies 90 miles southeast of Canton, the largest city in the adjoining Chinese province of Kwangtung. The Chinese imperial government ceded parts of Hong Kong to the British government in the middle of the nineteenth century following military action by British soldiers and merchants. The remaining predominantly rural and suburban parts of Hong Kong, known as the New Territories, were leased from China in 1898. This lease is due to expire in 1997.

The present population of Hong Kong is nearly 99 percent Chinese. Despite the fact that much of Hong Kong has been under British control for over 130 years, the Chinese were left to their own devices in matters of customs and social welfare. The British preferred to concentrate on economic matters and, except for preserving public order, were little concerned with matters internal to the Chinese community until after the Second World War. In the period between 1945 and the early 1950s, the government of Hong Kong gradually assumed greater responsibility for social welfare and housing. This reorientation was a direct consequence of the civil war then raging in China from which hundreds of thousands of refugees fled and was accompanied by a shift in Hong Kong's economic role from that of a commercial to a manufacturing center.

In the Introduction, I defined the criteria of modernization I would be using in this study. On the basis of these criteria: settlement pattern, the economy, literacy rates, and demographic characteristics, Hong Kong is clearly a modernized society. Looking at the settlement pattern first, we see that the area of Hong Kong is approximately 400 square miles consisting of numerous islands, including Hong Kong Island, as well as a large portion of the mainland. The rugged nature of much of the terrain leaves only 20 percent of the land area suitable for agriculture or occupation. Podmore (1971:22) stated that about 80 percent of the population lived in the metropolitan area--three million people crowded into 20 square miles. This has resulted in some phenomenal population densities. According to the Hong Kong Population and Housing Census: 1971 Main Report (1972:28), hereinafter referred to as the Census, the three most densely populated districts on Hong Kong Island were: Wan Chai with 293,283 persons per square mile; Sheung Wan with 254,814, and Western with 248,675. In Kowloon, however, these figures were easily exceeded by Mong Kok with 400,612 persons per square mile and Yau Ma Tei with 336,222 persons per square mile.

Most of these districts are vertically zoned with commercial and industrial establishments on the lower floors and residences on the upper. The noise can be deafening. According to an article in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin by Singh (Jan. 25, 1978), Dr. Norman Ko, a senior lecturer in mechanical engineering at Hong Kong University, and his students measured noise levels at 26 sites in the urban area and found that Hong Kong averaged 75 decibels, compared with an average of 57 in Tokyo, 62 in London, and 66 in New York. The Report on the Study of the

Social Service Needs of the Elderly in Hong Kong (1977:36) found that the elderly perceive noise (30.3 percent of respondents) as the major environmental problem, and noise from machines, planes, and cars was cited twice as often as noise from neighbors. The comparable figures for some of the other major environmental problems are: dirty environment--22.6 percent; size of accommodation--15.5 percent; crime--13 percent; lack of basic facilities--8.5 percent; and transportation difficulties--5.8 percent. The noise and the densities leave no doubt that Hong Kong has an urban settlement pattern.

Another indicator of modernization is the distribution of the labor force, specifically the relative proportions of workers engaged in primary, secondary, or tertiary economic activities. According to Podmore (1971:22) only five percent of the employed population are in the primary industries of agriculture and fishing. Manufacturing employs 40 percent; government and service occupations, 22 percent, and commerce, 16 percent. This distribution is a long way from the traditional village economy.

Literacy rates as measured by educational attainment have increased dramatically over the past decade and a half. For example, according to the Census (p. 64), in 1961, 83 percent of the children aged 6-11 were attending schools, but this figure increased to 95 percent in 1971. Of those aged 12-16, 80 percent of the males and 69 percent of the females were still in school. Podmore (1971:43) reported that in 1968 there were 4,700 students enrolled in universities. By 1971, the Census (1972:69) reported 8,104 such students. In either case there are not enough university openings to meet the demand in Hong Kong, and many

students are forced to go abroad for higher education. There are several hundred Hong Kong students at the University of Hawaii, a group sufficiently large to have its own student organization. Most old people, however, lag way behind their children and grandchildren in educational attainment. According to 1971 Census data as presented in Services for the Elderly (1973:5), and hereinafter referred to as the Working Party Report, 57 percent of those aged 60 or more had received no formal schooling, and 90 percent had never reached the level of secondary school.

Recent demographic changes in Hong Kong also reflect its increasing modernity, and the population pyramid shows the effects of reduced birth rates and reduced mortality. The Census (1972:13-14) reveals that between 1961 and 1971, the proportion of children aged 0-7 dropped from 24.5 percent of the population to 17.1 percent. The overall proportion of young people aged less than 15 fell from 40.8 percent to 35.8 percent. Data from the 1976 By-Census as reported in Services for the Elderly (1977:2), and hereinafter referred to as the Green Paper, reveal that the proportion of persons aged 60 or more rose from 4.9 percent in 1961 to 7.4 percent in 1971 and to 9 percent in 1976. Between 1961 and 1976 the total population increased by 41 percent, but the elderly population increased by 163 percent. According to the four indices of modernization: urban settlement, an industrial economy, high rates of literacy, and low mortality, Hong Kong clearly emerges as a "modernized" society.

The extent to which this modernization has been accompanied by westernization, the adoption of the value system associated with the West, has been investigated by Agassi and Jarvie (1969) and Shively and Shively (1972). As Agassi and Jarvie point out, the position of Chinese

intellectuals has long been that China and the Chinese should take from the West the tools required to become a modern nation but should remain essentially Chinese in matters ideological. How possible such a selection process is, especially now in Hong Kong, is the theme of their paper.

We hold that there are at least two facets to westernization: ideological and sociological. The west is a philosophy, a way of life, as well as a bundle of social institutions, customs, and cultural objects. We hold that while the west exports both, it is the ideology which is more important and coherent; that there is more homogeneity in fundamental outlook between the countries of the west than there is in social organization or technology (1969:129)

There are we suppose, senses in which Hong Kong Chinese can retain their identity and yet westernize. But in no sense can that in Chinese culture which clashes with the foundations of the west be blended with even the superficial west. On such basic issues there is only a yes/no choice. Perhaps the western ideology can be incorporated in Chinese institutions; what cannot be done is to take western institutions within a framework of Chinese ideology. That is to say such behavior sets up intolerable tensions. This is the prime conclusion of our empirical study (1969:162).

This pessimistic assessment is shared by the Shivelys whose own study utilizes two conceptual models--Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's value-orientation schema and Talcott Parsons' pattern variable schema--to determine the nature of value changes in Hong Kong. Using the value-orientations model, they describe traditional Chinese society:

. . . as one which considers human nature as a mixture of good and evil. It advocates harmonious living within nature and within society. It is oriented to the state of "being" rather than "doing," focusses its gaze upon the past and stresses the lineality of interpersonal relationships (1972:38).

In terms of the pattern variable model, Parsons himself suggested that traditional Chinese society was organized along particularistic-achievement values.

In order to measure contemporary values, the Shivelys drew a representative sample of 1,045 people from the urban area of Hong Kong known as Kwun Tong. The sample was composed of approximately one-third males and two-thirds females with a median age of 36.5 years. On the average the last school grade completed was Primary Four. Shively and Shively presented the respondents with six statements considered representative of traditional Chinese values. The extent to which the respondent agreed or disagreed with each statement was graded from 5 to 0 (from greatest agreement to greatest disagreement) yielding possible total scores of 30 to 0. The six testing statements were:

- (1) Young men must respect older people.
- (2) The husband is to be the head of the household and his wife must be obedient to him.
- (3) The more children and grandchildren one has, the better it is.
- (4) A woman should not lose her virginity before marriage.
- (5) Good men will receive good rewards, while bad men will receive bad awards.
- (6) It is important to select a "lucky" day for one's wedding.

The scores were then scaled, and the respondents were divided into high scorers designated "traditionalists," low scorers designated "deviates," and middle scorers designated the "middle" group.

Shively and Shively found that neither the sex of the respondent nor his income seemed to bear any relationship to his value-orientations. However, both the age of the respondent and his exposure to formal schooling reflected on the values held; the younger the respondent and the more formal education he possessed, the more likely he was to

deviate from traditional values. The two groups, "traditionals" and "deviates," were also examined to see whether they differed significantly in their responses to 13 other questionnaire items used to measure attachment to traditional values. They found that:

the deviations are greatest for the values concerned with interpersonal relationships--the hallmark of the traditional Chinese value system. The extremely high values for Chi-square for the items of propagation, ancestor worship, filial piety, and relatives indicate that lineality orientation which ranked first in the interpersonal relationships in China for over two thousand years is losing its dominance (1972:24).

"Deviates" were also found to exhibit greater feelings of potential power over the course of their lives--they tended to view themselves as "doers." The Shivelys concluded that:

In the light of the two theoretical models, and the findings, it seems clear that the ordering of value-orientation specific to traditional Chinese culture is undergoing change. The interpersonal relationships dominant in traditional society which stress the family connections in the present and through the generations of its history are gradually becoming less paramount. It would seem safe to conclude that they are being replaced by individualism, which their feelings of potency would seem to indicate (1972:39).

It is important to point out, however, that these findings represent a trend rather than an already established fact, i.e., those labelled "deviates" by the Shivelys still were in basic agreement with the six testing statements as can be seen by their median score of 19 out of a possible score of 30. Even with this cautionary remark, it is still true that a re-orientation of values seems to be taking place and that it is associated with education more than with any other single factor. The potential for value conflict between the old and the young in Hong Kong is therefore quite high.

On the basis of the eight generalizations of Cowgill and Holmes concerning the relationship between modernization and the status of the aged (see Chapter I), the prospects for those aging in Hong Kong are not very favorable. Nearly every feature which Cowgill and Holmes found associated with low status of the elderly is present in Hong Kong.

- (1) The elderly are a large and increasing proportion of the population. Now numbering 398,180, their proportion of the population has more than doubled in the past 15 years.
- (2) In the past 25 years, social change in Hong Kong has been rapid and pervasive. The labor force has become increasingly industrial; the population has grown from about 600,000 to 4.5 million, and radio and television have entered nearly every home.
- (3) The constant clearing and redeveloping of already occupied sites uproots thousands every year. Thousands more are resettled in public housing estates frequently far removed from their old neighborhoods, and this trend will continue as more housing estates are planned for the New Territories to lessen the density of the urban areas.
- (4) There are tremendous differences in the literacy rates by age in Hong Kong making it difficult for the elderly to claim a monopoly on knowledge. Worse yet, the knowledge they do control--of agriculture, ritual, and festival--is no longer sought in urban Hong Kong.
- (5) Sons and daughters disperse upon marriage, and couples begin their lives together as nuclear families adding their elderly parents only later in time of need.
- (6) The aged do not appear to be active in community affairs. When they retire, they generally retreat to their families and friends and do not participate in formal organizations.
- (7) Hong Kong is a city of migrants who left their ancestral temples and their patrilineages in China. Most elderly people are the first generation of their families to be buried in Hong Kong, away from their ancestors.
- (8) No generalized ethic of serving the people has replaced the declining ethic of the extended family. The Shivelys' work indicates an increase in the value of individualism with concomitant insecurity for the aged.

This grim analysis seems to be overwhelmingly confirmed by what one reads in the newspapers. During my nearly 20 months in Hong Kong I clipped all the articles I could find appearing in the two major English language dailies which mentioned elderly people in any way, e.g., as perpetrators of crime, as victims of traffic accidents, as recipients of public assistance, or as subjects of letters to the editor. This amounted to a total of 75 articles and letters. Of these 46.3 percent portrayed the elderly as victims, as people disoriented, or as lost in anti-social activities with such pathetic headlines as "Elderly caught in vicious circle of ill health," "Mother's lonely wharf vigil," "The lonely world of abandoned parents," and "Old opium smokers need care too." Another 37.4 percent of the articles presented the elderly as the needful recipients of social services with such headlines as "More cash for Hong Kong's needy and disabled," "Services for old people need drastic expansion," "Elderly need help at home," "Youths entertain elderly," and "Treat for Lam Tin old folks." Another eight percent were relatively neutral articles stating for example how many people were receiving the Infirmary Allowance.

Out of the 75 articles only four (5.3 percent) presented a positive image of old people. Reporting on a fund-raising walk, a January 1976 article in the Hong Kong Standard (HKS) included a photograph of an old woman nearing the finish line with the caption "They don't make grannies like they used to, and just to prove the point this one strides to the finish after her fourteen-mile walk." An April 1976 article in the South China Morning Post (SCMP) described a class in literacy being conducted in a hostel for the aged and reported that the elderly were

diligent and capable students who "should put many lazy schoolchildren to shame." A May 1976 article in the HKS told of spiritual healer Mr. Lo who, at the age of 82, has had many medical/spiritual successes with his patients. He is a wise old man at peace with himself. Finally, an August 1976 article in the SCMP focussed on 80-year-old Mr. Wong, the oldest member of the Wong clan residing in a tiny walled village in the New Territories. The writer of the article found the village idyllic and remarked that Mr. Wong "seemed an unusual combination of the best of Chinese traditional values, with a healthy acceptance of the inevitability of change."

As I shall attempt to demonstrate in the remaining chapters of this dissertation, this essentially negative picture is in fact a misleading portrayal of the actual circumstances of the elderly, and ironically it is the attempts of those who wish to improve the circumstances of the needy minority which are most responsible for the creation of the misleading stereotype. In the United States, organizations of the elderly such as the Gray Panthers are now taking an active role in promoting a more balanced picture of the older population (Michaelson 1977), but in Hong Kong this is not yet the case for one major reason. The negative is emphasized by younger advocates who want to stir the government to action. While this may seem a laudable aim, it has the unintended consequence of frightening most people.

In Hong Kong it is not possible to "write a letter to a Congressman" in an effort to influence government policies. There is a very restricted franchise in Hong Kong, and elections are held only for positions on the Urban Council which presides over such matters as

garbage collection, street cleaning, and cultural events (an interesting combination of activities!). The democratic equivalent of a letter to a Congressman in Hong Kong is a letter to the editor of one of the major English language dailies, the SCMP or the HKS. Thus one sees letters complaining of long lines at public clinics, of inadequate attention to patients in government-assisted hospitals, or of abuses of power by the police or housing officials. Such letters are usually answered publicly within a few days by an official spokesman for the offending department in which policies are patiently reviewed and the writer is informed that his problem is being investigated. Therefore, people hoping to influence the government on behalf of the elderly are naturally inclined to concentrate on tales of woe.

Perhaps another reason for the media emphasis on the neglected elderly is the belief that strong cultural prejudices make it difficult for those in power to understand that more than an emphasis on filial piety is required to meet the needs of some elderly. In the case of the monied elite, old people are less likely to be perceived as problems for several reasons: (1) residences are large enough to allow for privacy should there be friction between the generations, (2) sick parents are sent to private hospitals and are returned to their homes to be cared for by private servants, and (3) the nature of the educational gap is different, i.e., the elderly elite themselves are often graduates of western-style colleges. Thus the Chinese elite are shielded from the knowledge that for those lacking financial resources old people can pose considerable difficulties.

Economic resources clearly affect the style of life old people can follow. According to the Working Party Report (1973:6), 20 percent of Hong Kong's old people (some 60,000 people) were members of poor households, i.e., households having a per capita income of less than \$100 HK a month. According to the Annual Departmental Report (1973:86) of the Department of Social Welfare, during the fiscal year 1972-73 "old age" cases made up 52.1 percent of all public assistance cases. A total of 19,283 cases were dealt with by this division of the Department. Therefore, although 60,000 old people were considered members of poor households in 1971, only 10,043 were receiving public assistance in 1972-73. According to a letter I received from the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the number of "old age" cases rose to 29,747 by the end of 1976, and the monthly rate of public assistance was \$180 HK for an individual.

In the Green Paper (1977:6) the Social Services Branch of the Government Secretariat proposed that a special Old Age Supplement be introduced into the public assistance scheme, and that the qualifying age for the Infirmity Allowance (to be renamed the Old Age Allowance) be lowered from 75 to 70 years of age. At present all Hong Kong residents regardless of income who are 75 years of age or older are eligible for the Infirmity Allowance, a monthly grant based on 50 percent of the public assistance payment, i.e., \$90 HK. The grant was intended to relieve families of any extra burdens an old person might cause. The sum constitutes pocket money only; it does not make an old person self-sufficient financially. According to the Green Paper (1977:6) 73 percent of the eligible population was receiving the grant as of March 1977. The Secretariat also stated (1977:2) that only 1.4 percent of all

the elderly had independent means of support and that, therefore, the elderly continue to work as long as they are able. They retire only when they can no longer find suitable work or when other family members are able to support them.

The Green Paper (1977:2) reported that 60 percent of the males and 27 percent of the females aged 60 to 64 were still employed and that 35 percent of the males and 13 percent of the females aged 65 or more were still employed. Of these working people, 21 percent worked 15 to 44 hours a week, and 79 percent worked more than 44 hours. Three-quarters of the working elderly earned less than \$800 HK a month though this figure includes those who worked part-time.

As will be seen from the examples presented below, old people in Hong Kong differ tremendously in the ways they pass their time. Those who are employed frequently want nothing more than to rest when they return home from work, e.g., Mrs. Wong. Others, freed from the necessity of work or unable to work, are forced back on their own resources to utilize their time satisfactorily. With his many years of experience in formal organizations and his expansive personality, Mr. Go could easily be occupied every hour of every day. Mrs. Ngai and Mrs. Ip find comfort and security in their gods and their families.

At the time of my first interviews in 1974, a significant minority of my elderly informants--21 of 99--were still members of the work force. Of these, 11 were employed full-time; six, part-time, and four were involved in piecework in their homes. At the time of the second set of interviews in 1976, a similar number--20 of 74--were employed with the following distribution: six, full-time; 10 part-time, and four in piecework in their homes. What these figures conceal, however, is

that there has actually been considerable change of personnel. For example, I was able to follow up only 16 of the original 21 workers, and of these only nine were involved in the same job as a year and a half earlier. The other seven had experienced withdrawal from the labor force (4), change of location (2), or a reduction in hours (1). Another eight who had not been employed at the time of the first interview were employed at the time of the second. (And one man though recorded as unemployed at the times of both interviews had, in fact, held a job for several months between the interviews.) Therefore, over the course of the two years of interviewing, 30 of my 99 informants had some involvement in the labor force. Even these figures depress the actual extent of the employment of older people as a number of potential informants declined to be interviewed because of their jobs. These figures are not significantly different from those of the Working Party Report (1973:6) which found 31 percent of older people to be employed. According to the 1973 Report:

While the general response from members of the public has indicated that the elderly are interested in finding suitable work, this has not been followed through in pressure on the employment services provided by the Labour Department and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. This may be due to the fact that the elderly prefer to find employment through relatives or other personal contacts, rather than through an employment agency; or it may be because the elderly do not consider making use of the services of the Labour Department of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. But taking into account the lack of pressure, and the Labour Department's view that many suitable job vacancies exist for the aged (e.g., vacancies for restaurant workers and packers), it is difficult to regard the creation of special employment facilities for the aged as a matter of priority. This is the more so in view of the employment needs of other groups, such as former mental patients, discharged prisoners and former drug addicts, whose requirements in this respect we should regard as more pressing. (1973:31-32)

It is not clear to what extent this status quo attitude of the Working Party affected employment opportunities for the elderly, but it is interesting to note that only a few years later the Social Service Needs Study (1977:47) reported only 25 percent to be employed. Another 15 percent of the elderly not working full-time expressed interest in employment. The major reasons given for working were to contribute to family income (37 percent), to be self-reliant (36 percent), and to have something to do (16 percent).

The elderly are concentrated in traditional sectors of the economy. The 1977 Report (p. 47) found that of those old people currently employed 29.5 percent were unskilled workers, 23 percent service personnel, and 22 percent in the category of "technician"--only 2.5 percent were "professional." When I asked my own informants the nature of their present or most recent job, I found that the largest employment category for women was domestic servant (36 percent) and for men, unskilled laborer (39 percent). Unskilled labor ranked second among women at 26 percent. Many of my informants were clearly operating on the fringes of the working world, filling niches that no one else would fill or that no one else perceived. One 85 year old woman (my oldest full-time employed informant) served as a domestic servant in the household of a paralyzed woman. In addition to caring for the physical needs of the employer, she also had to do cooking, washing, and cleaning for the woman's husband and son. She was, however, so weak herself that she could scarcely carry out these tasks and received notice that as of the 1976 Lunar New Year, she would not be employed any longer. Another 79 year old man had worked as a casual laborer up until about four years

earlier. Then he shifted to collecting used cardboard and wooden boxes which he sold for scrap. This was not particularly lucrative, so he eventually went back to casual employment, obtaining a day job several times a month. Another 78 year old man hawked toys in the morning and rented out his room for gambling (mah jong) in the afternoon! All three of these people were also Infirmity Allowance recipients, and the two men received assistance from other family members.

Other informants worked only when it was necessary or when convenient opportunities presented themselves. One old woman took up piecework for the denim industry when she moved to a more spacious and expensive unit in public housing. Another ceased doing similar piecework because her relocation had taken her away from the metal works factory she had previously worked for. One 65 year old woman who had retired as a fruit hawker more than ten years ago continued to make "rice cakes" which she sold every ten days to a restaurant. The general absence of pension schemes and the low levels of public assistance require those with no supportive kin to continue working as long as possible.

Compulsory retirement and pensions are primarily characteristic of the government and large firms. There are few pension schemes in Hong Kong for those employed by small scale enterprises though a long-term worker may receive a lump-sum payment when he retires at an unspecified age. There is no social security system such as in the United States, and for those only temporarily out of work, there is also no unemployment compensation. The only source of guaranteed income is the Infirmity Allowance at the age of 75. These fundamental economic facts make it quite difficult for an old person to live comfortably on his own. Unlike

the PRC, Hong Kong does not restrict eligibility for public assistance to old people without sons, but a parent living with a son is not independently eligible for welfare. Social workers have told me that if a parent living alone applies for public assistance, the Social Welfare Department tries to encourage the non-resident sons to contribute whatever they are able. The Department does not put as much effort into encouraging non-resident daughters to contribute. But an application from a parent with descendants in Hong Kong is an infrequent occurrence. Most elderly parents still feel they have no choice but to rely on their children, and their children still feel they must provide them with support.

4. Summary

Traditional China was characterized by a value consensus which emphasized the virtue of filial piety and the obligations associated with personal relationships. In the village the material circumstances of life fostered intergenerational reciprocity within the family and interdependence among villagers. In the city though circumstances were somewhat different, the fundamental ethic of interpersonal relations still provided a measure of protection for old people. In this situation of "stable congruence," old people knew that they could rely upon sons, daughters and sons-in-law, nephews, fictive kin, work associates, neighbors, and community organizations in approximately that order. Thus, early in life all Chinese learned the significance of family and kin and knew that in their absence, they would have to make conscious efforts to develop alternative interpersonal ties to assure protection in old age.

The PRC, on the other hand, is in a state of "dynamic incongruence." Under a highly committed leadership, a new set of values has been promulgated. These values, which attempt to broaden the individual's social conscience beyond the lineage and the village to the "people," have been accompanied by new forms of social organization: communes, production brigades, and work teams with the twin goals of increasing production and raising the standard of living of the population as a whole. In the meantime, however, the fact that agricultural surpluses are being diverted to generate resources for industrialization means that the communes do not have sufficient surpluses to provide extensive social services. Consequently the family remains--and is officially required to remain--the chief provider of services to its own aged members. Old people for their part attempt to contribute to the household so long as they are able. Those old people lacking male descendants are generally eligible for a subsistence level of security through the commune-administered "Five Guarantees." Given the limited nature of the "Guarantees," many old people without families attempt to develop interpersonal ties, e.g., with neighbors or "sent-down" youth, in the hope of increasing their options for support.

Contemporary Hong Kong, in its present condition of "static incongruence," provides a problematic setting for those planning for their later years. The increasing influence of Western values of self-reliance and self-fulfillment undermine the traditional value of interdependence, but, by and large, the present generation of old people do not have the financial resources to rely upon themselves. Given the relative absence of pension schemes and of social security and the low levels of public

assistance, old people have no choice but to rely on others. But the choice of which others must be made under conditions of pervasive uncertainty.

In less than 20 years, the lease under which the British administer Hong Kong will expire. Will the PRC then take over the Colony? If so, what will be the consequences? Should the younger generation emigrate while they still have the chance? Will the Hong Kong Government develop an adequate social security scheme given its uncertain tenure? Will more firms adopt pension schemes and will employment conditions stabilize so that more workers will become eligible for them? Or will firms take their money and flee the Colony leaving unemployment in their wake?

In an attempt to demonstrate how some old people are meeting the problems of security under such unpredictable circumstances, the next chapter introduces two elderly Chinese, Mr. Go and Mrs. Wong, who, while not typical in any statistical sense, do reveal through their life histories and daily activities the experiences and strategies of many other old people in Hong Kong.

CHAPTER III

DAILY LIFE

1. Mr. Go

At just past six in the morning Mr. Go rolled over on his wooden bed and glanced through the bars of his window. The sky was overcast for the seventh straight day. He would have to carry his umbrella with him on the mini-bus ride to the market town in the New Territories where he meditated every morning. Mr. Go shrugged his shoulders in resignation. Twice this summer the mini-bus driver had called to his attention the forgotten umbrella. Although no one had yet had the temerity to point out that he was becoming increasingly forgetful, Mr. Go himself was painfully aware of the problem. Several times he had paused in his conversations in the tea house to discover that he could not recall what he had just said, but his table-mates had politely overlooked his stumbling. Fortunately, a distinguished gentleman of 82 was still given respect in his circles though he knew that such circles were becoming fewer in number.

Becoming aware of someone moving about in the dining room, Mr. Go realized that his daughter-in-law was preparing formula for his newest grandson. Though she was in most respects an excellent and obedient daughter-in-law, she had not accepted Mr. Go's recommendation that she breast-feed the baby. Mr. Go was not so much concerned with the matter of nourishment; rather, he believed that nursing the baby would help to alleviate his daughter-in-law's unfortunate handicap. She did not have complete control of the movement of her limbs, and while she got about

with no serious difficulty, her movements were not at all graceful. Mr. Go believed that nursing the baby would release the blocked air (hei) within her body which was probably responsible for her disability. He had also suggested that she receive hei gung treatment, a therapeutic technique performed by Taoist practitioners, which could enhance the flow of air through the body. However, these methods did not appeal to her.

Mr. Go's youngest son, a driving teacher, had delayed his marriage until well into his thirties. Previously he had lived in this apartment for several years with his mother while his father, Mr. Go, had lived with the fourth son. When the fourth son and his family emigrated to London to enter the restaurant business, Mr. Go had moved in with his wife and youngest son. Mr. Go's wife died seven years before at the age of 75, and father and son had been left to do all the household chores. For Mr. Go the greatest restriction imposed by his wife's death had been on his freedom to come and go. Fear of crime, in particular of burglary and robbery, was widespread in Hong Kong. Most buildings not only had barred windows, but also had heavy barred doors at the entry to the building and at every individual apartment as well. Mr. Go had had to assume his wife's role as a "door-watcher" within the apartment and found his normally active life restricted. Two years earlier his son had married, and the new daughter-in-law had taken over the household responsibilities, thus liberating Mr. Go.

Her arrival, however, had put additional strain on the family resources, and at about the time of the marriage, Mr. Go and his son decided to rent out one of their rooms. Previously Mr. Go had had his

own bedroom as well as a small room which he used as a studio to teach painting. His students had gradually become fewer and fewer, and Mr. Go finally ceased to take on new students as his eyes were failing. His bedroom and studio had been merged, and paintings and scrolls were lodged here and there among his books leading the untrained eye to see nothing but chaos. Some of his favorite works were still displayed in the living-dining area.

Co-tenant relationships in Hong Kong were a very delicate matter, and it was difficult to know in advance whether one had chosen appropriate co-tenants. They had rented the room to a young couple in their twenties, and Mr. Go felt that they were working out satisfactorily. They seemed to acknowledge that they had rented only the bedroom and use rights to the kitchen and bathroom. They had not spilled over into the living-dining area, and they did not bring people around to visit. At one time Mr. Go and his son had considered buying this apartment outright, but the asking price of \$80,000 HK (\$5 HK = \$1 US) had been too high. Instead they had decided to continue paying the rent of more than \$500 HK a month and to save up enough money to buy a house in the rural market town where they had lived when they first came to Hong Kong. Unfortunately now even market town properties were quite expensive, and it looked as though they would probably stay where they were.

Smoothing the wrinkles from his traditionally-cut suit, Mr. Go stepped into the dining area. He nodded a "no" to his daughter-in-law when she offered him some of the cereal she had prepared for the baby and reached instead for the large thermos on top of the refrigerator. He poured himself a glass of the dark tea. Though all of the adults in

the family drank this tea, only Mr. Go drank it full strength. In looking at the tea, one could not discern anything special about it, but this was no ordinary tea, for the tea leaves had undergone a special rite at the Taoist association's hall in the market town. On the feast day of one of the Taoist gods, they had been placed in the worshipping area while believers recited the scriptures. The god had then changed the leaves into a medicine effective against many ailments such as flu, fever, or stomach ache. One man, the father of four mute children, had obtained some of the tea from the association, and after drinking the tea, all the children had regained the power of speech.

Mr. Go did not drink the tea in the expectation of similar miracles. For him it was simply a necessary daily preventive, and it certainly seemed to work. He had not been ill in over ten years. Of course he took good care of himself otherwise too. He tried to do everything in moderation because he knew that excess damages one's health. When he ate, he never stuffed himself. When he had a problem, he remained optimistic. He always tried to laugh and talk pleasantly to others. Perhaps because of this his company was often sought.

In the old days as a lawyer in Canton, he had received many invitations to restaurant parties, and his friends had always sought his advice when seeking concubines. Mr. Go himself had never taken a concubine into his household, for he had promised his wife he would not. She had provided him with 15 children including seven sons so he could not complain. His wife had also been very skillful socially. Mr. Go had encouraged her to play mah jong with the wives of other prominent men, and through her, he had come to a greater understanding of these

men. But he had never really liked the gambling aspect of mah jong, and he rarely played it himself. Nor did he permit his daughter-in-law to play it.

His tea drunk, Mr. Go picked up his umbrella, waved it playfully at the baby, and headed for the elevator. Up until the past year or so, his normal routine had been to head for the Mong Kok railroad station to catch a train for the New Territories. Then he would stop in the market town for tea before proceeding to the Taoist hall for meditation. One morning while on his way to the station, he had encountered a robber, and though he had successfully resisted the man, he now feared that the robber might recognize him and perhaps try again. So he had changed his route. He now ate breakfast in a restaurant near his home and then caught a mini-bus out to the New Territories.

This morning the restaurant was crowded, and he found himself sharing a table with several strangers. Unable to strike up a conversation with any of them, he ordered two dishes of the meat-stuffed pastries he liked so much and a pot of tea. Although he had retired some 16 years before from a teaching post and had not received a pension of any kind, Mr. Go did not lack funds. While he was not a rich man, he did receive money from his children and his grandchildren. These gifts were not received on any regular basis, but they were sufficiently frequent that nearly any month could find him at a table waving a one hundred dollar bill and insisting on paying for the meals of several guests. He also received the Infirmity Allowance, the \$90 HK a month grant to all people over 75. When the Infirmity Allowance program had first been announced three years earlier, Mr. Go had not applied for it,

but after a couple of years and discussions with his friends, he came to feel that he was entitled to it. After all, he had paid taxes. In any case he could use the money to do good by passing it on to some person in greater need than himself.

When he descended to the street, it was raining quite hard. Bracing his umbrella, he raised one arm as a halt signal to the oncoming traffic as he stepped into the crosswalk. Mr. Go saw no traffic coming, but his poor vision made it impossible to be sure so he raised his arm just in case. Struggling against the wind, he reached the corner just in time to catch a passing mini-bus. Most people his age avoided the mini-buses as it was sometimes difficult to know exactly where a given bus was going. They had no fixed stops, but suddenly jammed on the brakes whenever a passenger yelled that he wished to get off or when someone on the side of the road flagged the bus down. Flagging the bus down meant having been able to read the destination card in the front window. Since many of the elderly were illiterate or suffering from poor vision or both, it was not surprising that they were infrequently seen on mini-buses. Mr. Go, however, had become a familiar passenger to the drivers who plied the route to the New Territories long before his vision began to fail.

At this hour of the morning few passengers traveled in Mr. Go's direction. The drivers were anxious to get to the New Territories as quickly as possible because the bulk of their passengers were there waiting to be brought to the industrial and commercial centers of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. The mini-bus rapidly ascended Taipo Road and within just a few minutes had left congested Kowloon behind and entered the peaceful forests of the New Territories. Mr. Go particularly

enjoyed the ride past the reservoir because there was usually a good chance of observing Hong Kong's only troop of wild monkeys along the roadside. Today, however, the rain kept them hidden away. The bus continued down the hillside and through the town that was rapidly becoming an extension of the urban area on the other side of the mountain. Mr. Go shuddered. It was inevitable and necessary he knew, but he was glad that the suburban sprawl had not yet engulfed the market town which had been his home when he first came to Hong Kong.

Mr. Go and his family had left Canton in 1938. He had watched the approach of the Japanese from north China with trepidation and finally decided to move some of his assets and his family to the safety of British Hong Kong. He had not expected the Japanese to move to Hong Kong also. During the war, the Japanese had appointed him principal of a secondary school in the town, and he had ever since been addressed as Go Louhsi, Teacher Go, by the townsfolk. After the war he had not returned to China for any extended stay. As a former official under the Nationalists and a landowner in the Canton region, he knew that he would have been a target of the Communists. It still amazed and hurt him that one of his daughters had remained in China and become a Communist. During land reform, his family had lost all its property, so they had no choice but to make their lives in Hong Kong. Two of his daughters continued to live in the region of the market town, and Mr. Go dropped in on them whenever he wished on his way to or from the Taoist hall.

The hall had originally been established in a district capital near Canton, but some 50 years earlier had moved to the present New Territories site. In its early years in Hong Kong, it had owned 100,000 square feet

of land, but it had since sold some of it. On the remaining land, the Taoists rented out apartments and also kept one of the buildings as a hostel for female Taoists. Plans were already underway to erect a twelve-story apartment building to provide additional revenues for the activities of the hall. Mr. Go was especially proud of his participation in the Taoist organization. He had always believed that one of man's most important duties was to promote harmony. In his days as a lawyer, he had sought to achieve this aim by resolving disputes. As a teacher, he had attempted to inculcate this idea in his students, and it was a guiding principle of his own behavior in everything from health practices to social intercourse. Now that he was retired and had time to devote to religious and charitable activities, the association had come to claim his major allegiance. Though he tended to explain his participation in abstract principles, he obviously enjoyed the companionship and respect which he continued to receive from his fellow members.

There were numerous other Taoist associations in Hong Kong. Perhaps the most famous one of all belonged to the temple at Wong Tai Sin to which thousands of people went during the New Year festival to learn their fortunes for the coming year. The members of these associations paid frequent visits to each other's halls and participated in each other's activities. Mr. Go's hall probably had a regular membership of about 400, but few were as active on as regular a basis as Mr. Go who came to the hall every morning. While a typical morning found 20 or 30 worshippers visiting the hall, a special occasion could draw well over one thousand. On the recent birthday of the association's special deity, a vegetarian feast seating more than one hundred tables had been served.

At the same time, the organization had raised from among its own membership the sum of \$12,000 HK which was donated to the Red Cross to help those in need in other countries.

Not that the Taoists were not concerned with charity in Hong Kong. The association attempted to meet a variety of needs, and the services with which Mr. Go was most involved were medical in nature. Once a week he practiced hei gung treatment in a Taoist hall in Kowloon. Usually he tried to teach female Taoists the proper techniques of the art because with so many women patients, it was more appropriate for women to touch other women. Actually curing by hei gung was not something that could be acquired simply by the imparting of instruction.

The basic Taoist theory of illness held that disturbances in the flowing of hei (air, breath, vital essence) through the body resulted in a wide variety of ailments. To cure the ailment, the patient's hei had to be stimulated into the proper flow. Certain people who had long studied Taoism gradually acquired control over their own hei. When such a person touched the troubled part of the patient's body, his own hei had such strength that it could stimulate the movement of the patient's hei. Essentially, the cure was a laying on of the hands though sometimes it would be accompanied by massage or by herbal medication. A good friend of Mr. Go, 81-year-old Mr. Lai, practiced hei gung treatment three times a week, and he and his assistants treated scores of patients at every afternoon session. One of the purposes of Mr. Go's daily meditation was to gain greater control over his own hei.

The Taoists were also concerned with the needs of the dead. For example, during the recent Hungry Ghost festival, the association had

offered more than 100 tables of food to those ghosts so unfortunate as to have no kin to make offerings to them. Providing such ghosts with food, clothing, and vast sums of paper money assured their good will. This year, because of the great earthquake in Tang Shan in northern China, many more ghosts than usual had been in need of the Taoists' attentions. Had they not been provided for, they might have vented their frustrations on the people of Hong Kong.

When he had finished meditating, Mr. Go, returning to the mini-bus terminus, smiled amiably at the vegetable hawkers whose stalls were closest to the sidewalk. He returned to Mong Kok in time to catch his son setting off for a driving lesson. Mr. Go was very pleased with this son as he had followed his father's interest in Taoism and painting. When he was free, he drove his father to the hall himself and made every effort to participate in the great occasions of the association. Mr. Go was well aware that today young people as a whole evinced little interest in Taoism. In China itself Taoism was officially regarded as pernicious superstition, but in Hong Kong it was simply ignored and left to face competition from Western education and ideas.

Following his afternoon nap, Mr. Go looked over the day's mail. Fortunately nothing of much interest was addressed to him. He was exhausted simply thinking about the mail he had received earlier in the week. The Benevolent Society of which he had long been a member announced its plans for a banquet on the birthday of Confucius. He had already sent off \$100 HK as his contribution. He had many friends in the society and had not seen a number of them since the early summer when his secondary school had held its annual meeting. Although he had graduated

from a secondary school in Kwangtung, so many of its alumni had found their way to Hong Kong that it was sometimes hard to believe that he was not still in China.

An academic association had invited him to attend a banquet on October 10th (Double Ten), the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China in 1911. October was a sensitive time politically in Hong Kong, for all the wounds of the Chinese civil war were re-opened. The refugees who identified most closely with the Republic of China (Taiwan) celebrated October 10th with banquets, speeches, and the display of the Nationalist flag. Those who identified most closely with the PRC displayed their flags on October 1st, the anniversary of its founding in 1949. In most cases the displaying of these flags did not overlap, but it was certainly easy to determine the political coloration of a neighborhood or village at this time of the year. Mr. Go wondered how the recent death of Mao Tse-tung would alter the normal October 1st celebration.

Mr. Go had actually met Mao back in the 1920s in Canton when the Communists and the Nationalists had been temporarily allied, but experience had long ago taught him that the topic of politics was inflammatory, and he studiously avoided any discussion of it. He personally felt that the Communists had betrayed their own ideals. Supposedly they were concerned with the welfare of the people, but in fact the people at the top were concerned only with gaining power for themselves. Mr. Go also believed that the philosophies of Taoism and Maoism were not completely opposed; both shared the theme of teaching people to help each other and to contribute to the common good, but Mao dismissed religion as superstition.

Mr. Go had also learned this week that a female paternal cousin was planning to "take a daughter-in-law." He was not involved in the activities of his own lineage or clan. Indeed, there were none as few of his patrikin apart from his own descendants were in Hong Kong. He had had only one brother a few years younger who had died in his seventies, and his brother's son was in Hong Kong. Mr. Go had never joined the Go surname association as he already had many friends chosen on the basis of criteria other than shared surname.

Most of Mr. Go's family interaction was among his own numerous descendants. Though not all of his 15 children still survived, several of them did. He smiled sheepishly at the thought that he could not recognize many of his more than 30 grandchildren. But his grandchildren, even though living in such remote places as Canada and England, continued to remember his birthday and to send him presents or money on special occasions. Many of his former students also regarded him as a father in some respects and sent him postcards or gifts when they traveled abroad. Mr. Go tried to look after their interests too. Even though he did not have quite so many contacts as he used to, he still kept his eyes open for a marriageable girl for his bachelor students and inquired about job possibilities for his children and grandchildren.

That night, after having dinner with his family, playing with his youngest grandchild, and watching or rather listening to the television, Mr. Go reflected that life had been good to him. Despite a few reversals in his fortune, he had many descendants, the respect of his peers, and the satisfaction of having lived a long and useful life of service to others. He had not only sought to maintain his own inner state in a

harmonious condition, but had also sought to restore harmony to the outside world. It was a noble objective, and pursuing it had no doubt added years to his life.

2. Mrs. Wong

A half mile to the northwest of Mr. Go in the more industrial section of New Kowloon known as Shamshuipo, Mrs. Wong arose quietly that morning. She did not wish to awaken any of the 20 or so co-tenants with whom she shared this subdivided apartment. Most of the co-tenants were single men who spent very little of their time in the tenement and returned only in the evening to eat or to sleep in the various cubicles and bedspaces. There was only one family in the apartment, the Fungs, consisting of husband, wife, and five children who occupied a room facing onto the street as well as the upper bunk of Mrs. Wong's bedspace.

Three of the younger Fung children were fast asleep above Mrs. Wong who was rummaging through her belongings in the dark seeking her packet of incense sticks. She rented this bedspace for \$35 HK a month and used the side of the bedspace against the wall as well as the area under her bed as storage. Her possessions were wrapped in a variety of plastic and paper bags, tied with string, and stuffed into larger plastic and paper bags or into boxes. She located the incense sticks and took out enough to burn for the sky, door, and earth gods. Although there was also a kitchen god, Mrs. Wong knew that one of her co-tenants would attend to him so she did not burn any incense for him.

She combed her short hair straight back and fastened it with a metal headband in the fashion of many older women. Among her age-mates nearly everyone had cut their hair in this style though there were still

some older women who chose to wear their hair long and tied up in a bun at the nape of the neck. Indeed, she knew of a couple of women who claimed to have had their hair cut only once in their lives. Mrs. Wong found the short hair much more convenient, and while she regretted the passing of some customs, she did not regret the passing of others. Sometimes it seemed that the whole world was in flux and quite beyond her control. Not that she worried about such changes--she had certainly seen enough of them--it was just that occasionally she felt that she had been cheated of her rights.

For example, she could recall her own sufferings as a daughter-in-law. She had been married in the traditional fashion at the age of 18 when a matchmaker had asked her mother for the eight characters specifying the time of her birth. The comparing of the eight characters of the prospective bride and groom was essential to determine whether there were any obvious signs of likely incompatibility between the two. In their case, there had been none, and so they had been married.

The distance between their two villages was somewhat greater than usual, but Mrs. Wong's mother, who had only reluctantly agreed to marry her off, had made a clever choice of son-in-law. Though Mrs. Wong's natal family lived in the district of Naahm Hoi, her husband's family lived across the river in the district of Sun Dak. As the center of the silk-weaving industry in the Canton region, Sun Dak had a very special economic situation, which had led to the development of some practices peculiar to the district. Women were the primary workers, and so a family suddenly found that its daughters, normally regarded as drains on the family resources, had become major providers of resources. Parents

became reluctant to marry off their daughters, and the girls themselves enjoyed their economic power. Some girls and their parents refused to consider matrimony at all whereas others agreed to marriage in name only. The girl went through a wedding ceremony, but declined to consummate the marriage, and after the wedding returned to her natal home. The husband of such a woman was free to take a concubine to bring him children. The reasoning behind such a marriage was to provide a family tree upon which to graft the woman, for after her death, she had to receive offerings from her husband's descendants. An unmarried woman could not receive the offerings of her brother's children. Some unmarried women adopted children to provide for their spirits while others contributed substantial sums to Buddhist or Taoist temples to meet this need.

In any case a large number of non-marrying women meant a shortage of potential daughters-in-law and forced Sun Dak parents to look further afield for spouses for their sons. On the other hand, it gave families with daughters additional leverage. Technically, at marriage a girl passed from her natal family to her husband's family, but in parts of Sun Dak this was not an immediate transfer. Instead it sometimes happened that after the wedding, the girl returned to her natal family and visited her in-laws only two or three times a year. She would not permanently transfer to her in-laws' home until she was pregnant with or safely delivered of her first child.

Mrs. Wong's mother made use of this strategy. She had been widowed when Mrs. Wong was a baby and Mrs. Wong's brother was still in her womb. Hers was not a weaving family, but a petty trading one, and she did not want to lose the labor of her daughter. Since Mrs. Wong's husband was

employed in Hong Kong and returned to his Sun Dak home on the same two or three annual occasions that Mrs. Wong did, it was not surprising that they did not have their first child until three years after the wedding. Mrs. Wong had dreaded the trips to her in-laws. She had been expected to stay out of sight, keep quiet, and work like a servant girl. In addition, she knew that her mother-in-law did not trust her and suspected that she stole food to take back to her own mother and brother. Yet she had patiently borne all this. A daughter-in-law had really had no choice in those days.

But now! What a difference! She could feel her indignation rising as she recalled the experience of a co-villager living in Hong Kong. This woman's daughter-in-law had objected to her staying around the house all day and had insisted that she spend her time outside. The old woman found this both boring and tiring and tried to return home, but the daughter-in-law had had the lock changed and refused to let her in. It was true that the family lived in incredibly crowded quarters, but Mrs. Wong could not help feeling that such treatment was going too far.

Although she herself had three daughters-in-law, she did not live with them. After all they were in China, and she was in Hong Kong. She had, however, given some thought as to how best to avoid such a potential conflict and decided that were she to live with a son's family, she would treat the daughter-in-law as a co-tenant rather than a daughter-in-law. Although sharing the same accommodations, they would cook independently. Traditionally the division of a Chinese household was symbolized by the use of separate hearths. In Hong Kong separate burners served the same function among co-tenants.

Starting out of her reverie, Mrs. Wong realized that she had better hurry off to the restaurant or she would miss the morning meal and then have to wait until 11:45 for the mid-day meal. The stone stairs and wall of the old building were clammy from the high humidity. She climbed carefully down the four flights to the street. Though it was still dark, Mrs. Wong did not fear the possibility of robbery. She was dressed in the white shirt of a restaurant worker and knew that it would be obvious to everyone that she was unlikely to be carrying any money. She glanced apprehensively at the sky and reminded the sky god that she had burned incense that morning. Surely he would not let it rain on her uniform! When she had first started this job two and a half months ago, she had been so proud of her uniform that she did not allow the restaurant to wash it. She brought it home to launder herself explaining that she was taller than the other workers and that if her shirt got mixed up with theirs, she might wind up wearing a shirt that was too small. Actually she knew that the restaurant washed the shirts and the tablecloths together, and when she thought about the fat, oil, and chicken bones that were daily rubbed into the tablecloths, she could not submit her new shirt to the ordeal. Now, however, she was not so squeamish and only occasionally brought the shirt home.

Sometimes Mrs. Wong suffered from rheumatism (fung sap: literally "wind and wet") brought on she believed by the fact that she had often gotten her feet wet while working in the fields too soon after delivering her children. She had never gone to see a doctor about this but treated herself by using ointments designed to "drive out the wind" responsible for the symptoms. Today she experienced no aches but proceeded carefully

nevertheless. A few months ago shortly after moving to her present address, she had been out on an early morning walk, slipped, and fractured her wrist. At that time she had had to receive medical treatment daily and had been unable to perform such basic tasks as cooking and washing. For nearly six weeks her co-tenant Mrs. Fung had performed these tasks for her, and afterwards Mrs. Wong had paid her \$200 HK.

Twenty minutes after leaving home, Mrs. Wong reached the restaurant. She ate her breakfast hastily as it was clear that customers were beginning to arrive. Mrs. Wong worked the ground floor which was the first floor to fill up with customers. She pushed a dim sum cart, a kind of four-wheeled table laden with small baskets of delicacies, around the floor and occasionally called out her wares. The cart was quite light and not any strain on her still sensitive wrist, and because of her age, she was not required to go up or down stairs. At the age of 70, Mrs. Wong was one of the oldest of the dim sum workers though at this restaurant most of the women were 50 or more. Mrs. Wong believed that younger people preferred to work in the factories where they could make more money, but she found that a half day's work, even if everyday, was more to her liking and ability.

When she first started working here, she had earned \$10 HK a day, but after a month her wages had gone up to \$14 a day. If she didn't miss a single day, she could earn just over \$400 HK a month. Not only that, but the restaurant also provided the workers with two meals a day, and Mrs. Wong rated these meals highly. Usually each table of workers received limitless rice and three side dishes. Since she actually had to pay for only one meal a day, she found that she could live on \$150 HK

a month. This reckoning meant absolutely no frills, however. Mrs. Wong did not gamble or attend movies and very rarely traveled by public transport. Since she could not read, she very easily got lost any time she found herself in an unfamiliar place. For example, she knew that she had to take a 2A bus to get to a friend's place, but she always had to ask someone where to get off, and then she had to ask her way along the street. Consequently she did not relish traveling and avoided it whenever possible.

Mrs. Wong returned home about one o'clock to find Mrs. Fung going over homework with one of her children. Fortunately they were reciting in the small room that let on to the kitchen, so their voices did not really disturb her as she lay resting on her wooden bed. Her bedspace along the corridor was actually quite cool and dark even on bright sunny days. Today she felt a slight chill and pulled a thin blanket over her legs before she felt completely comfortable. Mrs. Wong had seen many harsh things in her day and had often wondered where her next meal would come from, but somehow she had always managed to pull through. Perhaps as the proverb said she would have good fortune since she had survived so many difficulties.

She remembered the later days of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong when it had been so difficult to get food. At that time her husband had been working in the dockyards for the Japanese, but his rice payment was not sufficient to feed them all and to allow for the purchase of additional vegetables. Finally she decided to take her youngest child, an infant of eight months, leave the boys with their father and grandmother, and return to China to work in the fields. Then in 1950 her

husband had died of cancer in Hong Kong, and his boss had buried him near the border. Then there had been the terrible period of land reform when she estimated that nearly a third of her village had either committed suicide or run away as a result of the struggle sessions.

She could never forgive the Communists for that. Though she herself had not been criticized, she felt that the Communists had done wrong in taking the means of livelihood away from the people. Even the Japanese had not done that. But what most rankled her was their hypocrisy. Supposedly they made the poor man the master of China, but so far as she had seen, it had not worked out that way in practice. She knew that when her mother-in-law had been ill, no doctor was prepared to treat her, for at that time, the Communists felt that useless old people should not be given medical attention. All they were good for was eating the short supply of rice, so if they died, it was no loss. Then when her mother-in-law did die, Mrs. Wong had wanted to bury her in the village instead of where the Communists insisted. After all another family in the village had been allowed to bury one of its members in the village. But Mrs. Wong had not been given permission. Since the other family received large remittances from Overseas, Mrs. Wong concluded that, as usual, money talked, and the Communists were just as prepared as anyone else to listen to the rich. She borrowed a large sum of money from neighbors and friends and buried her mother-in-law in style.

The cadres were furious and threatened her with arrest, but Mrs. Wong had outfoxed them by obtaining an exit visa for Hong Kong. When applying for the visa, she had told the officials she wanted to go to Hong Kong to marry and had shortly thereafter received permission to

leave. In fact, it is unlikely that the officials believed her story. It was still not the custom for widows with nearly adult children to remarry, but it was clear that Mrs. Wong was a potential troublemaker. Her insistence on burying her mother-in-law in extravagant style even in a time of near famine was offensive and disobedient, but her courage in defying official policies and the filial piety which she demonstrated had won local admiration. To punish her would probably have caused the cadres more grief than granting her an exit visa. Besides she was already in her mid-fifties and would not be productive much longer. Thus in the early 1960s, Mrs. Wong became one of the 50 people a day to receive legal exit papers from China.

Upon arrival in Hong Kong, she had gone immediately to Wanchai, the area of Hong Kong Island where she had lived during the Occupation and where there were still a number of her co-villagers. She moved in with them, and her friends and neighbors introduced her to various employment opportunities. At one time or another, she had been a helper in a beauty shop, a household servant, and a seller of bread. She had saved every penny that she could and eventually was able to repay her debt.

A couple of years after Mrs. Wong's return to Hong Kong, the government declared the building in which she lived to be dangerous, and the residents were forced to scatter. Luckily Mrs. Wong and one of her co-villagers found a tiny room in Shek Kip Mei Resettlement Estate. They moved in with the knowledge and permission of the legal occupants, other co-villagers, who had moved to larger accommodations outside the estate. They had not, however, officially relinquished their Shek Kip Mei room because they did not want to lose their eligibility for a larger unit in

a more modern resettlement estate. Mrs. Wong and her friend could live there only so long as no one took official notice of them. For more than ten years they went undetected.

The rent of the tiny room amounted to a mere \$5 HK a month, but it meant only that they had a roof over their heads. There were no cooking or washing facilities. The plumbing for each floor was concentrated in one area of the building, and the water tap served almost the same function as a village well. In the morning housewives washed their clothes together. In the evening they would gather and discuss the events of the day. Neighbors were immediately aware of strangers and unusual activities and looked out for each other. When Mrs. Wong had been ill, they had fetched water for her. Then about two years ago, her luck had run out.

First, her roommate died, and she lived on in the room all alone. Next, a few months later, the restaurant in which she had worked for several years let her go due to financial difficulties. Finally, the authorities discovered that she was an illegal occupant. The building in which she had been living was one of several scheduled for demolition and replacement by blocks with more spacious rooms. All legal residents were to be temporarily put up in a nearby housing estate, but Mrs. Wong was not a legal resident and received no consideration. In great distress, she had gone to a welfare agency asking them to help her find a place to live, but they had said this was not their responsibility. Eventually she found her present bedspace several streets away from Shek Kip Mei.

Until this past July she had really had to hustle to make her living. Fortunately she had some savings which she supplemented with

occasional part-time jobs such as substituting for a sick restaurant worker or baby-sitting for a mother who had to run errands. Sometimes she had received small sums of money from a co-villager's daughter and from her own kai daughter. Mrs. Wong had kaied a young woman and a man in his thirties at the same time. Ideally the assumption of the tie was marked by a banquet, but in Mrs. Wong's case there had not been enough funds to do this. They had just had a simple meal together and exchanged gifts. A neighbor at Shek Kip Mei had introduced them to her; neither had parents, and they seemed "good" to her so she kaied them.

Of course, one of the major responsibilities of the kai children would be to see that Mrs. Wong received a decent funeral. Since her descendants were in China, they would not be able to perform this duty for her. Mrs. Wong had already taken steps to ensure that her death would not become a source of embarrassment to her spirit. She had purchased shares in two funeral societies to cover the costs of her funeral, and she had also purchased a memorial tablet at a Taoist temple for \$350 HK. This meant that the Taoists would assume responsibility for tending to the needs of her spirit; she would not become a "hungry ghost."

Lately, however, Mrs. Wong had been wondering about switching the authorization for her funeral from her kai children to her co-tenant, Mrs. Fung. When she had lived in Shek Kip Mei, she had taken the evening meal with her kai son who lived in a bedspace elsewhere in the neighborhood, and she had also done his laundry. Now that she had moved, she saw him less frequently. He was in his forties and unmarried, and

frankly sometimes one just couldn't be certain what a person's intentions really were.

As for her kai daughter . . . the girl was married with two children and seemed to have a good heart as evidenced by the money she had contributed when Mrs. Wong was unemployed, but since her family had moved to Oi Man Estate, the newest public housing in Hong Kong, their relationship had been somewhat strained. Originally Mrs. Wong had been listed as her kai daughter's mother on their application for public housing. There was a general belief among applicants that the larger the number of names on a given application, the greater the likelihood of being awarded public housing. In fact, there was some truth to this as applicants were admitted partly on the basis of the density of their present accommodation and the per capita income of the family. However, when the family had moved to Oi Man, Mrs. Wong had been told that she could not go along as she was not a real family member. It was not clear to Mrs. Wong who had made that decision.

By late afternoon the apartment was filling up again. Four of Mrs. Fung's children were doing homework or playing. One male co-tenant had returned early from work to do his laundry. Mrs. Wong realized she had better start preparing her evening meal before the kitchen area became too crowded. She made it a point to stay out of everyone's way since she had all day (or at least all afternoon) to take care of her household affairs, but the workers had only the evening. From about six to nine o'clock, the apartment was in a state of chaos. Several different households jockeyed for space among the burners and carried their food and dishes back and forth along the corridor in front of Mrs. Wong's

bedspace. She tried to sit with her feet up out of the way. While some were eating, others were watching television or listening to the radio. Evening was also the time when the only telephone in the apartment was likely to be in heavy use. By nine o'clock on school nights, the children ususally began to slow down; conversations became a bit softer, and Mrs. Wong, who had a great tolerance for noise anyway, was able to drift off to sleep.

Before sleeping on this night, however, she reflected that her bad luck of the past two years seemed to be over. Her wrist was nearly healed; her funeral was taken care of. Her job was steady and had enabled her to bring her savings back up to \$1000 HK. Her co-workers enjoyed her jokes and stories, and her new co-tenants, with one or two exceptions, were nearly as considerate as the neighbors she had left behind. So long as she retained her vitality and her job, there would be no problems. Perhaps in her next letter to China, she would include some money for her sons and daughters-in-law.

3. The Older Generation

By describing a day in the lives of two elderly Chinese residents of Hong Kong, my intent has been to touch on some of the problems and historical experiences which distinguish this particular generation and to demonstrate the diverstiy of its life styles. For all of its diversity, the present generation of older people in Hong Kong has had to face the challenges posed by migration, the invasion of the Japanese, and the consequences of the Chinese civil war. While not every older person had directly faced all three of these problems, all older people have been affected by them in some way.

According to the 1971 Census (p. 16), only 13.7 percent of those aged 40 or more were born in Hong Kong compared with over 95 percent of those under the age of 15. The vast majority of the older population was, like Mr. Go and Mrs. Wong, born and brought up in Kwangtung, the Chinese province adjacent to Hong Kong. For some the transition from life in China to life in Hong Kong was gradual and relatively easy; for others, it was a traumatic, sudden shift. As a young man Mr. Go had come to Hong Kong on visits a number of times, but he did not actually live there until 1938. At that time he did not realize that he would be spending the rest of his life in Hong Kong. By the time he realized that the Communist victory in 1949 made his return to China impossible, he had already sunk deep roots into Hong Kong. When Mrs. Wong came to Hong Kong in the early 1960s, she knew that she was leaving China for good. However, as a younger woman, she had lived in Hong Kong for some ten years, and on her return went immediately to her old neighborhood and former acquaintances.

Other migrants have had more difficult transitions, especially political refugees who fled to Hong Kong as the Communist military forces took over Canton and then found themselves destitute and separated from their families. Other migrants facing adjustments problems were those who came to Hong Kong in late-middle or old age with no previous exposure to Hong Kong. Some of these were parents who found that their adult children could not adequately support them and were encouraged by relatives and friends on both sides of the border to apply for exit visas. But not all old people are cut off from China. Those in Hong Kong at the time of the border closing are regarded by the Chinese government as "Chinese citizens

resident in Hong Kong" and as such may enter and exit from China with little restriction. Those who left China with legal emigrant visas may also return.

Among my own informants there are several who return annually to visit relatives in the ancestral villages, and some have stayed there for periods of several months. Two or three have returned there for good. Most of my informants, however, expressed no desire to return to China. The inescapable fact is that the standard of living in China remains very low. Annual returnees continue to testify to this and usually go to China bearing gifts of a very practical nature, e.g., plastic buckets. Other old people maintain contact with their kin through visiting intermediaries or through letters. For those whose descendants are in Hong Kong, there is no point in returning to China.

And what of life in Hong Kong? Are these mostly rural migrants comfortable in a densely populated urban environment with all its attendant insecurities? Is Hong Kong so different from China that they experience serious alienation or is the knowledge that the old China which they once knew no longer exists even in China sufficient to stimulate accommodation to the new environment? Each person would probably give a different answer to these questions, for each experiences Hong Kong in his own way. Such variables as rural vs. urban origins in China, length of time in Hong Kong, level of education, language ability, and the presence or absence of mediating kin or friends all affect the kind of adjustment the individual can make.

Probably the two historical events with the greatest impact on this generation of the elderly were the Japanese invasions of both Kwangtung

and Hong Kong and the Communist restructuring of Chinese society. A number of my informants simply could not discuss their circumstances during the occupation of Hong Kong. The harbor areas were heavily bombed for days, and informants living in their vicinity lost many of their family members. Equally trying were the subsequent shortages of food and medicine. The Japanese urged the population to return to China, and a great many did so, but others, already too weakened or lacking relatives in China, starved to death or succumbed to illness. According to Lethbridge (1969:78), the pre-invasion population of Hong Kong numbered about 1,846,000 of whom about 750,000 were refugees from the Sino-Japanese conflict. By the end of the war, there were only some 600,000 people left (1969:103).

The Communist restructuring of Chinese society has also been a severe blow to many of the elderly. Land reform and reclassification of families in terms of their "class origins" have nearly turned the old order upside-down. The overthrowing of Confucius, the conversion of ancestral temples into schools and meeting halls, and the condemning of religion as superstition have destroyed Mr. Go's world. The ban on ostentatious display on such occasions as funerals drew Mrs. Wong's hostility. While many younger residents of Hong Kong, such as university students and left-wing trade union members, are proud to identify themselves as "patriotic Chinese," i.e., ideological supporters of the PRC, the older residents are much more ambivalent.

Many old people fled to Hong Kong precisely because of disagreement with the Communist philosophy. Others though they came to Hong Kong for straightforward economic reasons still shudder when they recall the

humiliation and even violence which accompanied the "struggle sessions" associated with land reform. They find the enthusiasm of the young for a system which they have never seen in operation disconcerting, but most have learned to express their opinions cautiously. One of my informants, 66-year-old Mrs. Ngai, who lives down the street from a left-wing trade union, has learned, like Mr. Go, to avoid political discussions. When asked what she thought about Mao, she said only that it was wise to say that Mao was "Number One" because you didn't know whether the people who asked you were left-winged or not. She did, however, volunteer a disrespectful though silent imitation of Mao, head lolling and limp, in the advanced stages of a debilitating disease.

Most of the elderly are now living in a world very different from the one in which they grew up. Mr. Go is fortunate in being able to carry out the role of the wise, retired scholar, supported by his descendants, and spending his time in charitable pursuits. He is in some ways the epitome of the retired Confucian scholar of traditional China, but he does not deceive himself. He knows that the traditional world is not coming back. Mrs. Wong rails at the Communists, but she too is realistic. She sees and, in fact, wants no return to the days of "blind marriage" and mistreated daughters-in-law. In the course of their lifetimes, most of the elderly have had to accommodate to many changes, and while some of the changes are regretted, few old people seem to be disabled by them. Others have been able to find corners relatively untouched by change, limiting their contacts to old people from the same districts as themselves, living in tenements or bedspaces in crumbling parts of Hong Kong, and eking out a marginal existence.

In introducing the lives of Mr. Go and Mrs. Wong, I also want to point out some of the differences which exist among the elderly on the bases of sex, educational attainments, availability of kin, and economic resources. To a certain extent sex is the most important of these variables because in traditional China sexual status influenced opportunities for educational attainment and for family life, and both of these, in turn affected one's economic resources. While Mr. Go was exceptional, even for a male, in being a university graduate, Mrs. Wong with no formal education whatsoever was typical of old women. According to the Working Party Report (1973:5), 57 percent of those aged 60 or more had received no formal education, and 90 percent of all old people had not reached the level of secondary school. Old women are six times more likely than men to be illiterate.

In a village illiteracy might not greatly hinder a person, but in urban Hong Kong it seriously handicaps people in a number of ways. Being literate, Mr. Go can ride buses, know where to disembark, and follow street signs to an unfamiliar destination. Being illiterate, Mrs. Wong cannot, and consequently she hesitates to move out of familiar territory. The constant tearing down of old structures and the erecting of new ones make it difficult to identify places by their surroundings since the surroundings are always changing. When Mrs. Wong was forced to move, she had to depend on others to read the red papers posted in public places announcing the availability of cubicles and bedspaces. When friends recommend new ointments or pills to her, she is never sure of how much medication to take for which condition since she cannot read the label.

Mr. Go receives mail and reads newspapers daily. Mrs. Wong does neither. Whenever she receives an infrequent letter, she has to rely on an educated co-tenant to read it for her. Any letters that she writes go through a professional letter-writer at the cost of \$3 HK a letter. Mr. Go keeps up with current events through the paper. He is a part of the morning scene in the teahouse where men sit drinking and smoking. Mrs. Wong must depend on radio and television or word of mouth for such events. These differences in literacy also affect the utilization of leisure time. Whereas old women are quite content to sit around and "rest" after their household tasks are done, old men find this very boring and prefer to read or walk around outside.

The availability of kin also makes a great difference in life style. The support of his numerous descendants permits Mr. Go to spend his post-retirement life in the pursuit of meditation and the performing of meritorious acts. The absence of descendants in Hong Kong means that Mrs. Wong can never really retire. In time of need Mr. Go knows that his family will provide for him, but Mrs. Wong must rely on her kai children about whom she has already expressed serious doubts or pay a neighbor for services as she has already paid Mrs. Fung. In terms of opportunities for family life, those of elderly men exceed those of elderly women, for there are significant differences between the sexes in marital status. For example, according to the Working Party Report (1973:4) only 9 percent of elderly males are widowed, but 36 percent of the women are. More than twice as many women (seven percent) as men (three percent) have never married. One percent of both sexes is widowed or separated. Nevertheless, the majority of both sexes are

married though not necessarily living together: 87 percent of the men and 57 percent of the women. The differences in widowhood by sex are due to a variety of factors including: (1) greater male mortality rates, (2) the tendency of women to marry older men with consequent greater mortality of the older partner, and (3) the fact that traditional values sanctioned the remarriage of males but not that of females. I deal with this issue further in Chapter IV.

Widowhood not only means lack of a marital partner, but in some cases such as very early widowhood a lack of descendants as well. When I asked 68 widowed informants about the length of their widowhood, I found that 56 percent had been widowed for more than 25 years including ten percent who had lost their spouses 50 or more years earlier. In the absence of a spouse or descendants, an older person will explore the possibilities of assistance from more distant relatives, co-villagers, and friends. Mrs. Wong's two kai children represent yet another support system. Assistance is often non-financial in nature and may take the form of "employment," e.g., a meal in exchange for a few hours of casual baby-sitting or "door-watching," or of donations of essential items such as old clothes, scraps of wood for fuel, or "leftovers" from dinner.

Most of the elderly request public assistance for which they are eligible at age 55 only when in the most dire of circumstances. There is little sense of welfare being a right, and little inclination to blame social institutions for one's difficulties. Thus, as I pointed out in Chapter II (pp. 60-67), most old people work as long as they are able or until other family members are able to support them. Most old people seem to believe that though individual effort can make a difference, there is

a point beyond which the quality and length of one's life are matters of fate.

4. Daily Activities

In the preceding sections, we observed in close detail the daily lives of a man long retired and a woman still involved in the working world. In this section, we will take a look at the activities and interests of the older population as a whole. In an effort to learn just how a typical day is spent, I asked informants to give an account of the day preceding the interview mentioning such things as when they got up, prepared their meals, whether they went outside, received or made visits, indulged in recreational activities, etc. I was especially interested in comparing the daily lives of hostel residents with those in the community as the former are freer to follow their own dictates. They do not have to worry about avoiding the morning rush on the bathroom or scheduling meals around children or the work schedules of adults which are constraints on old people living in more age-heterogeneous environments.

Both groups tend to start the day between seven and eight in the morning though hostel residents get up about a quarter of an hour earlier on the average than community residents. On the other hand they go to bed about a half hour earlier--9:30 versus 10 p.m. Half of the hostel residents mentioned napping or having a rest period during the day as did two-thirds of the community residents. The most striking difference occurs with respect to eating habits. Whereas hostel residents prefer two meals a day to three by a ratio of almost two to

one, community residents prefer three meals to two by the same ratio--a complete reversal.

A fairly common pattern in both the hostel and the community is to get up, wash one's face, brush one's teeth, and then to take a snack such as a tea biscuit, a bowl of rice porridge, or a piece of bread before venturing out to buy the makings of the late morning meal. Brushing the teeth is a pre-eating morning activity in Hong Kong in contrast to the Western post-eating evening pattern. The difference in timing is related to difference in purpose, i.e., Westerners believe they are getting rid of food particles in an effort to prevent decay whereas the Chinese use toothpicks for this purpose. Brushing in the morning is intended primarily to freshen the mouth rather than to clean the teeth. One of the most popular brands of toothpaste available in Hong Kong is Darkie Toothpaste, featuring a Black man in top hat flashing a white smile on the tube!

While both men and women venture out of the house in the morning, the women are most likely to be taking a short trip to the market while the men are taking a somewhat more extended trip to the tea house. Hostel residents are also much more likely to take exercise, especially walking, than community residents, i.e., half of the former in comparison with a quarter of the latter mentioned walking (other than specifically on errands) or exercising on the day preceding the interview. Part of this difference is no doubt a function of opportunity. The hostel is magnificently located on a promontory of Hong Kong Island, and in 1976, a park along the shore very near the hostel was completed. For those people living in congested urban districts walking is not a pleasure and

is further impeded by the absence of places to sit and take a rest out of the blazing sun. Westerners frequently assume that many Chinese are involved in the practice of tai chi, a series of slow graceful posturings designed to bring harmony to the body rather than to stress it, but, in fact, though early morning practitioners can be seen in parks, very few Chinese in Hong Kong practice tai chi. Among my own informants only two or three mentioned tai chi at all--largely to say that they no longer did it. Tai chi classes were sponsored at the hostel for a while, but were given up when it became clear that the old people were not sufficiently enthusiastic.

With reference to social activity, 15 out of 71 community dwellers compared to one of 24 hostel dwellers made or received a visit on the day preceding the interview though this figure probably does not reflect casual visiting among co-tenants or neighbors. In both the hostel and the community about one-quarter of the informants had not left the house at all on the day preceding the interview. More than half of all community respondents spent at least part of the day performing household tasks primarily for the benefit of others, e.g., marketing, cooking, or washing, but only three hostel respondents were so involved. It is a hostel rule that each member of a four-person unit take responsibility once a month for general cleaning of the unit, and these three respondents discharged that responsibility on the day preceding the interview. To my knowledge none of the hostel residents other than couples cook and eat communally. When I asked why they didn't take turns or share the labor, I was told "we have different tastes," but I think asserting independence is probably another important reason. Another 13 of 71

community residents were involved in money-producing activities such as employment or piecework compared with only two hostel residents both doing piecework. Very few old people indulged in hobbies: a few tended potted plants or raised pets, usually birds or fish. Watching television or resting were the most frequently mentioned pastimes of my informants.

Some elderly have major responsibility for carrying on the religious traditions of their households, but religion does not seem to loom as a dominant concern. For example, the Social Service Needs Study (1977:33) obtained the following responses to their question "Do you have any religious beliefs"?

Table 1
Religious Beliefs

None, not even ancestor worship	21.66%
Mainly ancestor worship	22.03
God-revering	37.38
Buddhism	7.05
Protestantism	6.56
Catholicism	4.95
Taoism	0.12
Islam	0.12
Others	0.12

Thus only a minority of the elderly are formally affiliated with a particular religious system. Unfortunately the above figures indicate only the dominant religious orientation of the individual. In fact, a good many ancestor-worshippers are also god-reverers and vice versa. Perhaps the single most frequent religious act is the burning of incense before the household shrines once or twice a day along with the offering of fruit every two or three days. When the offerings, usually oranges,

are changed, the household members eat the old ones. Women play the major role in domestic religious matters, but men play the major role in the public worship at the ancestral graves in the spring and autumn.

Mrs. Ngai, a 66-year-old widow living with her son, daughter-in-law, and three young grandchildren in a multi-household unit in Hung Hom, a Kowloon district, is typical of the older women who find gratification in religious practice. Every morning Mrs. Ngai burns incense to the ancestral tablet in the corridor near her bedspace. In addition the owner of the unit has set up tablets for three gods in the kitchen: the sky god's tablet is fixed to the wall with a view of the sky, the kitchen god's tablet is fixed to the wall directly above the kitchen burners, and the earth god's tablet is placed on the floor just inside the kitchen. There is also a tablet to the door god placed at the main entrance to the apartment, and Mrs. Ngai herself used to keep a tablet at the head of the bed on which her grandsons sleep dedicated to a goddess who makes children obedient, but due to space problems she has had to remove it.

Mrs. Ngai worships the gods whenever she feels uncomfortable or unlucky. Once, for example, she became sick to her stomach upon returning from an outing, so she immediately burned incense and worshipped the sky god and felt good again. Mrs. Ngai is quite familiar with the special days of the various gods and recited the special days of seven gods from memory--and in so doing clearly impressed her younger co-tenants who were listening in. Although there are three temples in her district, she herself only occasionally patronizes the one dedicated to Gun Yam, the Buddhist goddess of mercy.

Hung Hom, the district in which Mrs. Ngai lives, was heavily bombed during the takeover of Hong Kong by the Japanese and as a result has a higher population of ghosts than most other districts in Hong Kong. During the seventh lunar month the streets of Hung Hom are again overrun by these ghosts as they are given a monthly furlough from the underworld. At this time Mrs. Ngai does not like her daughter-in-law to take the grandchildren out as the dangers of running into or being possessed by a ghost are rather high. The grandchildren do wear jade pendants for protection, but sometimes this is not enough. Mrs. Ngai is nostalgic for the old days when a festival meant a really glorious celebration. Even though today's celebrations are not very spectacular, she still looks forward to going to the local playground to check out the opera, auction, and offerings that are all part of the Hungry Ghost Festival.

One of the most popular temples in all of Hong Kong is that dedicated to Wong Tai Sin which is frequented, especially at the New Year, by fortune seekers. Mrs. Ngai is not a devotee of divining, but Mrs. Ip, a 75-year-old widow living with her daughter, son-in-law, and five grandchildren in another part of Kowloon is typical of those who worship him seriously. In her living room one of the most prominent pieces of furniture is a cabinet especially intended for the display of religious artifacts. On its top is a conventional picture of Gwaan Dai (the god of war known for the virtue of loyalty) as well as a Buddhist picture. At the next level the cabinet is divided into three partitions: one containing the ancestral shrine, the middle containing a statue of Gun Yam, and the third containing a picture of Wong Tai Sin. Oranges for both the ancestors and Wong Tai Sin were on display during our visit. In the

bottom corner of the cabinet is a recess for the earth god's tablet in front of which three incense sticks were placed. In addition a sky god is housed on the balcony, a kitchen god in the kitchen, and a door god at the front entrance. Mrs. Ip's display was probably the most elaborate we encountered, and there is no question of her devotion.

She has purchased a copy of the Chinese Almanac so that she can interpret the results of her frequent attempts at divination at the temple of Wong Tai Sin whom she praises as an exceptionally reliable god. Rather than follow the traditional custom of examining the eight characters of the bride and groom when her daughter wanted to marry, Mrs. Ip had asked Wong Tai Sin about the match. She also goes to him for medical advice and estimated that she practices divination at least twice a month. Her daughter is also a strong believer in Wong Tai Sin and has asked his opinion as to when the family was likely to be awarded public housing and when her son (hospitalized for what turned out to be a fatal kidney disease) would recover. But many old people are not so traditional in their religious beliefs. Mrs. Wun, an elderly widow with no surviving kin, is totally inactive and uninterested in religious matters: never divining, never going to a temple, and not having a single tablet in her corridor/bedspace. She has not returned to China for ancestor worship for decades. Old men in particular but even some old women are likely to disclaim a belief in ghosts dismissing them as something only people with guilty consciences need be concerned with. Others have suggested that concern with religious matters is all right for people with the money to support them but that the poor, like themselves, cannot afford to be too concerned.

In the hostel there is a higher proportion of Christians than in the population at large because a number of the sponsoring organizations are Christian and refer their own needy members to it. One incident pointed out to me one of the less "sincere" motivations for conversion particularly of those in their later years. A sixty-ish daughter of an old woman suddenly asked me about getting her old mother converted to Catholicism. I was quite surprised to learn of this interest as the old woman herself had never given any indication of wanting to be baptized. When I asked a priest about the appropriate procedure, he suddenly asked me the age of the candidate for conversion. When I replied that she was in her eighties, he shook his head resignedly and signed, "They are interested in the burial angle." He was referring to the fact that certain private cemeteries in Hong Kong, namely those sponsored by religious organizations, are able to practice permanent burial whereas the overcrowded government cemeteries practice what is known as double burial. In double burial, the corpse is exhumed several years after the initial burial, the bones are cleaned and placed in a large urn which is then assigned a location by the government, and the gravesite becomes available for reuse. The priest was not enthusiastic about this possible conversion, and when I reported to the family the necessary procedure, they too seemed to have lost interest. Perhaps they were a little bit embarrassed.

5. Conclusions

Mr. Go and Mrs. Wong are clearly following different paths to security in old age. Mr. Go has been able to hew closely to the traditional principle of reliance upon descendants. The responsibility

of providing security for Mr. Go has been, and continues to be, shared among his numerous children. At one point, he and his wife lived separately: Mr. Go with his fourth son and Mrs. Go with the youngest. When the fourth son and his family emigrated to England, Mr. Go moved in with his youngest son though even now he continues to receive financial support from his other children as well as grandchildren. In fact, he sometimes passes on such funds to those of his descendants who are experiencing financial difficulties thus playing the role of redistributor even though his family is in no way a traditional joint family.

Mr. Go has few kinsmen in Hong Kong, and there is no Go lineage as such. Though Mr. Go knows a great many people, he is not involved with his neighbors despite the fact that he has lived in his present apartment for eight or nine years. On the contrary, as an educated man, his personal relationships are heavily derived from school, work, and avocational pursuits and are frequently carried on through formal associations. He is keenly aware of the obligations which personal ties carry and is constantly alert to opportunities for his associates. Serving as an intermediary is one of his favorite activities. On the one hand, he offered to introduce my unmarried female research assistant to prospective marriage partners from among his former students. Similarly, on learning of my interest in old people, he immediately introduced me to his friend Mr. Lai, a hei gung practitioner. On the other hand, when he learned that my assistant had secured a job with a social service agency, he inquired about additional openings on behalf of a daughter who wished to make a job change.

Secure in his family and assured a place of respect among his peers, Mr. Go is now reaping the rewards due a man with many descendants and

substantial interpersonal skills. The fact that he is very active socially means that his presence does not weigh heavily on the other members of his household. Mr. Go's health remains quite good, but there are some clouds on the horizon. His failing eyesight has forced him to abandon painting lessons. His memory is also failing, and he is beginning to ramble in his conversations. At present he imposes few burdens on his household, but the likelihood of increasing enfeeblement suggests that problems could lie ahead.

Since her descendants are in China, Mrs. Wong has attempted to follow alternative traditional routes to security in old age. She has concentrated her attention and efforts on neighborhood-based personal ties, but this strategy may well prove her undoing in the long run. When she came to Hong Kong for the last time in the early 1960s, she relied on herself though she operated through a network of co-villagers, at first living with them and later learning of employment opportunities through them. Unfortunately she twice fell victim to the social consequences of urban renewal. When her Wanchai housing was demolished, her social network was demolished also. At that time she and a co-villager were able to move to Shek Kip Mei under the auspices of another co-villager. Since Shek Kip Mei's construction maximized opportunities for social interaction (this was an unintended consequence of the construction design which had as its major purpose the erecting of cheap housing as quickly as possible), Mrs. Wong was able to build up ties with her neighbors. Through these neighbors she was introduced to the two younger people who became her kai children.

But, again, a forced relocation destroyed the social network that had been ten years in the making. The ties to her kai children were greatly weakened as the community which had sanctioned the formation of those ties had disintegrated. Now Mrs. Wong has scarcely any contact with them. In her new residence, a bedspace in a subdivided tenement, she knows only her immediate co-tenants. A few months ago when a wrist injury made it impossible for her to perform household tasks, a co-tenant had helped her out, but Mrs. Wong felt it necessary to pay for the service as she had no previous history of reciprocity with the woman. Luckily she had the savings to pay for her assistance and her incapacity was partial and temporary.

Mrs. Wong continues to have occasional contact with co-villagers who were once co-tenants or neighbors, but since they are now scattered throughout Hong Kong, it is difficult to maintain the relationships at the previous level of intensity. Mrs. Wong does not like to travel--understandably so given the total lack of consideration bus drivers show for their passengers--and finds it difficult to locate people in unfamiliar neighborhoods. She is coming to realize the futility of relying on neighbors. She has decided that when she can no longer find employment she will have no choice but to seek assistance from the Department of Social Welfare, but like many other old people in Hong Kong, she will continue to work as long as she is able.

The reason Mr. Go and Mrs. Wong--and many other old people like them--continue to rely on traditional support mechanisms despite the disruptive influences of industrialization and value changes is very simple: contemporary Hong Kong does not provide adequate alternatives.

Writing almost 20 years ago about social change in six Western European countries, Burgess (1960:378) found that industrialization had forced all of these countries to develop new ways of meeting the needs of the elderly. Regardless of their particular cultural traditions, all had had to address problems of income, housing and health, and status deprivation in roughly that order. Hong Kong, however, despite its industrialization and despite public acknowledgement of the emerging needs of the elderly does not appear to have achieved any consensus as to which problems are most acute and how they should be tackled.

At present even the first priority of income levels is inadequately dealt with. As mentioned above (Chapter II, p. 60), the number of elderly receiving income supplements because of poverty is approximately one-sixth of the number who are members of poor households. Although there are some special accommodations for the elderly, largely in the form of homes for the aged or hostels (Ikels 1975), these come nowhere near meeting the needs of those in poor health. Similarly there are no special medical programs for the aged. Ironically, the attention of the private sector has focussed on the problem area which other countries have approached last, namely that of status deprivation. A number of community organizations, such as benevolent societies and gaaifongs or kaifongs (neighborhood associations), sponsor annual entertainment programs or dinners for the elderly. For example, in January 1976, 150 civic associations sponsored a Care for the Old campaign through which they hoped "to make people aware that the aged need friendship and attention and to remind the young of the traditional Chinese virtue of respecting the elderly" (SCMP January 7, 1976). One of the co-sponsors

of this campaign admitted his distaste for such programs and told me that the real function of the campaign was to assuage the guilt feelings of the sponsors rather than to alleviate the plight of the elderly and that once the program was out of the way, the sponsoring organizations would quickly abandon the old for other interests.

Such a cynical and pessimistic assessment does not seem to me unwarranted. The industrialization which undermined traditional support mechanisms in Western Europe has also undermined those in Hong Kong, but Hong Kong lacks the leadership and the consensus to guarantee alternative mechanisms. Under the present situation of static incongruence, old people have no choice but to rely upon the traditional sources of security --family and interpersonal relationships, and, in fact, most old people seem unaware of alternatives beyond these. Given the absence of any consensus, this lack of awareness is understandable, but it is also a major contributing factor to the insecurity, psychologically speaking, of the elderly. As pointed out in Chapter II, in traditional China the material, social, and ideological facts of village life were mutually reinforcing. Providing for security in old age did not really demand much from the individual in the way of decision-making. Generally he had only to tread the well-worn paths of kinship and interpersonal ties.

In urban Hong Kong, however, the situation is very different. The material, social, and ideological facts of life are in flux. Old people with children worry about the effects of the generation gap. Those without children are finding that the instability of urban neighborhoods renders community ties useless. There is no neat cultural map to follow. The individual is increasingly compelled to assess his own circumstances

and to rely on his own judgment as to which paths are most likely to lead to security in old age. This is a heavy burden for those who never anticipated carrying it.

CHAPTER IV
RELATIONS WITH KIN

1. Introduction

Urbanization and industrialization have frequently been viewed as the destroyers of an idyllic rural way of life. Compared with the countryside, cities have been described as depersonalizing, atomizing, and destructive of enduring social relationships, but more recent literature, e.g., Mizruchi (1969), Gutkind (1969), and Hollnsteiner (1972), suggests that this contrastive model greatly overstates the case. The reasons behind the former negative model probably derive from the historical circumstances of urbanization. For example, on finding that anomie was actually more characteristic of the rural than of the urban members of his sample, Mizruchi (1969:246) proposed that:

Perhaps the malaise of the urban dweller during the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries was not simply a figment of the imagination. The conditions described may have indeed been characteristic of those periods and may be attributable to the nature of the relationship between the larger societal structure and the smaller sub-structures, the cities, within the same societies. This urban life within a predominantly rural society would be subjected to strains and relatively high anomie.

Alternatively rural dwellers within a predominantly urban society would suffer similarly.

Gutkind (1969:216-217) points out that the interests of anthropologists led them to concentrate on tribal and peasant societies and thus to view cities as places in which the values and bonds of tribal and peasant societies were destroyed. Migrants to the cities were long viewed as

"tribesmen in towns" or "urban villagers" when, in fact, many of these people were members of families which had lived in the towns for several generations. Furthermore, definite forms of organized social life existed in many urban neighborhoods. As Hollnsteiner (1972:30) indicates, these neighborhoods are almost invariably the low-income residential blocks. Middle- and upper-income residential areas with their carefully bounded, independent houses are less grounded in neighborhood affairs. I will return to the issue of the nature of urban community life and its implications for the elderly in the next chapter. Here I am primarily concerned with how urbanization and industrialization are viewed in terms of their impact on the family and kinship.

Burgess (1960:275-276) states a common mid-twentieth century view of the functional relationship between family structure and the larger social system.

The autonomous nuclear family has the characteristics which seem adapted to the urban way of life. Husband and wife no longer seek their chief companionship outside the home--the husband with friends and the wife with relatives--as in the maternal extended family. They find it with each other. They select friends not from those who live in the same block but on the basis of common tastes, interests, and similar backgrounds who are likely to reside in other neighborhoods.

The autonomous nuclear family seems destined to be the family of the future. It is still in the process of evolution. Its central value is companionship of husband and wife and of parents and children. It recognizes increasingly the sharing of authority by the spouses and their equality in status. It is a product of the effects of the economic and social trends of the time.

Census data and other studies on household composition, e.g., Nimkoff (1962), give clear evidence of the residential separation of married couples from their parents, but such residential information may obscure as much as it reveals about the family relationships of older people.

Townsend (1957), for example, found that in a working class London neighborhood, though separate residence of adult married children was the rule, the children, especially daughters, continued to play major supportive roles in the lives of the parents. Litwak (1965) analyzed four types of family structures: the dissolving family, the nuclear family, the modified extended family, and the extended family and concluded that even from a theoretical position the conventional wisdom about the fit between family type and urban industrial society was incorrect. He found that the modified extended family rather than the nuclear family was best suited to a democratic industrial society because (1) it has a greater pool of resources to draw on than the nuclear family and (2) it is able to mediate conflict within the nuclear family (1965:309).

The theoretical analysis of Litwak and the empirical findings of Townsend and others, e.g., Shanas et al. (1968), suggest that the focus on household composition should be replaced by a focus on the nature of the relationships between parents and children, e.g., on changing residential patterns, aid flows, and visiting patterns. As Firth (1971: 389) points out:

Any investigation of kinship in an urban environment soon brings out the great degree of variation in relations with kin. The reasons for this are complex, and their force in varying types of kin situation is not entirely clear. But among the correlates of the varying recognition and maintenance of kin ties would appear to be the following: residential accessibility; common economic interests, as in occupation, or in property-holding; composition of household; composition of elementary family, especially as regards that of the sibling group; the biological range of persons available for kin recognition; the existence of key personalities in the kin field, to take the initiative in kin contacts; and the phase of development in which any given family finds itself.

This last point is especially important as so many studies examine families at a given point in time (cross-sectionally) rather than over time (longitudinally) so that many patterns are not detected for what they really are, namely, characteristic of particular stages in the family life cycle.

How have kin relations been affected by urbanization, industrialization, and westernization in Hong Kong? Has the nuclear family concept come to predominate? Do parents continue to live with adult married children? If so, how are power and authority distributed? What is the nature of the parental relationship with non-co-resident children? Now that girls need not disperse upon marriage have they kept up or increased their ties with their natal families? Has a maternal extended family such as Townsend (1957) noted in a London working class neighborhood begun to emerge? Or have the values of the patrilineal extended family persisted with sons playing a more significant role than daughters in supporting their parents? What of relations with kin beyond immediate relatives? Are Hong Kong residents still involved in patrilineage activities or have the traditional lineages vanished in the urban setting?

In an attempt to answer these questions and to indicate their significance for old people, the remainder of this chapter investigates three topics: (1) patterns of household composition and residence, (2) intergenerational relations, and (3) the role of collateral kin. Obviously income and educational differences contribute to differences in family structure and relations. Though I will draw on the studies of others for material about the middle and upper income families in Hong

Kong, my own data derive primarily from working and lower middle class families. However, in terms of income and education variables, my own informants are characteristic of the majority of elderly Hong Kong residents, and for this reason I emphasize their particular solutions to the problems of old age.

2. Household and Residence Patterns

First I would like to review briefly the idealized traditional family setting of the elderly Chinese against which many people contrast the contemporary family setting.

Long before he is physically unable to work (the elderly Chinese) is likely to have retired to live thenceforth on the fruits of his youngsters' labor. An older man who does seek employment not only is unhandicapped by age, but, if equally qualified otherwise, is preferred to a younger person. The relative economic security of the Chinese elder is surpassed by his social importance. Instead of restricting their associations to persons of their own age level, Chinese men and women seek the counsel and company of their elders. Furthermore, the elders enjoy a degree of authority over the young unheard of in the West. When living under the same roof, the former tend to exercise full control. If sons live separately from their elders, the authoritative position of the old is somewhat modified, but not surrendered, and their advice is sought on every conceivable matter. (Hsu 1953:328-329)

Without commenting on the accuracy of the above description, I would like to quote also from two contemporary sources in Hong Kong. First an excerpt from a June 1976 letter to the editor of the Hong Kong Standard:

It is an understatement to say that the elderly cannot live in peace and comfort because of overcrowding. The situation has deteriorated to the point where the least useful members of the family are victimised and abandoned. How much time is spent each day in hospitals by staff members who must try to convince the family that an elderly person is well enough to return home? Would the student or observer of the Chinese culture believe that a family would abandon an older member in the hospital while making plans to go abroad?

Next from the South China Morning Post of June 17, 1976 is an article headlined "Stranded Woman Back."

A 65-year-old woman who spent four days on the Macau hydrofoil wharf waiting for her son to return with her travel documents finally got back to Hong Kong yesterday with the help of friends. Lee Ho Min-ching was taken to Macau two weeks ago by her son and daughter-in-law for medical treatment. Once there, her son, whom she identified as Lee Kwong-wah (38), put her in a boarding house and gave her \$200HK. The couple then took her identity card and travel documents and told her to wait 'three or four days' for their return. She stayed at the boarding house for ten days until her money ran out and then took up her vigil at the hydrofoil wharf.

This latter story also received extensive radio and TV news coverage and had been heard by many of my informants who stated that such things do happen nowadays in Hong Kong and usually went on to relate cases of neglect or abuse with which they themselves were familiar. Such cases of abandonment are few, but the fact that they can happen at all coupled with the fact that problems rather than success stories dominate the mass media lead easily to the conclusion that the fate of the elderly in Hong Kong does not accord with traditional expectations.

In my research I have attempted to determine what substance actually lies behind the two opposing images I presented above. In this chapter I will look first at the residence patterns of the elderly. Of course there is much more to a description of family relations besides residence patterns, but since living with or apart from one's children seems to be a particularly emotional issue, I think it is an instructive one with which to begin. Although there are a number of studies, e.g., Mitchell (1972a), as well as census data dealing with residence and household composition in Hong Kong, these studies all suffer from one limitation, namely that they are all cross-sectional in nature. We see what a given

person is doing at a given time, but we lack any insight into his previous living situation. For example, it is one thing to know that a certain percentage of elderly parents are living with a married son, but whether they moved in with that son after a substantial period of separate residence or have lived continuously with that son have quite different implications for such relational variables as power and authority. A 65-year-old man who still contributes financially to the family and lets his newly married son bring a daughter-in-law into his household is in a very different position from a 75-year-old man who is no longer financially independent and has been invited by his son and daughter-in-law to move into their household. Therefore, for a better understanding of parent-child ties a history of the residence pattern is critical. In the course of my research in addition to asking specifically about prior residential history, I have also had the opportunity to observe some informants undergoing changes in either household composition or residence.

Although the number of my informants living in homes for the aged nearly equals the number of those living in the community, this is not a reflection of their actual numerical representation in Hong Kong. Residents of homes for the aged actually constitute a very tiny proportion of the elderly population, i.e., of the approximately 400,000 people over the age of 60 in Hong Kong less than one percent live in such institutions. However, since it is these elderly who loom large in public consciousness and whose fate is pondered by many other old people living in the community, I think it is instructive to examine some of their characteristics.

In the 1960s and 1970s there was a proliferation of old people's homes in Hong Kong such that by July 1976, the Social Welfare Department

(HKS July 1, 1976) listed 27 institutions providing residential care for 3,353 persons. Of these persons, 2,878 were in ordinary homes for the aged; 359 were in three hostels for the aged, and 116 were in two care and attention homes. In addition there was a waiting list of about 1,200 people seeking admission. Were these people abandoned by their children such as the ones we heard of above? Usually they were not.

The majority of people in homes for the aged simply do not have any children in Hong Kong, and, indeed, frequently have no relatives at all in Hong Kong. The reasons for this state of affairs include: (1) having never married, (2) having lost them all in infancy or during warfare, and (3) having left them all behind in China. Less than one-quarter of the informants, i.e., 21 out of 98, had children in Hong Kong prior to entry into a home, and the reasons for not now living with them vary greatly. Twelve people had only one surviving daughter. In most cases the daughter had long lived with her husband often with his parents as well. If the parent had been living with the daughter, it was usually an economic hardship which drove them to separate. In only a couple of cases was it apparent that there were bad relations between mother and daughter.

In no case had a man lived alone with his daughter prior to entering the home though two couples had so done. There seems to be a fairly strong resistance to the idea of living with daughters even among men who really have no other alternatives. One of my community informants who was in semi-retirement though still living with and being supported by his employer sighed that maybe it was all right for a woman to live with her daughters, but it would be "embarrassing" for a man. At that time he had three married daughters in Hong Kong and was considering

going to a home for the aged. When his daughters and employer heard of this plan, however, they raised such protests that he decided to remain with his employer.

The situation for people having a son or sons in Hong Kong was somewhat different. Nearly everyone who had at least one locatable son in Hong Kong had lived with him prior to entering the home. What, then, led to their separation?

- (1) In one case it was for the man's own health. He suffered from high blood pressure, and the doctor had advised him to move to a more quiet environment. His wife stayed on with the children, and the whole family lives in the same housing estate as the informant, and they have frequent interaction.
- (2) In another case the son died, and the daughter-in-law had to go out to work. His wife stayed on to look after the grandchildren while he came to a home to lessen the burden.
- (3) In another case the son had only recently been discharged from a home for the handicapped. His mother had previously worked at the same place, but about the time her son was released, she was too old to continue work. He could not support her so she came to a home.
- (4) One man had returned to China to live with his younger son, but on finding that he was not wanted came back to Hong Kong to seek his older son, an unmarried seaman. Unfortunately he was unable to locate him. He then lived for several months with his elder brother's son's family in the same housing estate where he now lives in a hostel.

- (5) Another man also failed to locate his older son so he lived with his younger son. However, it was clear that their relationship was not good, and he applied to move into the neighboring hostel. He has not seen his son for several months and takes a dim view of intergenerational living. "Quarrels are inevitable," he said.
- (6) One man with several children living in Hong Kong had lived with one of his sons in a carpenter shop, but for obscure reasons moved into a home. This man showed some signs of mental incompetency, and this may have been a factor in his removal from his son's residence.
- (7) A woman was removed from her elder son's residence (and not picked up by any of her other children) because of her very poor eyesight.
- (8) Another woman served as a domestic servant in her adopted elder son's home until she broke her leg. Thereafter she lived with them for several years until another relative, her husband's elder sister's daughter, suggested she enter a home.
- (9) One woman came to Hong Kong from China in the 1960s to find that her stepson did not want her to move in with him. She then lived alone and attempted to support herself until she was hospitalized. She came to the home from the hospital.

As the above listing suggests people come to the homes for a wide variety of reasons, but usually there is some precipitating incident that makes it difficult to maintain the status quo. The death or moving away of a key household member is a frequent reason, but the most common reasons seem to

be illness (acute or chronic) or loss of dwelling, usually because it is torn down but sometimes because the owner reclaims it. The loss of dwelling poses such a great problem because it often means the dissolution of the neighborhood or of co-tenant ties that cushioned the old person during times of crisis. A significant proportion of people come into the homes as the result of a gradual loss of health, inability to continue employment, overcrowding, exhaustion of savings, or a combination of these factors.

The majority of the residents were previously employed in traditional sectors of the economy, e.g., unskilled labor or domestic work, and as such did not have any fixed age of retirement. Most worked until they simply could work no longer. If they had been long-term employees, they often continued to be looked after by the employer and to perform nominal tasks. In the case of domestic servants, it was often the employer who attempted to place the elderly retainer when he either was no longer able to support her or planned to emigrate. Women employed as short-term domestics usually looked out for their own interests and maintained a bedspace or other accommodation to which they could go between jobs or retired to live with other retired domestic servants (Green Paper 1977: 21).

If entrance to old people's homes is primarily the consequence of not having children in Hong Kong, then it would seem that the majority of the elderly have little to worry about. Of the 99 people I visited in the community only 15 had no children in Hong Kong. There were, however, 13 people with children who were not living with them. In four of these situations the couples represented what was left after all

the children had moved out. (See Tables 2-5 for a summary of the residence patterns.) In all four of these cases the couples had previously lived with the only or youngest son until he married or moved out after marriage. Three people, including the man with three married daughters mentioned earlier, live with employers, but one of these, a 68-year-old woman, spends her day off with one or the other of her two children.

The remaining six informants, all in their seventies or eighties, though having children live alone. In two of these cases it is likely that the child is in fact a stepchild or an adopted child, and the informants have occasionally shared living accommodations with them. Despite a hostile relationship between one of these informants and her daughter-in-law, the adopted son arranged several years ago for his mother to live closer to his family so that he could look after her. In the other case, the informant sometimes lived in the rural New Territories with her son (or stepson), but usually lived in the urban area in a bedspace. On our second visit to her, we found that she had joined her son in the New Territories following a recent hospitalization.

Another woman has not lived with her only son since he moved out on marriage twenty or more years ago to live in a workers' hostel. This old lady is quite distressed with her present circumstances as she has received notice that the building in which she lives will be torn down in a few months, and she fears the destruction of her extensive social network. Two others cannot live with their daughters because there is no space, but they continue to have good relations with them, and the daughters attempt to support them. One of these women also has an

Summary of Residence Patterns of 99 Elderly Chinese in Hong Kong

Table 2: Informant Married and Living with Spouse

Spouse Only	4
Unmarried Child(ren)	17
Unmarried and Married Children Together	7
Married Child	8
Total	36

Table 3: Informant Widowed or Separated with Children in Hong Kong

Unmarried Child(ren)	4
Unmarried and Married Children Together	6
Married Child	29
Alone	6
Employer	3
Other	0
Total	48

Table 4: Informant Widowed or Separated with No Children in Hong Kong

Alone	9
Employer	0
Other	4
Total	13

Table 5: Informant Single

Alone	2
Employer	0
Other	0
Total	2

unmarried son in his forties who used to support her, but about a year ago he vanished while in Macau. However, he subsequently returned to be present at his mother's death in a Hong Kong hospital.

The final case is a woman who came to Hong Kong as a last resort at the suggestion of her husband's younger brother's wife in Hong Kong and the urgings of her neighbors in China. She has had no contact with a daughter in Hong Kong, and she is quite miserable as she fears that the apartment which she now tends will be sold by the owners, and she will be out on the street. A number of these individuals appear to be candidates for admission to homes for the aged, but they are not enthusiastic about this prospect. Stated objections included the reluctance to lose contact with present associates and the fear of mistreatment by the staff of the home.

Now we shall take a look at perhaps the most significant category of informants (significant in that they are numerically the greatest proportion of older people in Hong Kong), the elderly living with children. I have divided this population of 71 into three categories in the hope of discovering whether there is any one pattern of parent-child residential history emerging in Hong Kong today. The first category consists of 21 informants presently living with unmarried children. The second contains 13 informants living with married and unmarried children together, and the third category contains 37 informants living with the family of a married child. Some quite interesting features other than the marital status of the children distinguish these categories. For example, in the 21 cases of parents living with unmarried children, we are witness to the gradual reduction of family size characteristic of the

middle stage of the family life cycle. In 20 of these 21 cases, the parents have lived continuously with these children since giving birth to them. In 17 of these cases, the married couple itself is still intact. Of these 21 families, 11 have children who have already married out.

In the United States it is customary to think of this phase of the family life cycle as the experience of parents in their forties or fifties. In Hong Kong, however, this is not currently the case for several reasons. First, few children move out to pursue higher education. While some do move out for reasons of work or possibly conflict, most do not move out for reasons other than matrimony. The present average age at first marriage for males is in the late twenties. Secondly, we are in many cases not talking of families of two or three children but rather of five or six. As one woman said, "Women are expected to bear children until they can bear no more." In the past ten years, the Family Planning Association has been vigorously promoting the small family ideal with considerable success, but this cannot have an impact on those families already completed. Therefore, many people are in their sixties and even seventies with unmarried children at home.

Another factor leading especially to older men having unmarried children at home is that of having second families. Six of the 21 families still having unmarried children at home are in fact second families for the husband. In some cases these are remarried widowers. In others they are polygynous unions though in all cases the primary wife is not co-resident. Since 1971 it has been illegal in Hong Kong to accord a woman secondary wife status, but previous unions have not been affected, and many Hong Kong residents are convinced the practice

continues but less openly. On the other hand, traditional values frowned on remarriage of a widow though among the poor such remarriage did occur. None of my female informants admitted to being a remarried widow though they freely acknowledged being secondary wives. However, some of the secondary wives of my male informants appear to have been previously married. At least two women brought along children of their own by a previous union. This differential remarriage pattern means, of course, that there are considerably more childless old women than childless old men.

The second category, families containing both married and unmarried children, are presumably those in the process of reorganization, i.e., daughters are going out, and daughters-in-law are coming in. However, closer observation suggests that this is definitely a minority pattern and an unstable one as well. Of the 13 families in this category, six have what might be called special circumstances, and three others were unstable situations, i.e., in the less than two years that I knew the families, the living arrangements changed. The special circumstances tended to be of two types: either the parental residence was very large or the spouse of the co-resident married child was absent by reason of employment or separation. In three of the remaining four cases, the son had been married for less than two years and would perhaps move out later as his family size increased. In the final case, a widow and her younger son had been invited to Hong Kong by the elder son to help out her daughter-in-law after the war. The problem of space is often cited as a reason for families having to break up, i.e., a young man bringing in his wife will simply have no privacy therefore he moves out though frequently nearby.

In looking at the third category, that of informants living with only a married child, we find that of these 37 cases, 22 live with sons and 15 live with daughters. For a society traditionally based on patrilineal ties, it is at first glance surprising to find so many old people living with these supposedly married-out women. It is tempting to speculate that in Hong Kong the absence of any territorially-defined exogamic units means that daughters do not now necessarily live in areas far removed from their natal families. Thus, in the city a move into a daughter's household does not have the same social implications it would have had traditionally, i.e., a daughter's parents are not leaving their own territory and moving into a village in which they probably have few contacts. However, the absence of the exogamous patrilineal village does not seem to be the factor behind the high proportion of daughter-related families. What we are observing is not a new preference, but the result of a basic demographic fact. Of these 15 daughter-related families, 12 have no alternative sons. What of the remaining three cases? One old lady has, in addition to her daughter, a son, but he has been in a mental institution for a number of years. Another woman had previously lived with one of her sons, but due to a space problem moved in with a daughter. Later, when the space problem was resolved, she returned to live with the son. The only puzzler is the case of a couple with two sons and four daughters. The couple had parcelled themselves out among the daughters, and my informant would not discuss the matter further.

Of the 22 people living with sons, 13 lived with their only son. Of those who had more than one son living in Hong Kong, three lived with the oldest son; one lived with a middle, and five lived with the youngest.

In all of these cases, the parents seem to have lived with this youngest son all along. Mitchell (1972a:361) also found that among adult men having a brother or a sister living in Hong Kong, youngest sons were more likely to house their parents than older ones, i.e., 63 percent of them, in contrast to 43 percent of the first sons and 38 percent of the others, housed a parent. However, he does not differentiate between married and unmarried adult children. When all but the final son have married and moved out, he seems either to delay marriage or to marry but remain with the parents.

It is also instructive to look at the parent-married child residence pattern from another angle, namely that of stability, i.e., have the parent and child always been together or did they come together only after some period of separate residence. Fourteen represented continuous co-residence while 23 represented discontinuous co-residence. All cases of discontinuous co-residence meant the moving of the parent to the household of the child, and in the vast majority of these cases meant a dependent older person, usually a widowed mother, moving in with an adult accustomed to running his or her own home. The implication of this for the division of power and authority in the home should be clear. In Mitchell's (1972a:359) study of older people (those aged 55 or more), 56 percent of the widowed fathers living with their children owned or were the principal tenant of the residence whereas this was true for only 14 percent of the widowed mothers. However, if both aged parents lived with the adult children, then 85 percent of the older parents were the owners or renters according to the old father. According to their wives, however, only 62 percent were in fact the principal tenants--an interesting discrepancy!

Again Mitchell does not indicate whether he is discussing married or unmarried adult children.

Why did these 23 families reunite? In 12 cases the older person was being rescued from what was regarded as an abysmal situation in China though in at least three of these rescues, the older person also was seen as a major source of household help. Of the 11 parents who had been in Hong Kong all along, the reasons for resuming co-residence were, in four cases, a specific residence problem, e.g., destruction of the previous dwelling; in three cases, the parent could no longer find employment; in another three cases, physical infirmity provided the need, and in one case, widowhood. Living together with one's children does not mean the resolution of all problems. It may well mean the sharing of the goods that the family has to offer, but many families are unable to offer very much, and it was regrettably the case that I encountered situations in which co-residence served to exacerbate already bad relationships.

An important point to keep in mind is that non-co-residence of daughters-in-law is not a new phenomenon in Hong Kong. As Mitchell (1972a:230-231) demonstrates many married women did not move in with their parents-in-law even as long as 30 years ago.

For example . . . 57 percent of the wives age 55 and over, 45 percent of those age 45-54, 32 percent age 35-44, and 24 percent age 34 and under moved in with their parents-in-law after marriage. If only the women married in Hong Kong are considered, then there has been no historical trend in residence patterns within the past 15 years. . . . Since Hong Kong has so many migrants, it is quite likely that many people who married in the Colony could not move in with their parents simply because their parents lived in China.

Rosen (1976:4) reporting on the family structure of upper middle class couples in Hong Kong found that of the 11 couples (out of her sample of

20) who lived in nuclear families, six had done so since the inception of the marriage, but the remaining five had started out in the parental household. Generally this meant that the younger or youngest of the children continued in the relatively large parental home in order to save money for an apartment into which they would move following the birth of their first child. As Rosen (1976:10-11) points out, the "volitional" nature of this co-residence contributes to a better mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship since all family members are aware that the younger couple can afford to move out if the situation becomes unpleasant.

Data from other studies, i.e., Wong (1969:138), Hong (1970:95-98), and Mitchell (1972a:28), all indicate that two generation households predominate in Hong Kong with more than two-thirds of all households falling into this category. Approximately one-quarter of Hong's secondary students and 29 percent of Wong's university students live in stem families, i.e., three-generation households. Only two percent of Hong's and one percent of Wong's students live in joint families. Both Hong (1970:101) and Mitchell (1972a:28) are impressed by the relative frequency with which the stem family shows a "matrilateral tendency," i.e., includes the wife's mother. However, as I have demonstrated from my own data, this arrangement is primarily the result of demographic factors. The vast majority of parents living with married daughters do so out of necessity--they have no sons. As I will show in the next section, very practical, not simply ideological, considerations contribute to the persistence of the patrilocal stem family.

Mitchell raised the issue of residential preferences in old age with his sample and found that the least educated and those with the

lowest family income most supported patrilocal residence patterns

(1972a:337). Hong also found that his data (1970:201):

showed that the family of the upper economic strata, which has a greater likelihood of exposure to Western culture, has a higher tendency to exhibit characteristics bearing resemblance of the Western industrial family patterns, as compared to the family in lower economic strata.

These similarities were in family structure, concepts of property ownership, and in style of husband-wife interaction. Rosen (1976:11) found that couples most similar to the parental generation in income and education got along best with their elders presumably because there is less of a generation gap. Families which are most likely to be caught by the generation gap are those sending their first generation of students to secondary schools. The tragedy inherent in this situation is that these are also the families most likely to favor intergenerational co-residence and most likely to need it on economic grounds. In other words, in many cases, co-residence is not a matter of positive affect but a matter of necessity and obligation.

In summary, although nuclear families predominate in Hong Kong, the patrilocal stem family is the second most frequently occurring type. Furthermore, old people without sons can usually reside with, or at least count upon, their daughters. Wealthier and highly educated families show more features resembling Western families than do poor families. Present evidence suggests that traditional cultural values have eroded mainly in the upper classes. In the lower classes regardless of value changes, the absolute need of assistance on the part of most elderly parents means a continuance of the traditional pattern of reliance on sons. Co-residence is now more likely to be with younger than with older sons and to be discontinuous, i.e., the children move out on marriage leaving the parental

couple alone. Later, widowhood, illness, or poverty lead to a resumption of co-residence.

3. Intergenerational Relations

While most old people genuinely enjoy being with their children and grandchildren, the motivations behind co-residence are not necessarily primarily affective in nature. I once naively asked an informant whether she "liked" living with her son, and I was quickly set straight. "It is not a question of liking or not liking. He is my son, and I should follow him." When asked why they preferred to live with their children rather than apart, most parents did not give very specific reasons, but of those giving specific reasons, twice as many indicated their own need of assistance as indicated their desire for sociability.

Since I felt that people would be reluctant to express their dissatisfaction with living with their children even if they were dissatisfied, I tried to tap their feelings on intergenerational relations more indirectly, i.e., by asking whether they thought it was better for married children (in general) to live with their parents or to live separately from their parents. Of the 75 respondents, 40 indicated that living together was most desirable, and the reason most frequently cited was that the older person usually needed someone to look after him. Another 19 respondents felt that it was hard to say because so much depended upon the circumstances of the individuals involved, and 16 individuals felt that separation of the generations was preferable primarily because of different interests and differences of opinion between the generations.

Looking at the nay-sayers more closely, I found a sexual bias, i.e., although the absolute numbers were the same, eight males and eight females, the proportions were quite different. Of the total respondents, 29 percent of the men but only 17 percent of the women were opposed to intergenerational living. Wondering to what extent the negative attitudes were perhaps a reflection of inexperience with adult children (thus leaving the individual more open to the influence of negative stereotyping), I examined the number of children these 16 respondents had in Hong Kong. A very interesting U-curve resulted. Of those people having no children in Hong Kong, 29 percent favored residential separation as did 29 percent of those having four or more children in Hong Kong. Among those parents having only one to three children locally, 13 percent favored separation. Perhaps parents of large families were more likely to perceive opportunities for disagreement with at least some of their children given the probability of greater crowding. But it is important to keep in mind that I am discussing here the responses made to the question of intergenerational living in general, not to the question do you like living with your own children or would you rather live apart.

The kinds of differences of opinions that emerge between the generations are many and varied, but one evening while I was visiting with Mrs. Yu, a recent widow in her early sixties, a very revealing discussion occurred. Her oldest son, who had married and moved out since my first visit in 1974, as well as a couple of her unmarried children sat in the room where we were chatting and listened silently while their mother talked long and loudly about the circumstances of the elderly. According to Mrs. Yu, old people in Hong Kong have many difficulties, and

these could best be resolved by the government's establishing of more homes for the aged. Furthermore, these should not just be homes for the penniless, but homes in which people of different economic status could live paying according to their resources. Nowadays, she felt, it was too great a burden for young people to take care of their parents because they also have to pay rent, school fees, and raise their own children first; then there is no money left over for the care of the parents.

She pointed out that in her day people were proud to save money and to wear the same clothes for a long time. One person would proudly point to a garment and say "I paid \$20 for this," and the other would add with greater pride, "I paid only \$15 for mine." Nowadays, however, people compete to spend more money, e.g., a youngster will show you a shirt and announce that he paid \$50 for it, and then the other will proudly announce that he paid \$60 for his. Nowadays people also need radios and television sets to keep them happy. It was clear that Mrs. Yu did not approve of the way her adult children were spending their money, and since she had been widowed only a few months earlier, she was perhaps afraid that she would lose what little control she had over their expenditures.

When she had finished talking, her oldest son could no longer restrain himself and exclaimed that he could not understand why old people needed so much money. If they had a large sum of money, he ventured, they wouldn't know what to do with it and would probably spend it on a trip around the world! He clearly resented the fact that his mother gambled away much of her money playing mah jong. He added that so far as he

could see old people in financial difficulties should blame themselves for their plight. "Why didn't they save money before? Why didn't they marry later? Why did they have so many children (he has seven younger siblings)?" I mentioned that in the old days parents arranged the marriages and the individual had little say, and then, once married, the couple were almost under orders to have children right away at which point Mrs. Yu enthusiastically endorsed my remarks with the Cantonese equivalent of "You said it!" (mouh cho).

I also mentioned that in those days there was the expectation of reciprocity. As a parent, I cared for you when you were helpless; now that I am helpless, you should aid me, but that it was not now working out that way. The son then replied that his own plan was to travel around the world (since he is an employee of an airline, this is a realistic possibility), find the place that most suited him, settle there, and save money. Then when he is old, he will be able to give money to people instead of having to ask them for it!

Mrs. Yu had earlier said that a major problem of older people was that they had no one to talk to, i.e., they could not talk with young people because their ways of thinking and their interests were so dissimilar. Young people want to go to the beach or picnics, but old people do not like to do those things. She admitted that her own children urge her to go out and walk around for the exercise, but she said she was too lazy to do so. Other parents have complained about their children's taste in clothes, e.g., with reference to style, expense, or considerations of modesty. The style of dress of a daughter-in-law is an even greater issue.

Other informants have expressed doubts about the way young people select their mates. Seventy-one year old Mr. Lam had not participated in a "blind marriage." He had known his bride before the wedding as she was a relative on his mother's side and came from a village only four or five miles from his own. He thought they had a realistic knowledge of one another's character before they married, therefore there were no big surprises after the wedding. But nowadays people do not really know the character of the person they are marrying. Going to the movies or the teahouse does not provide much practice for understanding the partner's behavior in the marriage situation. Mr. Lam several times mentioned that whenever he took his little grandson for walks in the parks, such as those in the tourist district of Tsimshatsui, he would see couples everywhere. Some would be embracing; others would be sitting with the head of the one in the lap of the other. He related one case of a boy lying with his head on a girl's lap while she held a book in one hand and stroked his face with the other. They continued in this pose for an hour! Shaking his head in disgust, he culminated with a story of one girl resting her head on the chest of her boyfriend--no doubt she was getting a noseful of his armpit!

Mr. Lam made no secret of his difficulty in understanding the younger generation. About 15 years ago when his jewelry and curio shop was doing little business, he spent his time writing to people overseas. He took to answering pen-pal ads in magazines and ultimately acquired over 100 pen-pals in nearly every country imaginable, e.g., Fiji, Tahiti, New Zealand, Mexico, Taiwan, the United States, and Italy. Almost all of his correspondents were young, and though he claimed to have both male and

female pen-pals, he spent most of the time talking about the young girls. He spoke quite proudly of the fact that these young people told him their innermost problems, and he always tried to comfort them with his advice. One girl had a very serious family problem and was contemplating suicide, but he wrote her out of it.

He himself had never revealed his age or marital status to these friends as he feared they would immediately cease writing to him, but he said he never intended to hurt anyone. The writing, he said, was actually his way of doing anthropology, i.e., of finding out what people around the world think. It also occurred to me that in particular it seemed an effort to find out what young Chinese people think as all his correspondents were young Overseas Chinese. Was he, in fact, trying to gain greater understanding of his own children by this means? Was his pride in his ability to advise these youngsters a reflection of his possible inability to advise his own children? Although I have detailed above some of the issues which divide the generations in Hong Kong, it is important to remember that the vast majority of parents still prefer to live with their own children, and that even though there may be differences of opinion, these do not automatically result in open conflict.

A number of studies (Mitchell 1972a and b; Salaff 1974) suggest that the major way conflicts are avoided in the family is to delimit certain areas of decision-making such that the adult child assumes increasing control over matters that are of greatest concern to him, such as job and mate selection and leisure activities. Matters that pertain to the welfare of the whole family, such as where to live, whether or not younger children should continue in school, and the purchase of costly consumer

items remain more in parental hands. The younger the child and the more conventional the structure of the family, i.e., employed father and house-bound mother, the less influence the child has in family matters. Salaff (1974:22) noted that among families in which working daughters were major breadwinners

The decisions of import to the entire family that they did make were largely owing to their being economic contributors, but their income was necessary, but not sufficient, in their having the right to make decisions. Their contribution to the family income was only one of several factors that allowed the working daughters say in decisions, family composition being another. When their fathers were absent, and they were eldest siblings, the working daughters had more say in the family than when their fathers were present or when there were adult brothers at home. The family hence is more likely to recognize the daughters' position as economic contributor by giving her say in decisions in regard to herself, than by giving her an inevitable and significant say in regard to the entire family.

In my own research on the financial contributions of working unmarried children to co-resident elderly parents, I found most parents stating that the amount contributed was determined by the child and not by the parent although both parents and children shared a general idea of what was "fair."

In securing their jobs, few young people relied on their parents or relatives. The common saying "When at home rely on parents; when outside rely on friends" was usually explained to me with reference to job-seeking. According to Mitchell (1972b:172) the youngest men in his sample (those aged 18-24) were the most likely to rely on relatives for obtaining their current job, but even so this amounted to only 20 percent in contrast to 46 percent who obtained the job through friends, and 25 percent who obtained it through a direct application. Another six percent were employed in the family business. Mitchell also found a very

sharp relationship between age and self-employment, i.e., only three percent of the men aged 24 and under work for themselves in Hong Kong whereas 30 percent of the men aged 45 to 54 are self-employed. Elsewhere (1972a:365) he noted that at every level of family and personal income, the self-employed are more likely to take care of their fathers and suggests that perhaps this is an urban form of the traditional pattern, i.e., these sons inherited their jobs from their parents in the same sense that peasant sons inherited their farm lands from their parents and thus are particularly obligated to provide them care in old age. Another possibility is that because self-employment often means running a small business, a parent can continue to help out by tending to customers and performing miscellaneous chores.

Data from the Report of the Study on the Social Service Needs of the Elderly in Hong Kong (hereinafter referred to as the Social Service Needs Study) (1977:Table 8.3.4)--the report on which the Green Paper is based--found that 50.6 percent of old people were not consulted by a child about taking a job, 48.8 percent were not consulted about family planning, 45.3 percent were not consulted about the purchase of valuable goods or properties, and 28.6 percent were not consulted about the choice of a marriage partner. The study (1977:38) also stated that:

In all cases, the incidence of the elderly's advice usually being rejected after prior consultation was low. The findings might suggest that the younger generation may not consult the elderly if they estimated that their choice was unlikely to meet with the elderly's approval.

Unfortunately the answers are not broken down by sex of respondent nor by position in the family, i.e., we do not know whether a father is talking about the consulting patterns of his unmarried children or a widowed

mother is talking about those of the son she has just moved in with. It is also not clear to what extent the respondent is addressing himself to hypothetical situations or to events already past, but even so these findings are suggestive of the degree of independence now held by the younger generation.

The conclusions of Mitchell (1972b), Salaff (1974), and the 1977 study quoted above all indicate that adult children obtain jobs, spend money, and plan their family size relatively independently of their parents. Choosing a spouse is still grounds for consultation, but this is a far cry from the situation of only two generations ago when most children were not consulted by their parents in this matter. Clearly filial piety no longer requires total subordination to parental authority.

When I asked older people about the concept of filial piety and how it is operationalized in Hong Kong today, two themes emerged. The first was that co-residence is not the measure of filial piety, rather the significant point is that children should be concerned about and care for their parents. Ideally co-residence is a means to this end, but if it is not a realistic means then separate maintenance of the parents is quite acceptable. No old parents agreed with the proposition that the moving out of a son at marriage is an unfilial act. Secondly, the expression of filial piety takes different forms depending on whether the child is a son or a daughter. Parents are the financial responsibility of their sons though co-resident unmarried daughters also must contribute to the household's expenses. Salaff (1974:8) refers to a 1970 survey of 660 young factory workers aged 14 to 21 in which it was found that 40 percent of the workers gave all of their income to their

families, and 88 percent gave at least half. In her own study of 27 unmarried working daughters, Salaff reported that the family claimed a minimum of three-quarters of the girl's income. Following marriage, however, a daughter's responsibilities shift from financial support to emotional support. A filial daughter will visit her parents regularly, help out if they are ill, and continue financial support if she is able and the parents require it.

Female employment patterns are a major factor in the lesser financial role played by daughters. According to the Census (1972:74) women's participation in the labor force rose from 32 percent in 1961 to 37 percent in 1971. While female teenage employment increased during this period, male teenage employment decreased--a reflection of increasing male attendance at secondary and post-secondary educational institutions. As the daughter-in-law of one of my informants explained, "Nowadays girls are no longer considered siht bun fo ("goods on which money is lost"), because they go to work early to pay for their brothers' school fees." Female labor force participation peaks at 69.5 percent in the 20-24 age group. Shortly after marriage (at the average age of 22.7 years) and the beginning of child-bearing, female employment drops drastically--to 39.6 percent for those age 25-34--and never goes any higher. It is also likely that a significant proportion of married women work only part-time. By contrast male employment rates remain above 90 percent between the ages of 20 and 54. Women also suffer from unequal pay for equal work. As Fessler (1976:8-9) points out it was not until April 1975 following more than 25 years of efforts that women civil servants, including teachers, doctors, and nurses, were entitled to

receive the same pay as their male counterparts. Their sisters in the private sector have been less organized and presumably continue to receive unequal wages. These basic economic facts of lower labor force participation rates and unequal pay coupled with the traditional belief that a woman's income should go to her conjugal family and not to her natal family serve to limit the amount of financial assistance a married daughter can make to her elderly parents.

The nature of the economic support provided by children varies tremendously. For example, a parent living with a married child might receive no actual income from him although all his basic needs are met. Alternatively, a non-co-resident child might make monthly payments of more than \$100 HK or might send money intermittently and in very small amounts. Mitchell (1972a:369-370) reports that 65 percent of the married men who still have a living parent, and 44 percent of the comparable married daughters, give their parents money. Married children are just as likely to send money to their parents in China as to their parents in Hong Kong, and parents often receive money from more than one child. According to Mitchell (1972a:371) among those aged 55 and over reporting receiving money from children, 50 percent of the couples and of the widows compared with 69 percent of the (13) widowers receive help from two or more children.

According to the Social Service Needs Study (1977:49), the median amount contributed monthly by family/relatives and friends was \$111.40 HK or \$1,336.80 annually. However, only 41 percent of the elderly receive income from this category. Some 22.8 percent receive income from employment with a monthly median of \$463.99 HK, and according to the Green

Paper (1977:6) 73 percent of those aged 75 or more receive the Infirmity Allowance. The study (1977:50) concluded that:

It was very clear from the findings that the family, relatives and friends played a primary role in the support of the elderly. The fact that less than 3 percent had a pension reflected the inadequacy of the present social security system which did not cover retirement pensions. The role of personal accumulation, e.g. from investments and savings, seemed to be negligible. Should the family be unable to support them, many would have to rely on public assistance for maintenance as the other income sources were not too significant.

On the other hand, helping is not a one-way street nor does living together imply a one-way relationship with the old parent the passive recipient of services. The majority of old people, especially women, provide many household services to their children. Among my own informants, of 45 women living with relatives (usually their children), 29 claimed major responsibility for at least two household tasks, and a majority of these performed three or more such tasks, particularly marketing, cooking, and cleaning. The tending of grandchildren seems to be considered the primary responsibility of the mother or of the older siblings of the grandchild. Eleven elderly women said that they have no household responsibilities. Of these 11, three were employed outside the home; six had health problems, and two admitted to idling the day away.

Of 31 men living with relatives (usually a spouse and children), only seven said they perform two or more household tasks whereas 20 stated that they have no household responsibilities at all. Of these seven helpful men, four have working wives; one has a disabled wife; another has both a working son and a working daughter-in-law, and the last man performs token work such as watching the door and answering the

phone when other household members are absent. How do the remaining 20 men contribute to the welfare of the family if they have no household responsibilities? Half of them are still in the work force: three full-time, four part-time, and three temporarily out of work but currently seeking employment. The remaining ten men describe themselves as retired: three of them are over 75 (such as Mr. Gou); three others are in poor health, and another is very deaf. The other three are relatively recently retired men including two who feel the burden of free time and one who does not. One of the two (Mr. Lam) subsequently rejoined the work force as a self-employed middle man in art and curio transactions-- he had at one time had his own shop doing this business.

What of relationships with non-resident children? Among my own informants, 55 have non-resident children living in Hong Kong, and while these children live in many different parts of Hong Kong, there is a tendency for them to cluster on the same side of the harbor as their parents. For example, 20 parents have their nearest non-resident child living in the same district which implies within walking distance or, at the most, a short bus ride away. Six have their nearest child in an adjacent district while 14 more have such a child on the same side of the harbor. Only nine parents have their nearest child living across the harbor. Since there are many ferries crossing the harbor as well as a tunnel used by buses and other motor vehicles, even a cross-harbor child is not necessarily far away. Six parents did not answer this question.

When asked about the communication patterns of non-resident children, 13 parents had received a visit or phone call the day of or

preceding the interview. Another 13 had visited or talked on the phone within the week preceding the interview. Six parents saw or heard from a non-resident child between a week to a month ago, and four had seen or heard from a child between one and two months ago. Nineteen parents did not respond to this question. A number of parents have several children in their own neighborhood, and these children (or one of them) not only tend to stop by daily but sometimes also take their meals with the natal family. Most of the visits and phone calls are at the initiative of the child. These figures reveal only the most recent communication with a non-resident child; some parents have additional children with whom they have less frequent contact.

When asking specifically about visiting, Mitchell (1972a:387) found that there are many adult children who see relatively little of their parents--though these are not necessarily elderly parents. Thirty-five percent of the men and 32 percent of the women who do not live with their parents say they visit them once or more a week, but 26 percent of the men and 32 percent of the women visit their parents less than once a month or never. Many of these infrequent visitors work seven days a week or have heavy family responsibilities, and Mitchell does not take into account visiting by telephone. He also found that

Married adults seem to get along quite well with their parents-in-law. . . . Fifty-eight per cent of the men and 50 per cent of the women visit their "spouse's parents" at least once a month (among those who have these parents-in-law in Hong Kong but not living with them). In fact, they visit their in-laws about as often as they visit their own parents, and instead of these forms of involvement competing with each other, they are mutually supportive. Those who visit their own parents more often are more likely to visit their parents-in-law quite often as well. (1972a:406)

He also found older parents-in-law (those aged 55 or more) reporting good relations with their children-in-law. Only four percent reported getting along "quite badly" or "very badly" with their sons-in-law though eight percent reported bad relations with a daughter-in-law.

To illustrate the variety of family situations which I encountered, I will present three case studies of families in transition, i.e., families in which adult children are in the process of moving out. Beginning with the Seun family, we find 69-year-old Mr. Seun living with his wife and two unmarried sons. In addition to the cubicle in which his two sons sleep, the family rents a double bedspace with Mrs. Seun sleeping on the upper bed and Mr. Seun on the lower. They also rent a small upper space for storage purposes. The Seuns have lived at this Shamshuipo address for six or seven years, and for the preceding seven years lived just a few doors further down the street. Consequently they are quite familiar with both their present co-tenants and their numerous neighbors. The Seuns keep both a talking bird and a very large well-fed cat.

They could easily afford to move to better private accommodations, but they had set their hearts on public housing. In the past they turned down a chance to move into public housing at Choi Hung Estate because it was too far from Mr. Seun's work place, and he feared getting dizzy riding the buses. Within the past year or so, they learned that they had lost their eligibility for public housing as the combined incomes of Mr. Seun's two younger sons (nearly \$2500 HK a month) exceeded the maximum allowable for a family of four. Ironically the government adheres to this limit only during the time of consideration of the

application; once a family moves into public housing there is no limit set on the amount of income it may have, nor is there any change made in its monthly rent.

Mr. Seun's eldest son is married and lives with his wife and four children just a few blocks away. In fact, in the winter when both he and his wife work, Mr. Seun takes the three oldest grandchildren (all primary students) to and from school while the youngest one stays with him and his wife during the day. His daughter-in-law takes her lunch break at Mr. Seun's joining her school-age children and the baby who stay on through dinner. At dinner they are joined by the eldest son who later returns to his own dwelling with his wife and children though sometimes one or two grandchildren are left with the grandparents overnight. In the summer when the children are out of school, Mr. Seun's daughter-in-law quits her job at the sewing factory to supervise the grandchildren and help out her mother-in-law. For all practical purposes, she and the grandchildren live there during the day returning home with the eldest son only at night.

Mr. Seun's youngest son (aged 26) is known as Third Uncle to the grandchildren, and it is he rather than Mr. Seun who plays the role of taskmaster when the grandchildren are around. Mr. Seun himself is very indulgent towards his one grandson and three granddaughters, and while he occasionally supervises their homework, it is Third Uncle who is likely to scold them for sloppiness or carelessness. Second Uncle is rarely around as he works on an ocean liner and returns to Hong Kong only when his contract expires. He is due back in about four months according to his most recent letter. Half of his salary is automatically sent by the

shipping company to Mr. Seun who retired several years ago. All of Mr. Seun's sons have followed in his footsteps occupationally, i.e., all are bakers: Mr. Seun, his eldest and youngest sons in hotels, and the middle son on a liner.

Mr. Seun also has two married daughters (the elder with three children and the younger with five). The younger one lived on the same street as her parents up until a year ago when her family moved to public housing near Tsuen Wan. She used to come by every day, but now that is not possible. The older daughter lives with her family in government quarters for the fire service in the same district as her parents, and she comes by at least once a week. Neither of the Seun daughters is living with her parents-in-law. One set of in-laws lives in Macao (where the Seuns lived for several years), and the other set is deceased. Mrs. Seun's brother also works on a liner and stays with the Seuns between contracts.

After a morning in the teahouse drinking and reading the paper, Mr. Seun returns to his bedspace for a nap. In the afternoon he watches television or plays mah jong with his neighbors. He pronounces himself quite content with his present situation. His health is good (though his poor vision somewhat restricts his travels); his sons provide for him, and he is able to fill his time in playing with his grandchildren, snacking, or socializing with his neighbors, co-tenants, and former workmates who drop by occasionally. The snug security of Mr. and Mrs. Seun would doubtless be a source of envy for another couple in Hong Kong, Mr. and Mrs. Tai.

When I first met the Tai family of parents and two unmarried daughters, the four of them lived in one of the older resettlement estates and were very dissatisfied with their surroundings. The room they lived in was so small that one of the daughters had to sleep on the floor at night, and their neighbors were rough and rowdy young men. The two daughters were the sole supports of the family as Mr. Tai (then aged 63) had quit work a few years earlier for health reasons. He had worked at construction sites as a dynamite blaster. However, he had suffered from high blood pressure which made him dizzy and eventuated in a stroke which left him partially paralyzed. Fortunately following his hospitalization, he had taken acupuncture treatments which restored his ability to move. He still required monthly check-ups, and whenever he went out for exercise had to be accompanied by his wife.

In the next year and a half both his familial and his health circumstances underwent great changes. Both of his daughters married and moved out; not only did they move out of the resettlement estate, but they moved completely out of Hong Kong! One daughter married a Westerner who worked in the firm where she was a secretary and went to live in the southern United States. The other married an Overseas Chinese living in San Francisco. Both daughters continue to support their parents financially and keep in touch by letter. Both called long distance at Lunar New Year, and one has already begun proceedings to bring her parents to the States. She emphasizes, however, that her father should be in good health to be sure of the approval of their application.

Unfortunately, Mr. Tai's health has continued to decline. In the month preceding my visit to him, he had been hospitalized three times

(twice with kidney/bladder obstructions and once with constipation). At the time of the interview, he was in a dazed state--whether as a consequence of taking medication or of genuine mental deterioration I do not know, but he was still alert to some things. When his harried wife began to make inquiries about homes for the aged, he quickly burst out with "I don't want that! I don't want that!" Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Tai has any other close relative in Hong Kong as they came here in 1949 as refugees. Mr. Tai knows that there are some cousins in Hong Kong, but he has had no contact with them for years. For these two parents the future is very uncertain.

Like the Tais', the Leungs' household consists of a set of parents and their two unmarried daughters, both in their twenties. Mr. Leung (aged 66) retired two and a half years ago after more than 40 years with a shipping company. At the time of his retirement from the position of tug-boat pilot, he received a lump sum payment of \$30,000 HK. Now the family is supported by the two daughters. Second Daughter teaches in a pre-primary Christian school (she is a Christian) and contributes \$2-300 HK a month to the family. The Third Daughter contributes \$3-400 HK a month.

The Leungs' oldest daughter married five years ago and lives with her husband and two small children in Hung Hom, not far from her parents' residence in Ho Man Tin Estate. When she decided to marry a co-worker from the factory, they agreed that they would not move in with his mother who is now living with her own daughter. She continued to work until the birth of her first child. Now that her second child is nearly two years old, she has stopped doing plastic flower work at home and gone

to work in a factory making watch bands. Mrs. Leung stays with the grandchildren in Hung Hom, though the daughter is able to return and share lunch with them. Sometimes Mr. Leung, in the course of his daily walks, joins them for lunch and even dinner. In fact, Mrs. Leung has just about taken up residence with her eldest daughter as she returns to spend the night at Ho Man Tin only once or twice a week. In addition to providing meals to her parents, the oldest daughter also occasionally gives them money.

Mr. Leung is in reasonably good health though a few months after his retirement, he was operated on for an ulcer. Even though he had suffered from stomach trouble for over five years, he had put off the operation. He explained that so long as he was working, he could attend the union clinic for free treatment, but that once he retired, he had to pay for private doctors himself or go to a public clinic. Ultimately he went to a public clinic and was advised to have surgery. He had also delayed the operation because he feared that once his employers learned of it, they would force him to retire. This was their right as technically he should have retired at 60, but his boss had allowed him to work until the age of 64. Mr. Leung also admitted that he had been doubtful of the ability of the young doctors to perform the surgery successfully . . . in the Chinese medical tradition, surgery has been one of the least prestigious specialties. To maintain his good health, Mr. Leung has been advised to eat small quantities of food and tea many times a day and to exercise every day--thus his long daily walks.

Unlike the Tais who came to Hong Kong in 1949 as refugees, the Leungs have long been established in Hong Kong. Both Mr. Leung's father

and grandfather are buried in Hong Kong, and he has three younger brothers here. He and his wife are boat people who moved ashore only twelve years ago, and all of his brothers are still employed in some aspect of marine work. They were not originally a fishing family but a transport family and formerly lived in a boat moored in the typhoon shelter. Now even his son-in-law is involved in marine work having joined a government department as an inspector checking boats for smuggled goods. The Leungs are nostalgic about their water-borne existence and like to contrast the co-operativeness of the boat people with the selfishness of the land people. When crossing from Kowloon to Hong Kong, Mr. Leung has not yet taken the tunnel bus preferring instead to cross by ferry.

Mr. Leung appears to be on good terms with his brothers (he has no sisters) and with several of his former co-workers who live in the same area, but he too has his worries. For one thing, he is bored to death! He wants desperately to find a part-time job that will not require too much physical labor, but he does not know how to find one. Secondly, he is concerned about his future. The dwelling unit he now occupies is intended for occupancy by a family of four; should one member drop out, the remaining three are allowed to stay on. Should two members drop out, however, the remaining two will have to leave the housing estate as there are no units certified for the use of such a small household. Until about a year ago, Housing Department policy required all children to move out upon marriage so as to avoid overcrowding. Because this policy was detested by residents and frequently violated, the government compromised by permitting the parents to select one child to stay on after

marriage, and the younger couple would ultimately succeed to the tenancy (the selected child could be either a son or a daughter).

What will happen when his two remaining daughters marry? Mr. Leung said that his wife has discussed this problem with the daughters, but no decision was reached, and the second daughter had kept pretty quiet which Mr. Leung interpreted as a lack of enthusiasm. He suspects that his third daughter will marry before the second. If she moves out, they will be left with the second daughter. But what if she too moves out on marriage? Mr. Leung has never directly stated this, but they appear to have their coolest relationship with this second daughter. At the age of 16 she was converted to Christianity on her own initiative having been a student at a missionary school in the typhoon shelter. At first her parents were opposed to her conversion, but they have since grown used to it. The rest of the family are not Christian, and they still keep shrines to the earth, sky, and kitchen gods. Second Daughter will not eat the foods prepared as offerings to these gods.

Although the Leungs have only daughters, families with sons face exactly the same problem. In private housing there is no limit on household size with respect to the type of accommodation (other than comfort and financial resources), but such a limitation in public housing means decisions must be made by the children long before the parents reach the stage of physical infirmity that usually signals the reunification of a household. Since 41 percent of the Hong Kong population currently live in public housing--and this proportion is steadily growing, a substantial number of families must deal with this problem. In terms of intergenerational relations, this period of declining family size is probably the

most anxiety-producing. The other period of great distress occurs at the time of illness or widowhood when the older person realizes he can no longer make it on his own, and his children are forced to work out their responsibilities to their parents.

Actually among my primarily working class informants, tenancy rights in public (or private) housing seems to be the major "good" an elderly parent can bequeath to a child. I did not pursue the topic of inheritance in my interviews, but it was clear in a number of cases that the parent had no assets and in other cases that the distribution of property occurred long before the death with the co-resident child(ren) receiving the greater share. According to Hong Kong law, a person may dispose of his property in a will as he sees fit, i.e., subject to no requirement of providing for particular categories of relatives. Should a person die without a will and legal action be necessitated in disposing of his property, a complex set of rules of succession is followed.

According to the Intestates' Estates Ordinance of 1971, the three most significant categories of kin are children, spouses, and parents. In the presence of any two of these categories, the property is divided fifty-fifty--with one exception. Children receive full inheritance even if the deceased's parents are still alive. In the absence of two of these categories, the one remaining receives the full inheritance--again with one exception. If the deceased has left behind siblings as well as a spouse (but not a child or parents), the siblings and spouses divide the inheritance fifty-fifty. In the absence of all three of the above categories of kin, the siblings (defined as children of the same father) inherit the estate. In the absence of siblings, the grandparents

inherit, and in their absence, the siblings of the deceased's parents inherit. In their absence, the estate reverts to the discretion of the Crown.

One important change brought about by the 1971 ordinance pertains to the rights of concubines (secondary wives) and their children. If the concubinage was entered into prior to 1971, i.e., prior to the enactment of the Marriage Reform Ordinance outlawing concubinage, the inheritance rights of the secondary wife's children are the same as those of any other children of the deceased. The concubine herself, however, is entitled to less than a primary wife. Women entering the no longer officially recognized status of concubine after 1971 have no rights of inheritance nor do their children. It is my impression that very few elderly Chinese have wills, and in cases where there is no real property and very little in the way of personal chattels, the distribution of goods does not require legal action. Any savings that the old person has been able to put aside are likely to be used for his funeral.

In summary, the relations between elderly parents and their adult children vary greatly. The closer the two generations are in income and education the less the "generation gap" and the better they get along. The generation gap manifests itself in a variety of ways: in different attitudes towards spending and family size, in the processes of mate selection, and in preferred activities. Nevertheless, these differences do not inevitably lead to intergenerational conflict because: (1) children have the option of moving out and restricting interaction, (2) adult children have acquired primary control over the decisions of greatest personal importance, and (3) children avoid situations of

potential disagreement by not consulting their parents on sensitive issues.

Despite the possible friction these differences can cause, most parents and children continue to be involved in extensive mutual support systems. One reason for such mutual support is that filial obligations are expected to transcend personal feelings, i.e., "it is not a question of liking or not liking," but equally, if not more, important is the fact that the two generations genuinely benefit from their interaction. Elderly parents may be housed, clothed, and/or fed by adult children, but for their part, elderly parents, especially women, contributed a substantial proportion of labor to the households of the children. Mr. Leung's eldest daughter, for example, would not be able to work if her mother did not care for her two young children. Mr. Seun's daughter-in-law is in the same position.

Both the Leung and the Seun family situations illustrate the dangers of concentrating exclusively on household composition. By residence criteria both these families are clearly nuclear families, i.e., elderly married couples with their unmarried children, but by relational criteria, such as aid flows and visiting, they are clearly what Litwak (1965) describes as modified extended families. While not all non-co-resident children have as intense relationships with their parents as the eldest Leung daughter and the eldest Seun son, my own observations suggest that most parents have a close relationship with either a co-resident child or at least one of their non-co-resident children. On the other hand, the close ties of some children permit the very loose ties of their siblings. Thus, some children make no financial contributions to their parents and pay only infrequent visits on holidays or ceremonial occasions.

4. Relations with Collateral Kin

In Hong Kong, collateral kin, i.e., siblings, aunts/uncles, cousins, and nieces/nephews, do not seem to be a major source of interaction or of assistance. A major reason for this is the absence of collateral kin. Among my 99 community informants, for example, only a minority of 24 have any siblings in Hong Kong: 14 have one sibling; four have two; four have three, and two have four or more. Sixty-five have no siblings in Hong Kong, and another 10 either did not answer the question or do not know the whereabouts of their siblings. Some of my respondents were clearly the last survivors of their generation whereas others had left siblings behind in China (25 cases) or seen them migrate overseas (5 cases). However, those having brothers or sisters in Hong Kong do not appear to have much interaction with them. Only five people could remember having seen such a relative within the past two months, and this includes three who had contact within the past 24 hours. Those old people with brothers and sisters in China have almost as much contact with them (albeit by letter) as do those having such relatives in Hong Kong. I encountered no cases of elderly siblings living in the same household though there were a few cases in which they lived in the same neighborhood, and there was one case in which the families of a brother and a sister occupied adjacent units in a resettlement estate.

The relationship of adult siblings who have long lived apart seems problematic. It is not clear what, if any, responsibilities they have towards each other beyond ritual visits at the New Year or Ching Ming festival (the spring ancestor worshipping occasion). Smith (1970:251) reported that:

the mere act of dividing property seems to extinguish all sense of responsibility whatever for the nearest kin. It is often replied when we ask why a Chinese does not help his son or his brother who has a large family and nothing in the house to eat, "We have divided some time ago."

Once when I was asking about relatives outside the household, an old man said he had no such relatives whereupon his daughter burst in with "What about Uncle So-and-so?" The old man shook his head bitterly and said, "He wouldn't help me when I needed him. I no longer consider him my brother."

According to Mitchell (1972a:429) 31 percent of the older people who have non-resident grandchildren in Hong Kong never visit with them whereas 39 percent say they visit with them at least once a month. For those who have nieces and nephews in Hong Kong, 44 percent never visit with them whereas only 12 percent see them at least once a month. The initiative for such visits lies with the younger person as Chinese custom prescribes that juniors should go to seniors and not vice versa. Three of my community informants were living with a "nephew" or a "niece," but in fact these were not the children of their siblings but of co-villagers of the same generation status.

To measure the involvement of adults generally in the wider kin network, Mitchell (1972b:473-474) asked "Besides those who live and work with you, how often do you get together with your siblings, uncles, aunts, and first-cousins for a half-hour or more of relaxing and talking?" He found that only 22 percent of the Hong Kong population who have such relatives in Hong Kong see them as often as two or three times a month. Among comparable Chinese interviewed by Mitchell, the Hong Kong Chinese had the weakest involvement in kin networks, i.e., 55 percent of Malaysian

Chinese, 43 percent of Singapore Chinese, 43 percent of Bangkok Chinese, and 38 percent of Taipei Chinese reported seeing collateral kin as often as two or three times a month (or more). Mitchell (1972a:421-422) reporting on financial assistance between collateral kin found that non-kin were actually more likely than kin to receive loans of \$100 HK or more. Similarly, in borrowing patterns, when parents and children were eliminated, married people were more likely to borrow \$100 HK or more from non-kin (18 percent) than from collateral kin (10 percent).

Collateral kin do, however, seem to have an important back-up role to play, i.e., should an individual have no children of his own to depend upon, other relatives, usually nephews and nieces but sometimes cousins, will help out. Combining the data for 75 people visited in homes for the aged in 1973 with that gathered from 22 residents of the hostel in 1975, I found the following distribution of pre-entry living arrangements (see Table 6). The sample is categorized on the basis of "closest" relative in Hong Kong, i.e., a man might have both a spouse and a brother in Hong Kong, but he is categorized only as having a spouse.

Unfortunately exactly who these collateral kin are is not clear from the data. In the early period of my own research, I neglected to inform my research assistant to preserve the meaning of the original Chinese kin terms, i.e., to translate "father's brother" or "mother's brother" so as to maintain these distinctions. Thus both these terms are translated by the English term "uncle." Similarly Mitchell does not indicate whether the aunts, uncles, and first cousins he asked his informants about are on the paternal or maternal side. In the West such a distinction may not seem important, but in traditional Chinese society the distinction was

Table 6
Closest Kin and Pre-entry Living Arrangement

Spouse	(9): 8 with spouse; 1 with friend
Son	(8): 3 with son; 1 with collateral; 1 in institution; 3 alone
Daughter	(10): 3 with daughter; 2 with spouse's kin; 2 with friends; 1 in institution; 2 alone
Sibling	(11): 3 with sibling; 2 with collateral 1 with friend; 2 with employer; 1 in institution; 2 alone
Collateral other than Sibling	(15): 8 with collateral; 1 with spouse's kin; 3 with friends; 1 with employer; 2 alone
Spouse's Kin	(5): 3 with spouse's kin; 1 with employer; 1 alone
"Distant Relatives"	(3): 1 with "distant relative"; 1 with friend; 1 with employer
No Kin	(36): 6 with friends; 12 with employer; 5 in institutions; 13 alone

critical as only the former were considered members of one's patrilineage. According to Chen (1936:27), the patrilineage could be a vital source of support in time of need though the poorer the lineage the less the support.

Lineages, however, appear to have been characteristic of rural China rather than of urban China. After briefly reviewing the literature, Baker (1977:502-504) provided the following reasons for the comparative absence of lineages in traditional cities. First, the strength of the rural lineage rested on its control of land. Sojourners had no incentive

to build lineages in the city since their land rights and descendants were all in the village. Secondly, the greater economic opportunities in the cities required quick and flexible responses to changing investment conditions. In the face of such opportunities for individual advancement, the drive for the kind of collective unity supportive of lineage organization was probably greatly weakened. Thirdly, the greater residential mobility in cities probably militated against settled and enduring kin ties.

If these reasons account for the relative absence of urban lineages in traditional China, they seem even more credible as explanations for the relative absence of lineages in contemporary urban Hong Kong. First, the majority of migrants to Hong Kong came from Kwangtung province and especially from the Pearl River delta. This is precisely the region in which lineages had enormous corporate holdings. According to Chen (1936:34) over one-quarter of the cultivated land in Kwangtung and about 50 percent in the delta region were corporately held. Such wealthy lineages exerted great retentive powers on the loyalties of temporarily absent members. On the other hand not all lineages were wealthy, and members of poorer lineages resident in the city probably had weak ties to home lineages and lesser loyalties to the lineage system as a whole. As Ahern (1973:82) points out non-resident members of lineages in Taiwan have the responsibility for managing corporate affairs when their turn comes up in the annual rotation. They also benefit by returning to the village to reap the fruits of lineage activities such as feasts which are paid for out of the profits from corporate lands. Non-resident members of lineages lacking corporate property have no incentive to remain

associated with an organization devoid of economic benefits. In Hong Kong loyalties attached to rural lineages or tended to disappear.

Secondly, investment opportunities in Hong Kong are diverse and rapidly changing. Whole industries, such as wig-making, can rise and fall in just a few years. There is not the same security which owning land provides though more cautious investors are now putting their money into apartments. Jobs are obtained primarily through friends or direct applications and less frequently through relatives. Thus lineages have little economic significance and have failed to develop.

Thirdly, while residential mobility within Hong Kong is quite high, it is probably less significant as a factor in the absence of lineages than Hong Kong's relative isolation from its rural hinterland. The home base of most lineages is China where the lineage halls stand and the ancestors are buried. The present population in Hong Kong would have to start its lineages from scratch. In traditional China the lineage system and ancestor worship were mutually reinforcing though the strength of one was not absolutely correlated with the strength of the other. Ahern's data (1973) effectively silences those who maintain that all (non-Christian) Chinese worship their ancestors. She found that the obligation to worship depended on a number of generally accepted rules:

- (1) If X inherits property from Y, he must worship Y.
- (2) If X is Y's only descendant, he must worship Y.
- (3) If X is the most obligated descendant, he must worship Y.

Thus while descent is important, it is not a necessary and only sometimes a sufficient condition to worship the ancestors.

Ancestor worship is by no means universal in Hong Kong. Mr. Seun, for example, has no ancestors in Hong Kong. His wife returns to China annually to worship, but apparently she is the last generation who will do so. Mr. Seun said that he does not expect his sons to worship him. Mr. Leung, even though he is the eldest son and has two generations of ancestors buried in Hong Kong, does not have custody of his family's tablets. Since he has only daughters who would normally worship their husband's ancestors, his younger brother's family has custody of the ancestral tablets. Another informant, Mrs. Wun, though she is the only survivor of her husband's patrilineage worships neither ancestors nor gods. I did not systematically pursue the issue of ancestor worship with my informants, but data from the Social Service Needs Study (1977:33) further illustrate the restricted nature of ancestor worship. Only 22 percent of their sample stated that they worshipped ancestors while another 37 percent stated that they worshipped traditional gods. Although it is likely that a good proportion of those worshipping traditional gods also worship ancestors. Perhaps what is more significant is that 12 percent of the respondents were Christians, and another 22 percent indicated that they worship nothing at all.

What these findings suggest is that many people do not feel sufficiently obligated, e.g., have not received property or favors, to find worship necessary. Such sentiments do not make the development of lineage ties--which are based even more on economic considerations--a likely occurrence in Hong Kong. Indeed, if the fraternal ethic of cooperation within the joint family can be extinguished by household division, how much more likely is the lineage to crumble when there are

no economic incentives to keep it together. Mitchell (1972a:419) found patrilineages nearly non-existent in urban Hong Kong.

Only one or two of our informants claimed they belonged to a clan organization, but these organizations are not patrilineages in the traditional sense. Instead, they are "name" associations composed of people of the same surname, regardless of whether their members can establish any kinship connection with each other. And these associations provide very little if any services to their members.

My own informants confirm Mitchell's findings. Very few belong to a surname association, and most of those who do joined in order to participate in the burial insurance programs sponsored by the associations, i.e., by making monthly payments into a fund, they were guaranteed a funeral and burial at death.

Baker (1977:509-510) distinguishes among lineage, clan, and surname associations in traditional Chinese cities. Whereas lineages were characteristic of the rural areas and membership was dependent upon descent, clans were an urban phenomenon utilized primarily by the elite and deliberately formed with only the flimsiest of known or ascribed genealogical ties. Baker does not believe that common surname associations were of great importance in Chinese society and suggests that where they did exist, they were likely to be mutual aid groups for the poor in the largest cities. The emergence of such "voluntary" kin associations as clans and surname organizations in the cities has also been noted by Bruner (1970:133) in Indonesia. What seems to have happened in both urban environments is a "redistribution" of kin sentiments and opportunities for joint action. In the absence of conventionally constituted lineages, the nuclear and/or stem family assumes almost complete responsibility for its own members, and the clan or surname group takes

over responsibility for community-wide action. The middle ground has disappeared.

In summary, collateral kin, siblings, aunts/uncles, nieces/nephews, and cousins, appear to play only a minor role in the lives of elderly Chinese. Though many of my informants have no kin from these categories living in Hong Kong, those who do have quite limited interaction with them. Mitchell's data (1972a) suggest that this infrequent interaction is not unique to older people but is generally characteristic of the Hong Kong population. Collateral kin appear to be most significant for those people lacking closer kin, i.e., spouses or descendants. The patrilineage which in the village was the next largest corporate group to which an individual belonged and from which he could claim assistance is almost non-existent in urban Hong Kong. Instead "voluntary" kin groups, clans for some and surname associations for others, operate in the community sphere, but their activities are more specialized and narrow than those of the rural lineage. This absence of the patrilineage has meant that increasingly exclusive responsibility for kin resides in the nuclear or stem family.

5. Conclusions

The stereotype of the isolated nuclear family is not appropriate to Hong Kong. Though nuclear families predominate statistically, this phenomenon is partly a consequence of demographic facts. Given the infrequent occurrence of the joint family, there are not even enough old people available to make it possible for every adult child to live with his parents. The fact that the stem family is the second most

commonly encountered family type indicates that old people are still considered family members by their adult married children.

Nevertheless most parents can expect to spend at least part of their lives living independently of their adult married children, but this period is unlikely to be long nor is it characterized by isolation from the children. The period is likely to be short because the present generation of elderly parents raised four or five children to adulthood, and these adult children usually do not leave home until marriage which occurs around the age of 22 for daughters and 28 for sons. Thus, many parents in their sixties, particularly if theirs is a second marriage, still have unmarried children at home. Furthermore, unemployment, widowhood, or illness on the part of the parent or a need for household assistance on the part of the child are sufficient grounds for the re-establishment of co-residence. Even when parents and adult children live separately, there is often so much interaction as in taking meals or staying overnight that the concept of the modified extended family as described by Litwak (1965) is a much more apt description of the actual family situation.

Stem families in Hong Kong are predominantly patrilineal though the parents and especially the mother of the wife are frequent members. The presence of the wife's parents is rarely a violation of the traditional Chinese rules. As we saw earlier (Chapter II, page 24), reliance on daughters in the absence of sons was a sanctioned alternative. In Hong Kong reliance on daughters continues to be a reflection of the absence of sons. The economic facts of life in Hong Kong make the choice of sons rather than daughters as co-residers and supporters most practical. The

labor force involvement of women is considerably less than that of men, and even for the same work their wages are often less. While daughters may be an important source of positive affect (see Chapter V, p. 181), they cannot in most cases be as supportive in an economic sense as sons.

The fact that co-residence of parents and adult married children is now an option and not obligatory means that the potential for conflict resulting from different attitudes and interests--the generation gap--is kept low. Children who have hostile relationships can move out and minimize familial involvement especially if they have siblings who are more closely involved. Indeed, the close ties of some children permit the looser ties of others. Probably the most difficult situation for all concerned is a hostile relationship between a parent and an only child. Since few parents have the resources to make it on their own, an only child generally must accept responsibility for his parents. There are a number of strategies for reducing potential conflict, and separate residence is certainly one of them. In the years before the initial establishment of separate residence, most adult children acquire primary control over decisions most directly affecting them, i.e., job and mate selection. The later resumption of co-residence usually means the moving of the parent(s) to the household of the child, i.e., to the household of someone accustomed to making most of the decisions. The wise parent does not attempt to assert authority in these circumstances.

Old people in Hong Kong are highly conscious of the fact that they cannot take for granted what their own parents and grandparents did. They are aware that they must continue to inculcate the value of filial piety and at the same time determine which child is likely to be most

amenable to and most capable of supporting them in old age. This situation is particularly delicate as in the absence of the patrilineage, few outside pressures can be brought to bear on a recalcitrant child.

As Bott (1971:30) points out:

Urban families are not isolated since members maintain many relationships with individuals and groups outside the family. But they are more "individuated" than families in relatively small, closed communities. Many of the individuals and groups to which an urban family is related are not linked up with one another, so that although each external individual or group may control some aspect of familial activity, social control of the family as a whole is dispersed among several agencies. This means that each family has a relatively large measure of privacy and freedom to regulate its own affairs.

It is precisely this freedom which produces anxiety for many elderly parents. Should they lose control of their child, they have scarcely anyone else they can turn to.

CHAPTER V

INFORMAL AND FORMAL ASSOCIATIONS

1. Introduction

Most works dealing with Chinese social relations are concerned nearly exclusively with the role of the individual as a family or a lineage member. With the exception of a few studies, e.g., Fried (1953) very little has been written about the role of extra-kin ties. Such neglect is surprising in view of the fact that the bond between friends constituted one of the five cardinal relationships upon which the traditional Confucian social structure was based. Perhaps this concentration on kinship has been helped along by the fact that particularly in southeast China villages often consist of a single lineage--thus all one's neighbors and most of one's friends are simultaneously relatives. Constant association leads naturally to increasing familiarity, but in the city kin ties while still important come to be supplemented by more formal ties to district organizations, surname organizations, and the like. In the city the individual is made aware of alternative networks operating for specific purposes. This awareness is more characteristic of men who go out daily to work; unemployed women remain dependent on the local neighborhood to a much greater degree in developing social relationships beyond the family.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the position of the older person within the family has been undergoing change in Hong Kong. The distribution of power within the family, the living arrangements, and the

sources of emotional gratification are quite varied. There is considerable evidence in the American literature on old people (Johnson 1971; Hochschild 1973) that old people, while maintaining and even increasing their involvement in family affairs, also enjoy contact with their age-mates (with the exception of a minority who share the stereotypical view of the elderly and refuse to acknowledge their own membership in the category). Rosow (1967) and Blau (1973) note that while most older people retain close affectional ties with their children, such ties are not able to satisfy all of the emotional needs of the parent. Studies of friendship patterns indicate that homogeneity of age, marital status, sex, education, and socio-economic class is characteristic of all age groups. Almost by definition children are unable to meet at least the first of these qualifications. Hochschild (1973) suggests that while a parent in a sense relives his life through his children, he continues to live his present life with his peers. Only with a person who faces the problems common to aging can an older person truly share his fears and gain emotional support.

How true this theory is with respect to elderly Chinese is not clear. Chinese are encouraged to take the long view back to the ancestors and forward through the descendants. Nevertheless, the present generation of old people can be regarded as pioneers. They are the first generation to have grown up in a more or less traditional China and yet had to face the fact that they are aging in a modern urban context. Lopata (1973:180) points out that the urban environment itself can pose considerable obstacles for those whose backgrounds are rural since the methods intended to bring:

another person into the "best friend" category are designed to start with already known semi-friend positions and to begin early in life. These characteristics have made the development of a new friendship extremely difficult in modern urban centers, where it must start from mere acquaintance or even some candidate-searching action through the whole life cycle. Traditionally, the culture of all but the upper classes does not contain such friendship building mechanisms. In fact, their development has been hampered by a village-like distrust of all strangers and the assumption of permanency and ascribed nature of "true friends."

Clark and Anderson (1967:306) also noted the significance of time as a factor in friendship and the apparent reluctance of older people to seek new friends. The implications of these findings for old people caught up in urban renewal projects should be clear. Niebanck (1965: 136) found that old people living in residentially stable neighborhoods were able to maintain long-standing friendships. Furthermore, the neighbors were the major reason people gave for liking their location, and the social ties were the greatest impediment to a voluntary move. A number of my own informants were living in close-knit communities of fellow countrymen, and they perceived the possible break-up of their networks through urban renewal as an unmitigated disaster.

Old people, however, just when they may need friends the most, i.e., when they are retired or widowed, often find that their circle of friends is contracting. Friends die or move away, and the physical limitations that often accompany aging may make it difficult to keep up old ties. Rosow (1967) suggests that making new friends is especially difficult for old people unless they are located in an area where the density of old people is very high, i.e., unless more than a majority of the households in the immediate vicinity contain at least one older person. Lowenthal and Haven (1968) make the additional point that even

more significant than the quantity of friends an individual has is the quality of the ties. In their study, the presence of a confidant whether a friend or a relative served to protect the morale of the individual from the normal "insults" of aging (though not, interestingly enough, in the case of health problems).

That some old people have difficulty in developing a fuller social life has led in the United States to a proliferation of senior centers and other clubs specifically organized to facilitate interaction among the elderly. However, as Niebanck (1965:139) indicates, a number of studies suggest that elderly persons do not really have much interest in these clubs or their activities. Here again the lack of involvement may be an outgrowth of the time factor mentioned earlier. For a person wary of strangers and uncertain of his own social skills, a visit to a club of strangers is a dismal prospect. This is a very different experience from seeing people in the neighborhood church one has attended for several decades.

In the sections which follow I will present my own findings on the role of friends and confidants in the lives of elderly Chinese. I will also look at the quantity of neighborliness characteristic of Hong Kong as a whole and relate this to the neighborliness of the elderly. The reluctance of old people to become involved in formal associations appears to be just as true in Hong Kong as in the United States and for similar reasons.

2. Friends

The semantic range of the word friend is extensive in both American and Chinese cultures, and several qualifiers are used to distinguish the

degrees of intimacy characteristic of particular relationships. Although precisely what is meant by each qualifier also varies, there does appear to be a fairly consistent use of terms with respect to relative intensity. Starting at the least intense end of the scale is the term jauyuhk pahngyauh (lit. wine and meat friend) with the connotation of a non-enduring relationship, e.g., "Wine and meat a thousand friends retain, but in need will one of them remain?" At this point I would like to mention that the amount of capital required to sustain friendships sometimes exceeds that available to the older person. For example, in Hong Kong much social life occurs in restaurants and tea houses, and it is customary when a group of people have been eating or drinking together for one person to pay the bill. Diners vociferously struggle to grab the check or to push aside the hands of other contenders proffering money to the waiter. The practice of splitting the check is usually frowned on and may be interpreted as small-mindedness on the part of the person making the suggestion as it may imply an unwillingness to enter into a new social relationship. At one gathering an individual will be put into the social debt of the payer of the bill, but he is expected to right this balance at a future encounter. Mr. Go's flourishing of \$100 bills is in this tradition though the practice is by no means limited to the senior generation. The inability to marshal resources sufficient to pay for several people may depress a person's social participation. True friendships, however, should not be terminated because one party can no longer keep up his share. The problem is more likely to inhibit the development of new friendships rather than to terminate old ones.

At a similar level of intensity is the term poutung pahngyauh (lit. common or ordinary friend) and louh pahngyauh (lit. old friend) with connotations similar to those of the English term. The "old" refers specifically to the enduring quality of the friendship rather than to the age of the participants. The importance of the time element in making friends is clearly expressed by the common saying "A long road tests a horse; long-drawn out affairs test a friend." At the level of most intimate friend or confidant are the terms jigeige pahngyauh (lit. friend who knows my self) and jisange pahngyauh (lit. friend who knows my heart). In some cases such friendships are so intense that they culminate in git baai hingdaih (lit. sworn brothers) or gam laahn jimui (lit. "golden orchid sisters" = sworn sisters) relationships the model for which is drawn from the fourteenth century historical novel The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. According to Doolittle (1865:II, 228-229):

It is a very common practice for those who are intimately acquainted with each other, and who cordially love and respect each other, to adopt each other as brothers. Oftentimes women who dearly love each other adopt each other as sisters. Men who adopt each other as brothers sometimes do it by kneeling down and worshipping Heaven and Earth simultaneously, or by burning incense, with kneeling, before an image of the god of war, or of some other popular idol. Others swear, under the open heavens, to be faithful brothers to each other, imprecating awful curses in case they should become unfriendly and not fulfill the duties of brothers to each other. . . . The vows are considered binding as long as one of the original parties survive, no matter whether the relative positions in society remain unchanged or not, whether one becomes rich and honored, and the other becomes a bankrupt or a felon.

Such sworn relationships are less frequent nowadays, but they can still be found particularly among aged domestic servants (e.g., Sankar (1977), who entered the relationship when they were young or middle-aged.

In the United States old people are usually found to have fewer friends than young people for a variety of reasons such as the lessened mobility brought about by retirement, reduction of income, or ill health which serves to make contact with former associates more difficult. A presumed lack of social skills in urban living makes it difficult to initiate new friendships, and this difficulty is compounded by the shrinkage of the age-pool from which they are most likely to draw new friends. At the same time the need for friends remains quite high and in the absence of kin probably increases. In Hong Kong the return to China of some old friend and the relative absence of extended kin probably leave many old people isolated from their peers.

In the course of interviewing old people in the community, I found that most of the friendship characteristics associated with elderly Americans apply equally to elderly Chinese. For example, a majority of informants stated that they now have fewer friends than they had when they were 50 years old, and they attributed this fact primarily to having lost natural opportunities to interact with them. Retirement for many men meant no more meal-time association with co-workers, and moving to a new location often meant the loss of co-tenant or neighborhood-based friendships for women. One-fifth of the respondents saw no change in the number of their friends, and a small number actually have seen an increase in the number of their friends. A few others have been able to replace friends lost though they have not actually been able to increase the number of their friends. Most of those making new friends encountered them in the course of walking around or sitting in public areas near their homes or through other friends. Two-thirds, however, said that they have

made no new friends in recent years. A majority of informants said they would like more friends for reasons of sociability and/or mutual help.

The above answers were to questions regarding friends in general, but I also tried to ask about "good friends." Responses tended to fall into three categories: none, many, and a few. I do not feel that the category "many" is an accurate reflection of the number of good friends a person has as so many informants who were in this category gave such responses as "everyone is good" or "hundreds" showing little of the discrimination the term good friend implies. I think it is more useful to focus on the more specific answers such as "not a single one" or "two good friends" as more reflective of the actual situations. Nearly 50 percent of the informants said that they had no good friends at all, and there was no significant relationship to age for either men or women. Most striking, however, was the basic difference between the sexes, i.e., at both interview sessions when this question was asked, women were more likely to say that they had no good friends--59 percent at the first interview and 58 percent at the second with the comparable male figures being 34 percent and 44 percent respectively. Men were more likely than women to say that they had some or a few good friends--45 percent at the first interview and 40 percent at the second with the comparable female figures being 34 percent and 18 percent respectively. The present living arrangements of the older person, i.e., with family members or alone, did not seem to affect the number of good friends a person had.

I also asked whether there was any intimate friend with whom the informant felt comfortable talking over personal matters. A majority of both men and women said that they had no intimate friend, but men were

more likely than women--37 percent to 21 percent--to state that they did. However, this apparent lack of close friends on the part of women does not mean that they have no intimates from whom they can derive emotional satisfactions. There is a Chinese saying to the effect that men have friends and women have relatives so perhaps women are more likely to obtain emotional gratification from this latter source. At another interview session I simply asked informants whether there was any person (as opposed to a particular friend) with whom they shared their personal thoughts and problems. The responses to this question were almost identical for men and women, i.e., 47 percent of the men and 43 percent of the women identified such a person, but the types of persons so identified were quite different as the table below indicates.

Table 7
Nature of Confidant

	Child/Spouse "Family"	Other Relatives (including fictive relatives) Co-villagers	Friends
Men	10	2	4
Women	13	12	4
Total	23	14	8

The most striking contrast occurs in the distribution between the categories "Family" and "Other Relatives/Co-villagers." The confidants of females are almost equally distributed between these two sets of people whereas those of men are five times as likely to be members of

the immediate family than to be other kin. This distribution suggests that, at least in the elderly population, the folk saying mentioned above is indeed true. Women are more dependent upon kin, people of long-term and ascribed relationships, for intimacy than are men. In the absence of kin, either immediate or extended, women are more likely to experience isolation as they lack the skills for converting "acquaintances" to friends over a short period of time.

Another interesting finding lies in the type of family member chosen as a confidant. Literature dealing with the traditional structure of the Chinese family, e.g., Lang (1946), tends to emphasize the father-son and mother-son ties. Whereas father-son ties are the authority focus of the family, mother-son ties are usually perceived as the affective focus of the family. But in looking at the extent to which parents perceive their children as major sources of affect--as measured by identifying them as confidants--I found that in the ten cases in which a child was so identified, the mother-daughter tie emerged as the strongest. Seven women cited a daughter (of these seven women five have no sons), but no woman cited a son (though four cited "my children" or "my family" which might have included sons). Sixty-five informants have sons in Hong Kong and 65 have daughters yet only two fathers picked sons as confidants, and one father who has no sons picked his daughter. Out of 32 married informants only three indicated such closeness to a spouse--a reflection perhaps of the different interests and concerns of the sexes.

There is also a close relationship between the number of good friends a person has and the presence of an intimate. For example, of the 46 informants who stated they have no good friends in Hong Kong, 30 also

have no intimate. Of the 16 who do have intimates, 12 named family members; three, other relatives or co-villagers, and one a person living in China. Of the 34 informants having one or several good friends in Hong Kong, 21 also have intimates of whom nine are family members; six, other relatives or co-villagers, and six are friends. Of the ten informants having "many" friends, only three have intimates--a distribution resembling that of people with no friends rather than that of people with one or several.

Language continues to be a divisive force in the older population though its impact should decrease in future generations as immigration to Hong Kong is much reduced. According to the Census (1972:16) 92.1 percent of the age-group 14 and under speak Cantonese as their usual language, but this is true of only 78.8 percent of the population in the age-group 55 and over, and there are at least three other distinctive languages spoken by migrants from Kwangtung alone. Hoklo, a dialect characteristic of northeastern Kwangtung and closely related to the language families of the neighboring provinces of Fukien and Taiwan, is spoken by 6.0 percent of the older people. This language, known locally as Chiu Chau speech, is actually spoken by a slightly larger proportion of the next age-group (those 40-54) because the Chiu Chau are the most recent migrants to Hong Kong, and therefore have a somewhat higher proportion of middle-aged people in their population than other groups. Hakka, a language spoken by the descendants of northerners who migrated to Kwangtung hundreds of years ago, is spoken by 4.5 percent of the older people. Sze Yap, a variety of Cantonese distinctive of four counties in the south coastal region of Kwangtung, is spoken by 4.4

percent. Other Chinese languages, e.g., Mandarin, Szechuanese, etc., are spoken by 5.6 percent of the older people, and 0.7 percent speak a language other than "Chinese." Thus a substantial minority of the elderly speak a language other than Cantonese, but many of these can understand Cantonese as their descendants speak it.

In my study, minority language speakers are somewhat underrepresented, i.e., less than 15 percent of my informants prefer to speak a Chinese language other than Cantonese compared with 21 percent of older people generally. While minority speakers have fewer good friends, i.e., only 23 percent said they had one or several good friends, they are substantially more likely to have a confidant (71 percent) than the general population. Of the ten confidants four were family members; five, other relatives/co-villagers; and only one was a friend. The minority speakers seem to be somewhat more closely bound to their own relatives and native district associates than do Cantonese speakers.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, one of the hypotheses concerning the social relationships of older people is that they prefer to make friends with age peers and the availability of such peers conditions the formation of friendships (Rosow 1967). In order to determine the extent to which this hypothesis applies in Hong Kong, I examined the friendships of people living in a hostel for the aged. Two floors of one block of Wah Fu Estate were set aside for the hostel which opened in 1969. The block is well-situated so as to catch a breeze and provides a magnificent view of the water and nearby islands. The hostel contains 36 units: 30 for the use of residents, four for common rooms, one for an office, and one for the staff resident.

According to a hand-out sheet introducing the hostel, nine voluntary agencies and three Government Departments cooperated:

to provide attractive accommodation for 120 ambulatory, independent elderly persons in a Public Housing Estate. It is the first project in the community designed to provide non-institutional housing for the aged, and it plays a useful and necessary role for them. It is clear that for many elderly people life in an institution is not the right answer--what they want is a home in which they can enjoy a full, active and normal life. This is what the Hostel aims to provide.

Unlike residents in a traditional home for the aged who often live many to a room, take their meals in common, and share communal washing facilities, the hostel residents retain a large measure of the freedom they had in the community.

Four residents live in each of the units which contain a large living/sleeping area, a small kitchen, balcony, and a toilet off the balcony. They are free to watch television in the common room provided on each floor, to engage in handicraft activities in their rooms, to do their own cooking and cleaning, and to come and go as they wish. There are buzzers by each bed so that in a medical emergency, a staff member (who is on call 24 hours a day) can be summoned. The residents may spend up to seven nights a month outside of the hostel and may accumulate such time to take longer trips to Macao or China. The hostel provides ten regular social activities every year including two picnics, four birthday parties (one for each season), feasts on Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and the "Winter Day" as well as get-togethers with the residents of the other hostels since opened in Hong Kong. In addition to these hostel-sponsored activities, other activities are carried out by church

and private agencies, which, for example, sponsor a tai chi class or bring in youth groups to sing at Christmas time.

Priority in admission to the hostel goes to old people who are poor and have no relatives. An individual should not have more than \$10,000 HK in savings. While the expenses of most residents are met through public assistance, there are a few who pay their own fees. Residents do not have total freedom of action however. For example, the choice of room-mates is up to the hostel staff as people apply as individuals (except in the cases of a few couples) and vacancies (which now occur only through deaths) are filled from the waiting list. People are not allowed to change their rooms except under very special circumstances, e.g., two residents who met and married in the hostel were allowed to transfer to a room with another married couple. Similarly, gambling such as card-playing and mah jong are not allowed nor may residents keep large appliances such as refrigerators or televisions in their rooms. Nevertheless residents consider themselves much better off than those living in traditional homes for the aged, and the government departments and voluntary agencies have considered the hostel such a success that four more have been opened.

Though the possibilities for social interaction are greatly increased in a setting such as the hostel this does not appear to have been a major factor (or at least not a primary factor) motivating people to apply for entry. Most residents came to the hostel out of financial necessity though perhaps others, in the newer hostels, may now perceive advantages of a social as well as a financial nature. The locating of the hostels in blocks of public housing estates means that unlike in many of the

secluded homes for the aged, the residents can still participate in ordinary everyday activities such as going to the market and the tea house.

I interviewed 24 hostel residents, each from a different room. My original assumptions based on Rosow's (1967) findings were that hostel members would: (1) have more good friends than community dwellers, (2) have less contrast in the number of friends now vs. age 50, (3) be more likely to have made a new friend recently, and (4) be more likely to have a confidant. Only the second assumption was borne out though there is some evidence to suggest that the first is partially supported. Responses reveal scarcely any difference between the two groups (community dwellers and hostel residents) with respect to the number of good friends except that no hostel residents picked the category "many." Just as in the community sample, hostel women were less likely than hostel men to say they had any good friends (37.5 percent to 50 percent). Though these are not very different from community figures, it is important to remember that prior to their joining the hostel, the residents were likely to have been quite low in terms of social resources (or they would have not been desperate enough to seek admission). That they are now at the community level suggests that they have indeed utilized the opportunities in the hostel for greater social interaction. This is further supported by the fact that 42 percent of hostel residents compared to 26 percent of the community residents stated that they have as many friends now as they did at the age of 50.

Surprisingly, however, only two of 22 respondents said that they had made new friends in recent years. Perhaps most of the hostel

residents having lived in the hostel for four or five years made most of their friends shortly after arrival and therefore do not consider them recently acquired.

When asked whether they had any intimate friends, only two hostel residents responded positively, and of these two confidants one was a cousin living outside the hostel and the other was the roommate of the respondent who came from a neighboring district and spoke the same dialect (Sze Yap). The relative absence of confidants again points out the significance of the time element in providing intimacy in a relationship. Few of the hostel residents knew other residents prior to entry and are unlikely to feel they have known their co-residents long enough to become really close. Language differences in the hostel are a problem for residents and staff alike. "Northerners" tend to be located near each other, but the only Hoklo speaker in the hostel proved very disruptive until another speaker joined the hostel. This reduced her frustration somewhat, but she still lives with three Cantonese roommates, and their rather poor relationship is mediated through gestures. In the opening of a hostel, the language problems of the residents are taken into consideration, but this is much more difficult to do when admissions are one at a time from the waiting list.

To summarize--most studies of the elderly indicate that even a good relationship with adult married children is not necessarily sufficient to satisfy the social needs of the older person. The problems unique to aging can best be faced by sharing them with peers whose values and attitudes are most similar to one's own. Old people, however, frequently find their social circles narrowing as mortality and reduced mobility lessen

the opportunities for interaction. Women are the primary victims of these reduced opportunities for two reasons: (1) they tend to be more dependent on long-term association such as that provided by kinship or a stable neighborhood, and (2) they frequently lack the social skills to convert casual friends into closer friends. The influence of these two factors seems quite strong in Hong Kong. Even hostel residents who have many potential candidates for friends generally failed to develop intimate ties with their roommates. In the absence of extended kin or other close relationships, old people in Hong Kong have become increasingly and in some cases exclusively dependent upon their immediate families for social gratification.

3. Neighbors and Informal Association

It is a widely held belief in Hong Kong that the residents lack a sense of identity. This alleged lack of identity is commonly attributed to three factors: (1) most older residents were not born in Hong Kong and still think of China as their homeland, (2) the anticipated expiration of the British lease in 1997 creates insecurity and causes many residents to view Hong Kong as a temporary residence only, and (3) Hong Kong is a British Colony which means minimal political power to the residents and reinforces their basic lack of identification with Hong Kong. Just how this alleged lack of identity translates into a lack of community spirit is not clear, but in a comparative study of neighborhood involvement among Chinese, Mitchell (1972b) found Hong Kong Chinese much less involved than Chinese in other cities. According to his data (1972b: 482), only 42 percent of Hong Kong residents said that they get together

with their neighbors for a half hour of relaxing and talking as often as two or three times a month whereas 68 percent of Malaysian Chinese, 64 percent of Singapore Chinese, 53 percent of Bangkok Chinese, and 43 percent of Taipei Chinese said they were so involved. Similarly the Hong Kong Chinese were least likely to identify a neighbor as one of their best friends: Bangkok Chinese--40 percent, Malaysian Chinese--28 percent, Singapore and Taipei Chinese--22 percent, and Hong Kong Chinese--only 12 percent. Mitchell attributes this lack of neighborhood involvement, at least in part, to the nature of housing in Hong Kong, i.e., high rise buildings with self-contained apartments contribute to the anonymity of urban life. His own findings revealed greater neighborly interaction in squatter areas and the older resettlement estates where communal facilities (water taps and toilets) necessitate frequent daily face-to-face contacts thus providing the opportunity for greater familiarity than is the case in the self-contained units of the newer public housing estates or the private sector.

However, Mitchell overlooks two other possible explanations for his findings: (1) people who are well-to-do and well-educated tend to socialize with people other than their neighbors, i.e., they do not tend to be so locally-based, and these are the people least likely to be living in squatter areas or resettlement estates, and (2) length of residence plays a major role in involvement in neighborhood activities. Squatter areas and the communal-type resettlement estates have longer histories than the self-contained type of public housing. In fact, Kan (1974) in her study of neighborly interaction in public housing estates found that when the length of residence was held constant, the significance of

housing design as a factor in interaction disappeared. Like Mitchell, she found interaction to be less in the housing estates with fewer communal facilities, but she attributes this difference not only to the fact that the older estates have longer histories but also to the fact that the residents knew many of the other residents prior to their collective move to the resettlement accommodations. Residents of more modern estates or of private housing are much less likely to be moving to a location in which they know in advance any of their new neighbors.

The fact and nature of employment are also important influences on the social interaction of Hong Kong residents. Interaction with co-workers frequently exceeds that with family members, but how much this on-the-job contact is supplemented by after work contact is problematic. Mitchell (1972b:479) found that Hong Kong and Taipei Chinese had relatively low rates of after-work socializing. For example, only 37 percent of Hong Kong Chinese and 32 percent of Taipei Chinese said they saw co-workers as often as once every two weeks whereas the figures for Malaysian Chinese--61 percent, Bangkok Chinese--56 percent, and Singapore Chinese--40 percent were all higher. Among all of the Chinese groups, men were more likely to have after work socializing than women. In view of the family responsibilities of women, the comparative lack of such socializing is not surprising, but this is not the only reason for the lower rates. The nature of the work also plays a role. For example, many workers, such as domestic servants who live in the employer's household, simply have no co-workers with whom to interact.

Among my own informants co-workers, or rather former co-workers, are significant sources of interaction, but due to the fact that co-workers

frequently do not live in the same neighborhoods, their level of interaction tends to fall off much more rapidly than does that of locally-based interaction. Mr. Leung, the recently retired boat pilot we met earlier (see Chapter IV, pp. 153-156) is a good example of a man closely bound to his former co-workers, several of whom retired at the same time he did. When I first met him in 1974 a few months after his retirement, he continued to have weekly tea with his former also-retired colleagues. Mr. Leung was at that time quite restless and liked to take walks occasionally stopping in on former co-workers though he remarked that "I always call on others, but others seldom call on me." At that time he was enthusiastically anticipating a move to a public housing estate because several of his former associates lived in that general area.

When I next visited him in 1976, he had succeeded in moving to the housing estate and still met his former colleagues for tea. He had made no new friends, but seemed to retain close ties with his old ones as he stated that he was quite comfortable talking over confidential matters with them. On the other hand, he was still restless and wondering how to go about finding some part-time work. He has joined the Mutual Aid Committee (MAC--see p. 200 below) in his block, but he is not involved in any other organized activities. Mr. Leung is also tightly integrated into his kinship network having three brothers in Hong Kong at least one of whom he sees on a weekly basis. He is also increasingly involved with his two young grandchildren, and I suspect that he will turn more and more to his family for social gratification as he does not seem to know how to go about making new friends.

Seventy-three year old Mr. Wu spent most of his life in association with his co-workers and fellow countrymen, the two categories frequently overlapping. He never married, he said, because he never had enough money, but he does have an older brother and his family living in Hong Kong. Mr. Wu's first attempt to find a job in Hong Kong was with a printing company, but he had become ill early in his apprenticeship and been forced to return to China. When he recovered sufficiently to return to Hong Kong, the company would not take him back so through the introduction of friends he began in Hong Kong the same career he had left behind in China, namely serving as a shop assistant. He usually lived in the shop that hired him, but as he got older (approaching 60), he had difficulty finding a shop to keep him for any long period of time, so he became a casual day-laborer going every morning to a certain street where people came to hire workers for the day or for specific short-term tasks. Such jobs did not provide lodging, but he was able to stay in the rear of a shop of a co-villager with several other co-villagers. He did not have to pay any rent, but he helped out picking things up when the shop was closing for the night.

When he was in his mid-sixties, his co-villagers alerted him to the possibility of living in the new hostel for the aged. At first he was not interested thinking instead that he would save the option for a later date when he would be in greater need of such a facility. However, as his friends pointed out, it would probably be easiest to join the hostel when it was opening up as subsequent vacancies would become available only upon the death of a resident. Once in the hostel, Mr. Wu ceased to have much interaction with his co-villagers and fellow countrymen. They

have not come to see him nor has he gone to see them. On the other hand, he and his older brother exchange two or three visits a year--one or the other taking the one to two hour mini-bus trip to the opposite end of Hong Kong Island. In the meantime, Mr. Wu seems to be on good terms with a number of hostel residents. He has assumed responsibility for the care of the plants in the sitting room, and he takes great pride in his calligraphy having prepared several New Year sayings for the hostel. He attributes his good writing to the days when he wrote the prices for goods in shops. While he has no intimates, Mr. Wu seems to be well-adjusted and competent in managing his social affairs. Though he has lost touch with his former associates, he has been able to compensate for this in his new residence.

Eighty-year-old Mrs. Wun is an extreme example of the person whose social interaction is locally-based. Since she first came to Hong Kong about 50 years ago, she has worked and lived exclusively in or around Western District on Hong Kong Island. She now has not a single relative in either Hong Kong or China. Her two young daughters and her husband all died when she was in her mid-twenties. At that time her father-in-law ran a fruit stall in Hong Kong, so Mrs. Wun left China to replace her deceased husband as his assistant. By the time he died, her natal family of parents and younger brother had immigrated to Hong Kong. Her brother disappeared after being taken into custody by the Japanese, and Mrs. Wun tried to support their living by selling fruit, first as an illegal hawker and subsequently as a licensed one though she had no fixed stall from which to operate.

For more than 20 years Mrs. Wun lived a few blocks away from her present residence and was on good terms with her numerous co-tenants.

Unfortunately their decrepit residence was declared a dangerous building, and the residents were forced to scatter. An old woman from the same district in Kwangtung though not a co-villager told her of her present residence, and she has been living here in a bedspace in the rear corridor of a small metal-work shop for the past ten years. Since the corridor containing their two bedspaces is small and dark, Mrs. Wun and her co-tenant actually spend most of their time sitting outside the rear of the metal shop in an alleyway which contains four more bedspaces--all occupied by old women from the same district as Mrs. Wun and her co-tenant though Mrs. Wun did not know them until she moved here.

The alley is sloped so that water drains away, and it is reminiscent of the back alleys sometimes seen in villages of the New Territories with a few scrawny chickens and occasional rats making appearances. The old women have no refrigerator so are forced to keep only minimal quantities of food around, and these are suspended in plastic bags or baskets from a wooden and canvas structure built from scavenged goods which serves as a roof over the sitting area. Mrs. Wun and her co-tenant do not have to pay any rent, but as they use the water supply of the metal shop, they are assessed \$5 HK a month as water fee. They cook on wood burners in the alley using for fuel scraps of wood given them by a nearby carpenter or scavenged from construction sites or shops using wooden boxes. Most of their clothes have been given to them, and when they need help in repairing their "roof," they can usually get an assist from the nearby male workers.

Mrs. Wun spends most of her time sitting quietly or playing a card game characteristic of her native district with the other old women.

Whenever we visited her, the other old ladies were also present--sometimes playing cards and sometimes cutting the heads from the stems of beansprouts. The seller of beansprouts in the nearby market would give them this task when she did not have the time to do it and would pay them a small amount. Fortunately, Mrs. Wun lives very close to the market and as a former hawker herself probably knows a number of the hawkers. In any case she is occasionally given gifts of food by local people. Whenever she is too sick to buy her own food, she can count on her neighbors (the other old women) to buy it for her. They also help out in times of illness by offering advice or by accompanying her to a clinic or doctor though these are indeed rare events as Mrs. Wun prefers not to go.

At present Mrs. Wun survives on public assistance, the infirmity allowance, and the charity of her neighbors. Her social life does not extend beyond the five women living in the corridor or the alley. She has neither the inclination nor the money to participate in social activities of a more formal nature. She has several times remarked that she never really expected to live this long and gives the impression that she is quite tired of her life. Although her material standard of living is very low, she is at least able to share the company of other old people with similar experiences and values ("We can talk about everything," she once said), and she can count on their assistance in time of need.

Not more than a ten minute walk from Mrs. Wun lives Mrs. Lau. Like Mrs. Wun, Mrs. Lau is a widow and is also from the same district of Kwangtung known as Dung Gun, but unlike Mrs. Wun, she has lived in Hong

Kong for only 13 years. Mrs. Lau has a son and a daughter in China as well as a son and a daughter in Hong Kong. Many years ago Mrs. Lau's older son in Hong Kong asked her to come and help his wife with the grandchildren, but her younger son in China did not want her to leave until he was married. When she finally did come to Hong Kong, she first lived with her older son's family in Western District, but when the building was declared dangerous, they moved to Central District. Actually this proved to be a very desirable location for Mrs. Lau as two co-villagers including her father's brother's wife were their co-tenants. Unfortunately this building too was declared dangerous, and the Laus had to move again. This time, however, the family split up (Mrs. Lau and her daughter-in-law did not get along). Mrs. Lau's son rents a flat in Western District the front part of which he uses as a workshop for making silver jewelry (very simple earrings, chains, and bracelets) and the back part which he sub-lets to others. His father-in-law also lives there, and his brother-in-law works with him in the shop. At night both the brother-in-law and Mr. Lau return to their wives and children living elsewhere.

Mrs. Lau cooks the meals for her son and occasionally pinches rings together to help him out and to earn some money for herself. In fact, she sends all the money that she doesn't spend on cigarettes--her only indulgence--to her children in China. She used to return to China annually, but for the past two years her rheumatism has made it difficult to go. She would like to return to China to spend her last days, but her older son will not allow her to go saying that she will not be able to get adequate food. Even were he to send money to her, she would still

have to use ration books so her diet would be much more restricted than in Hong Kong.

Mrs. Lau is very dissatisfied with her social situation in Hong Kong. Her present residence is very difficult to reach as it is located on the third floor of a building perched high on the slope behind Western District's commercial area. The fellow countrymen who used to visit her in Central District cannot climb the many stone steps necessary to reach her, and even her young grandchildren complain of the climb. Because she has moved several times since coming to Hong Kong, she says, she has not been able to make new friends. She added that it is also the case that people in Hong Kong do not want to make friends with her as they consider themselves refined and her a country bumpkin. Mrs. Lau reciprocates by describing Hong Kong residents as overly concerned with their appearance and interested only in spending money. She cannot tolerate extravagant trips to a tea house because she knows how her descendants in China are suffering from lack of food. She loves to tell old Chinese folk tales, but few people in Hong Kong seem prepared to listen to them.

Because of her rheumatism she is not really able to get around. If she had someone to go with, she would try to participate in some outside activities, but she doesn't know anyone. She does not regard her daughter-in-law's father, a co-tenant, as a suitable companion. She once remarked that if there were somebody who would live with her and talk with her, she would be very happy--even if the person were not from the same village. Unfortunately, her location makes it difficult for

her to meet new people easily, and her own co-tenants are mostly unsuitable younger people.

To sum up--the Hong Kong population as a whole is relatively uninvolved in neighboring. This fact is probably due in part to the many hours employed people spend at work as well as to the unstable nature of some of the neighborhoods. It is unfortunately the case that the material and social qualities of neighborhoods appear to be inversely related. The older and the more dilapidated the neighborhood, the stronger the local social networks; the newer the neighborhood, the weaker the social ties. The dilemma facing people like Mrs. Wun is how to replace these ties when a neighborhood is destroyed by urban renewal or a building declared unfit for occupancy. The old people in such neighborhoods are the least equipped to initiate new relationships. However, as the four cases described above suggest, a wide variety of factors interact to influence the level of social activity of older people in Hong Kong. The mere fact of being old seems less significant as a predictor of social activity than other variables such as length of time spent in Hong Kong, the nature and availability of co-tenants and neighbors, and the health of the individual concerned.

4. Formal Associations

Formal associations were certainly a part of life in the Chinese village (e.g., Kulp 1966), but they differed from most urban associations in a very significant feature, namely in the nature of the relationship among the members. Most members of village organizations were already known in other capacities to a new member. The notion of joining an

organization in order to get to know the members is primarily an urban concept and probably contributes to the lack of interest old people reveal in clubs for the elderly.

There are two major neighborhood-based formal organizations in urban Hong Kong: the gaaifong associations and the Mutual Aid Committees (MACs). Both of these organizations owe their origins to Government (and private) concepts about the nature of welfare and mutual aid in the Chinese village. The first gaaifong (lit. neighbors) was established in 1949 with official encouragement. According to Wong (1972:50), the gaaifongs serve essentially three functions:

- (1) To act as social welfare organizations which give charity and relief, provide a limited scheme of social security, and work to strengthen the integration of the Chinese community.
- (2) To serve as channels of communication between the authorities and the Chinese people representing Chinese community interests on the one hand and publicizing Government community policies on the other.
- (3) To provide a source of prestige and social status to the leaders. (As Topley (1969:210-213) points out this seems to be the major function of many associations.)

Wong found the leaders to be traditional in their orientation and interested in encouraging the retention or restoration of such values as filial piety and respect for the aged by holding annual banquets or entertainment programs for the elderly. By the mid-1970s, however, these functions were increasingly being turned over to the Government. For example, in February of 1976 the Social Welfare Department's Community and Youth Office in Shamshuipo, a Kowloon district, coordinated Senior Citizen Week. The gaaifongs' greatest impact on the elderly comes

in the form of "burial societies" or "death gratuity schemes" which are sponsored by 46 percent of the gaaifongs (Wong 1962:73). In 1977 (p. 51), the Green Paper reported that nearly 18 percent of the older population were members of burial societies (not all of which were run by gaaifongs) and that the median monthly payment of the members was \$10.13 HK. My own informants were more likely to belong to a burial society than to any other form of organization. Participation consists simply of making the monthly payment. In both the recreational and the burial society activities of the gaaifongs, old people are merely the passive recipients of services. They are rarely involved as active planners or implementers of programs.

The MACs are somewhat different: (1) they are based on smaller residential units than the gaaifongs, and (2) though membership is entirely voluntary, members are more actively involved. Mr. Leung, for example, takes a turn as a night watchman once a month for his MAC. For these reasons, the MACs, which are of more recent origin than the gaaifongs having been organized during the Government's Fight Violent Crime Campaign of 1973, may be more successful in stimulating neighborly interaction. According to the Hong Kong Government Report for the Year 1973, a total of 1,214 MACs with a total membership of 110,380 households had been set up by the end of 1973. The Report optimistically concludes that:

Although the basic aim of the movement is building management, it is already clear that the mutual aid committee has the potential to meet other needs; in particular the need to replace the social links that disappeared with the decline of traditional forms of village life. A sense of neighborliness is already developing in some multi-storey blocks where mutual aid committees have been set up, and people are now getting to know their neighbors in a way which seemed impossible before, (1974:9)

If lack of involvement in community activities is characteristic of Hong Kong Chinese, it should not be surprising to find that most old people are also non-participants in formal community life. In 1971 the Wong Tai Sin Community Centre which is located in an old resettlement estate carried out a survey on the social needs of old people. A random sample of 483 old people--8.5 percent of the total older population living in the resettlement estate--provided the data base. The survey (Leung 1971) confirmed the low level of involvement of older people. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents indicated that they had no contact with any social welfare organizations (Table 35), and 82 percent said they had no knowledge of the nature of their work (Table 36). Only ten people indicated an awareness of the recreational work of such organizations. When asked why they did not choose to participate in community centre activities, a variety of reasons was given, e.g., 26 percent said they had no spare time; 19 percent had difficulty getting around; 14 percent wanted to avoid trouble, and 14 percent indicated that they simply had no interest (Table 38). The basic reason for non-involvement, however, appears to be that many old people do not look to formal organizations for purely social gratification. When asked what functions organizations catering to the special needs of the elderly should perform, only 11 respondents mentioned the provision of recreational activities--far fewer than mentioned financial assistance (142), help with residential problems (57), medical care (45), or help in obtaining employment (29). Another six respondents suggested that the organizations help old people to make friends (Table 40).

Among my own informants very few mentioned attending recreational or social clubs for the elderly. To a limited extent this lack of attendance may be a function of a lack of clubs. For example, in 1972 the Directory of Social Services listed only ten clubs (all sponsored by Christian organizations) with activities for the aged, e.g., picnics, birthday parties, religious meetings, or the provision of casual settings for chatting and watching television. In 1972 the Social Welfare Department listed an additional six community and social centres providing activities for the aged. Altogether the 16 clubs probably had not more than 1,500 members--not all of whom were necessarily active. In 1973 the Working Party Report (pp. 18-19) stated with reference to recreation that:

It seems clear that additional facilities are needed; and a number of these have been suggested to us. Amongst these are old people's clubs, library facilities for the aged (including suitable books and newspapers), facilities in public parks and communal T.V. Clubs seem to be the most desirable, since a club can provide recreational activities together with various other services including meals, counseling, sheltered employment, etc. Ideally, therefore, clubs for the elderly should be distributed more extensively.

Since the early 1970s there has been a rapid expansion in the number of organizations offering clubs for old people. By the beginning of 1977 the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (personal communication) listed 40 clubs or groups with a service capacity of 5,000. Nevertheless, the impact of this increase in the total number of clubs does not seem very great. For example, the Social Service Needs Study (1977:45-46) found that 77 percent of their sample had never heard of such clubs, and less than three percent of the sample knew that they were places for recreation.

In 1972 three of these organizations were selected for a study by the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Social Welfare Department. Ninety percent of the sample were female; 82 percent (two men and 111 women) were widowed, and 44 percent were living alone. These are higher figures of widowhood and single living than for the aged population as a whole and reflect the fact that the clubs for the aged were intentionally located in areas with a population having these characteristics. The preponderance of females in the clubs does not serve to encourage male participation. I once asked Mr. Lam, the man who had so many youthful pen-pals, why he didn't seek the companionship of other old people by visiting a club for the aged. He shook his head in distaste and exclaimed that he had nothing in common with the members. "All they talk about is family business! Mothers-in-law complain about daughters-in-law, and daughters-in-law complain about mothers-in-law."

Social segregation of the sexes in Hong Kong remains very high partly as a function of different interests but also, especially among the elderly, as a carry-over from village life where relationships with members of the opposite sex were expected to be confined to relatives or to be of a restricted nature. People of any age were not expected to choose members of the opposite sex as companions, and a marriage between two old people continues to be a matter engendering ridicule. At the hostel referred to earlier there was one couple (a widow and a widower) who had met and married in the hostel. The director of the hostel considered them an exemplary couple and in conversations in front of other hostel residents pointedly emphasized the tenderness with which they treated each other in times of illness. At least some hostel residents were

unimpressed and complained that hawkers in the market gossiped about the couple. According to the HKS (Sept. 15, 1976) of the 36,479 marriages registered in the 1975-76 year, there were three cases in which both the husband and the wife were 70 or more years old. The notion of companionship rather than reproduction as a motive for marriage still seems incredible to some. A number of old women asked me whether old people in the United States got married and laughed when I gave some examples.

In short, participation in formal organizations is the experience of only a minority of the elderly. Among my own informants, two-thirds belong to no organizations whatsoever, and even when they do belong to an organization, it is by no means the case that they derive great social satisfaction from their membership. Burial societies are the single most frequently mentioned type of association, but they offer no social activities as such. A few informants do derive gratification from their participation in temple or church societies, Mr. Go being the outstanding example. Mr. Go, however, is representative of those people who have been involved in formal activities throughout their lives. His present memberships in an alumni association, a benevolent society, and a Taoist association are a continuation of a long-established pattern. But to join a formal organization consisting largely of strangers for the first time in old age is not an attractive option for most older people.

5. Conclusions

The literature on old people in the United States and Western Europe emphasizes the importance of extra-familial sources of social and emotional gratification. The relationship between parents and children is not threatened by these other social relationships. Indeed, good relations

within the family are often associated with considerable extra-familial social life as these two types of relationships are essentially complementary rather than competitive in nature. Whatever frustrations occur in the context of family life can be aired with other old people whose views of what should be are more similar to one's own.

In the village the opportunities for sharing one's problems are greater than in many parts of Hong Kong. In the village natural opportunities for interaction occur in the carrying out of everyday activities such as marketing and washing clothes (e.g., Wolf 1972:222-223). Furthermore, years of contact and the presence of extended kin mean that these relationships have an enduring quality not often found in the city. Little individual effort is required to stimulate the intensification of bonds. Even participation in formal organizations such as rotating credit associations or burial societies means additional interaction with people already known. Associations characterized by more extensive inter-village or inter-district membership are the arena of the male elite and not of the ordinary villager.

The urban environment can, though it does not inevitably, pose considerable obstacles to the intensification of social bonds beyond the family. Given the rapidly changing face of Hong Kong, i.e., the steadily growing population and its equally steadily growing demand for improved housing, many neighborhoods are unstable. In some cases moves are voluntary as families relocate to newly opened public housing estates. In other cases they are involuntary as one dilapidated building after another is declared unfit for occupancy. On an even grander scale whole settlements may be obliterated either by fire as happened to a squatter area during

the 1976 Lunar New Year or by bulldozers as the land is cleared for new housing. All of these factors make difficult the assumption of permanency in social relationships. Secondly, since most of the older people in Hong Kong are migrants, they have relatively few extended kin available to serve as confidants and morale boosters. None of this means that old people are necessarily isolated, but what it does mean is that old people must become conscious of the fact that the development of intimate ties requires something more than making do with whomever is available and waiting for the passage of time to bring the relationship to maturity.

Few are as lucky (socially speaking) as Mrs. Wun for whom long-time association in a very narrow geographical range has meant a large network of casual supporters and a smaller number of intimates with whom she interacts on a daily basis. Mrs. Lau is perhaps more typical of the stereotype of the isolated urban dweller. Though supported by her son, she feels acutely the absence of people who share her world view. People in Hong Kong like to dress up and spend money; they are not interested in the folk-tales of a country bumpkin like herself. These are the bitter conclusions she has drawn from trying to interact with younger people (co-tenants) who have grown up in Hong Kong. Despite the economic hardships she would suffer were she to return to China, she still wants to go--at least there she can die surrounded by friends who understand her.

Mr. Wu, on the other hand, represents successful adaptation to the urban environment, and it is no accident that this is the case--after all, he has spent some 50 years in Hong Kong whereas Mrs. Lau has spent only 13. Throughout his life, Mr. Wu shared his dwellings and his

jobs with a group of co-villagers though his associations were not limited to these men. Over the years he developed a personality that was pleasant and undemanding. He seems capable of carrying on ties with a number of people without at the same time becoming overly dependent on any one of them. Thus, when he left his old friends behind to move to the hostel, he was able to replace them with new ones. Mr. Leung's situation is somewhat different. Most of his present associates are former co-workers, but the frequency of interaction with them is gradually falling off. His motives in joining the MAC in his block are probably both time-filling and social in nature.

As we have seen above, few old people look to formal organizations such as clubs for a compensatory social life. Perhaps the next generation of old people in Hong Kong--those maturing in an urban environment--will have a different view of the role of formal organizations. Alternatively should population growth slow down and residential stability increase, perhaps they will perceive no need for such organizations. At present while uninterested in formal organizations, many older people are frustrated by the lack of opportunities for increasing interaction with their peers.

CHAPTER VI

HEALTH AND MEDICAL PRACTICES

1. Introduction

The vital statistics of Hong Kong are those of a modern industrial society. Lowered birth rates and increased life expectancies have led to an increase in the proportion of the elderly in the population. In 1961 people aged 60 and over made up only 4.9 percent of the population; by 1971 their share had grown to 7.4 percent, and by 1976--according to the By-Census--to 9.1 percent. In 1961 the life expectancy of a male at age 60 was 14.01 years; in 1971 the Working Party Report (1973:7) found that it was 15.45. The corresponding life expectancies for women were 19.12 and 20.67. By 1976 the unequal life expectancies were clearly reflected in the unbalanced sex ratios of the older population which ranged from a high of 956 males per 1,000 females for the 60-64 age group to a low of 376 for those aged 75 or more.

The Annual Departmental Report of the Director of Medical and Health Services (1976:1) stated that the main cause of death in Hong Kong is cancer which accounted for 24.1 percent of all deaths in 1975. The death rate from cancer has been steadily increasing--from 49.6 per 100,000 people in 1955 to 87.7 in 1965 and to 116.9 in 1975. The most common cancers are those of the lung, liver, nasopharynx, and stomach. Infectious diseases characteristic of regions with impure water supplies, an abundance of insects, and an absence of antibiotics are no longer the major health problem of Hong Kong. The mortality figures now reveal a

pattern of deaths similar to those of other urban industrial communities.

According to preliminary By-Census data (personal communication), the three leading causes of death among those aged 60 and over were circulatory system difficulties (4059), cancer (2517), and respiratory system difficulties (2005) together accounting for 8,281 of the 11,291 deaths in this age category in 1975. The majority of these elderly deaths were preceded by a considerable period of invalidism which necessitated relying on others, e.g., family members, community nurses, or institutions. While only 1.1 percent of elderly deaths fell into the suicide and self-inflicted injuries category, it is revealing to note that people aged 65 and over who made up only 5.6 percent of the 1976 population accounted for 21.7 percent of the deaths in this category.

One of the most striking differences between the sexes is in the occurrence of respiratory ailments. Of the 8,192 cases of tuberculosis discovered in 1975, elderly males accounted for 1,137, but elderly females for only 348. This difference is usually interpreted as a result of the greater tendency of men to smoke (or to have smoked) tobacco and/or opium. Another area in which there appear to be considerable differences between elderly men and women is perceived state of health. To get a rough indicator of the health and disability status of my informants, I rated them on the basis of such criteria as occurrence of most recent illness, length of disruption of daily routine by illness, presence of chronic conditions, hearing or visual deficits, and other potentially handicapping conditions. I obtained all the information by asking the informant directly, and no confirmatory physical examinations were carried

out. The ratings ranged from a low of zero to a high of eight. Mr. Go merited a one on the basis of his poor vision. Mrs. Wong received a three due to her frequent bouts of rheumatism, occasional "head troubles," and some vision difficulty.

The mean scores by sex differed substantially: 2.1 for males and 3.9 for females. In every age-controlled comparison the mean score for men was exceeded by that for women. The highest mean score by age for men occurred in the 85 and over age group (3.5). This was the lowest mean score for women occurring in both the 60-64 and 75-79 age ranges. When I visited 74 of these people the following year and re-investigated their health status, I found that while the mean scores had increased--possibly due to more careful follow-up questioning--the sex differences remained the same. The mean score for men was 3.0 and for women 4.8, and in every age-controlled comparison, the mean score for men was exceeded by the mean score for women. Palmore (1975:32) found similar differences in perceived health status among Japanese and stated that this phenomenon seems to be "a universal tendency at all age levels in all modern societies studied." To what extent these scores reflect: (1) real differences in morbidity, (2) attention-seeking behavior on the part of women whose spheres of recognition tend to be smaller than those of men, or (3) greater reticence on the part of men is not clear.

These modern patterns of illness and mortality are interpreted and treated in a wide variety of ways by the population of Hong Kong. Nowhere is Hong Kong's bicultural aspect--part Chinese and part "Western"--more apparent than in the medical sphere. Even Chinese medicine has two complementary traditions: that of the specialists such as the acupuncturist and that of the ordinary person. Chinese medicine has always

placed the lion's share of health maintenance on the individual and his family. While the emphasis was on preventive medicine, most families also had a stock of herbal knowledge which they drew upon for common ailments and turned to specialists only for more complicated problems. In China the old women frequently gathered the more common herbs themselves.

In Hong Kong while health maintenance is still primarily a matter of individual responsibility, the knowledge of old people is no longer significant. The predominance of concrete in urban Hong Kong means the relative absence of medicinal herbs from anywhere outside of an herbalist's shop. The theories of disease causation with which old people are most familiar are totally ignored by the "scientific" community. While young people may be exposed to traditional concepts at home, they receive only modern concepts and treatments in schools and government-sponsored medical facilities. While individuals may be able to work out their own mixtures of the two systems, in Hong Kong there is no official support for such a mixture--though there is considerable support for it in the PRC.

Furthermore, the only subsidized medicine in Hong Kong is western medicine. A person seeking traditional modes of treatment must go to an herbalist, acupuncturist, or bone-setter at his own expense. Old people in particular are caught by this official policy of discrimination. They are the ones most likely to favor traditional treatment but also most likely to be unable to pay for it. In many cases their only choice is between western medicine and no medicine at all. Unfortunately, even a preference for western medicine cannot always be gratified because there is a serious shortage of medical facilities in Hong Kong, especially of medical facilities for long-term care. For these reasons serious illness

or the fear of it is probably the greatest source of anxiety for most old people and their families.

2. Longevity and the Maintenance of Health

According to the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine:

. . . the five organs which regulate the functions of the body are injured by the five flavors. Thus, if acidity exceeds the other flavors, then the liver will be caused to produce an excess of saliva and the force of the spleen will be cut short. If salt exceeds among the flavors, the great bones become weary, the muscles and the flesh become deficient and the mind becomes despondent. If sweetness exceeds the other flavors, the breath of the heart will be (asthmatic and) full, the appearance will be black and the force of the kidneys will be unbalanced. If among the flavors bitterness exceeds the others, then the atmosphere of the spleen becomes dry and the atmosphere of the stomach becomes dense. If the pungent flavor exceeds the others, the muscles and the pulse become slack and the spirit will be injured.

Therefore, if people pay attention to the five flavors and mix them well, their bones will remain straight, their muscles will remain tender and young, their breath and blood will circulate freely, their pores will be fine in texture, and consequently, their breath and bones will be filled with the essence of life.

If, furthermore, the people carefully follow the Tao as though it were a law, theirs will be a long life. (Veith 1972:109)

Although this ancient text dates back to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- A.D. 220), some of the principles which it states, namely: the relationship between diet and health, the avoidance of excess, the necessity of balancing, and the role of morality in attaining to a long life, are still part of contemporary Chinese medicine.

Classically, the attainment of a long life implied virtue on the part of the longevous individual as well as possession of special knowledge concerning the appropriate diet to preserve the body, techniques to preserve the body's hei (breath or air), and medicinal herbs. Mote

(1977:227) cites the case of the founder of the Ming Dynasty who invited a centenarian to court to honor him for his longevity. When asked the secret of his long life, old Chia Ming replied that the essential thing was to be most cautious about what one ate and drank. He subsequently submitted to the throne a book which he had written on the subject and which was widely reprinted in the centuries which followed. Gruman (1977) in his study of the early Taoist beliefs describes their focus on dietary, respiratory, gymnastic, and sexual techniques though he adds that a great gulf soon developed between the adepts who attempted to practice these techniques and the mass of the population who could not give time to them.

The two central concepts of the Taoists were hei and jing (also "vital essence" though identified with semen and menstrual fluid). Circulation of the hei and preservation of the jing (the two "forces" were not always clearly distinguished in the popular mind) were the goals of the Taoist breathing, gymnastic, and sexual practices. Whereas Chia Ming's dietary advice tended to emphasize the relationship between foods and organ conditions, the Taoists were more concerned with eating foods which possessed a large amount of essence or vital force. Eggs and embryos were selected for this reason as were foods derived from long-lived plants or animals, e.g., pine resin and tortoise soup. It was also believed that emotionalism used up one's hei and that, therefore, one should be moderate in feelings. A host of folk sayings testify to the wisdom of the Taoist philosophy of moderation in diet and emotion: "Eat less at dinner and you will live to 99"; "Encased in fat in youth, encased in coffin in middle age"; "Every smile makes one younger, every

sigh older"; and "The heart being at ease, the body is healthful." According to Schafer (1977:109-110) the pharmacologists of the T'ang Dynasty were particularly concerned with the prolongation of youth, the lengthening of life, the blackening of hair, the restoration of waning sexual powers, and related problems. Since pungent and spicy materials, e.g., pepper and cardamom, had great effects on the olfactory cells, they were assumed to have a similar effect on other cells and consequently were in great demand as additives to prepared dishes.

When I asked my own informants why they have had such long lives and what, if anything, can be done to lengthen one's life, I received a wide variety of responses. Mrs. Wun volunteered that perhaps her long life was due to the fact that her two daughters who died in early childhood had given their allotted time to her. This belief is in accordance with a popular folk tale in which a son on learning that his parent's life was about to end rushed to the god in charge of these matters and offered up the remainder of his life-span on behalf of his parent. The god agreed and took the child instead. Mrs. Lau stated that there is really nothing one can do as one's death is predetermined. Besides, when one is old, all the diseases come out, and there is no point in consulting a doctor. Old people lose their teeth and suffer from rheumatism as a matter of course. She herself is blind in one eye and deaf in one ear, but she said that this is the lot of most old people. It has not occurred to her to see a doctor about either her eye or ear problem--after all she still has one good eye and one good ear.

Mr. Go, on the other hand, perhaps because of his greater participation in literate society and his membership in the Taoist association,

espouses the Classical as well as some magico-religious ideas. He stressed moderation in both diet and emotions. While he does not restrict himself in terms of the variety of foods he eats, he emphasized that the critical thing is to avoid overeating, i.e., to eat only "70 percent full." He said that one should not worry about things as worry leads to illness and described himself as always optimistic. He also does Taoist breathing exercises and drinks a special tea which while made from ordinary tea leaves has had the Taoist scriptures recited over it.

There is also a basically Buddhist belief that doing good deeds will bring good, e.g., long life, to the doer. While a few informants were familiar with this idea, they thought that the negative of the statement was more likely, i.e., that bad deeds will bring bad consequences. One man stated that particularly in one's last few years, one should scrupulously avoid evil as evil deeds can cancel the death that destiny had planned, and an earlier death could come about. Another man stated that it took a lot of energy to contemplate and carry out wrongdoing, and the consequent exhaustion might well shorten one's life. He gave as an example a businessman who always schemed to get more than is humanly possible from his employees.

Both Mr. Leung and Mr. Lam have been advised by doctors to take walks for exercise, and, in addition, Mr. Leung occasionally takes bou ban (strengthening tonic) in the form of chicken soup and herbs. Mr. Leung mentioned that since his operation for an ulcer a year or so ago, his hair has begun to turn white and fall out. He attributes this to the fact that being old, his blood is not good. Pahn hyut (lack of blood) is an ailment from which old people are likely to suffer. Mrs. Ip concurred

on this point and she herself gets a weekly injection at the hospital to ensure that she has enough blood. She also stated that old people being more "empty" than young people are more likely to suffer from too much fung (wind) leading to aching joints whereas young people being more full are likely to suffer from excessive fire in their bodies. The deficiency of blood and excess of wind due to emptiness seem to be popular beliefs related to the loss of vital essence view of the classical Taoists.

When talking about a balanced diet the terms yiht (hot) and leuhng (cold) seem to function as the symbolic equivalents of the Taoist terms yeuhng (the male principle) and yam (the female principle). Both members of the pair are essential, and they are complementary, i.e., too much of the one is corrected by the addition of the other. Typical "hot" foods are fatty or spicy, e.g., dog meat, while "cold" foods are vegetables or "cooling teas." As Anderson and Anderson (1977:368-369) point out, the cooking process itself can make a given food "colder" or "hotter." Cooking in water (boiling or steaming) is cooling whereas cooking in oil, especially deep-fat frying, and roasting are heating. The longer the cooking process, the hotter the food.

While explaining hot and cold foods to me, Mr. Leung said that he thought Westerners were already familiar with the principle of balancing as they usually ate boiled potatoes and carrots (cool foods) with their roasted meats (hot foods). The Andersons state elsewhere (1975:148) that although strong alcoholic beverages are usually considered hot, beer is regarded as cold since it is weak and watery as well as served chilled. From the Chinese point of view, beer is considered the salvation of

Westerners who suffer from a too hot diet. Rice is the ideal neutral, i.e., balanced, food though if cooked with larger than normal amounts of water, it becomes a cool food known as juk (congee). Generally people do not seem overly concerned with the concepts of hot and cold until illness or an unusual condition such as pregnancy occurs.

One of the key concepts of diet is that different people have different constitutions, and these differences must be kept in mind when planning meals or medicinal remedies. Generally one learns one's constitution by experience, but Mr. Moy, whose father and older brother had both been traditional Chinese doctors and who himself knew much about herbs, said that one could tell one's nature through the sense of taste. If one's tongue is bitter and sticky, then one is "hot," but if there is no taste at all, then one is "cold." Hot people have greater tolerance for cold foods than do cold people. Mrs. Lau, for example, stated that as a result of dietary restrictions followed by her mother during pregnancy, she was born excessively hot and even now has greater tolerance for cold foods such as squashes, melons, and soups than other old people. This is indeed fortunate as she also cooks for her son who since he works with metal and fire needs more than the normal proportion of cold foods.

One's habitual diet and astrological influences can also effect one's basic constitution. One old man who was raised in Vietnam explained that he could eat several mangoes a day with no problems as he was accustomed to eating them. Mangoes and some other tropical fruits are considered sapyiht (wet-hot) and are usually taken in moderation. Most old people did not follow any particular restrictions purely on the basis of age nor did they mention eating foods noted for their longevous qualities such as

tortoise soup or ginseng. If, however, they had an illness, they sometimes followed restrictions. Mrs. Ip, for example, does not eat laaht (hot in the sense of peppery) foods because of a heart condition. Nevertheless, even the most careful attention to matters of diet cannot totally prevent the development of disease.

Sometimes illness can be brought about by malevolent spirits or evil influences. Therefore, it is necessary to protect oneself from them too. There are a number of special devices such as baat gwa and fu which are used to prevent misfortunes from entering a house. A baat gwa is a mirror set in an eight-sided wooden frame on which the eight trigrams are printed. Since the purpose of the mirror is to reflect back any misfortune about to enter the building, it is usually placed above the main entrance, but if there is a particularly unlucky place nearby, the baat gwa will be placed on the outside of the building facing the unlucky place. For example, the building in which I had office space was opposite a hospital, and our baat gwa was so positioned as to ward off the bad influences emanating from the hospital. In the apartment building in which I lived, the baat gwa on our floor was hung facing the elevator. Hopefully any misfortune would get off at a different floor.

Huard and Wong (1968:66-69) describe a number of talismans used to ward off misfortune, but the only other type that I encountered was the magic paper known as a fu. Mr. Seun had been given two of these charms, yellow papers on which highly stylized characters were written, by a Taoist priest who had come to his home seeking donations for the temple. Mr. Seun had then taped them to the wall below his altar to Wong Tai Sin and Gun Yam. Above the altar he had hung a fung che (wind wheel)

purchased several years ago from the temple at Wong Tai Sin. The fung che is a paper-covered wooden-framed construction with lucky sayings on the top and several pinwheels stuck into the main body of the structure. The turning of the wheels is considered lucky not only in the sense of a preventive but in a more positive way of drawing in good luck. On the first day of the Lunar New Year, I purchased a fung che at Wong Tai Sin. One of the two lucky sayings on my fung che was "May the sources of your wealth be many." Within one week I received word that my monthly fellowship stipend had been increased by 50 percent! I bought another fung che before completing my field work.

In summary, in the past, old people, partly because of their relative scarcity, were believed to possess special knowledge about the preservation of health and the lengthening of life. Such knowledge encompassed complex dietary rules as well as special exercises. Since life could also be threatened by malevolent supernatural forces, an old person who had for so many years eluded them was considered exceptionally virtuous--his long life presumably a reward for his virtue. In Hong Kong today, however, old people are not scarce nor are they considered particularly knowledgeable or virtuous. Being old has lost the magical aspect it seems once to have had.

3. Causation and Treatment of Common Health Problems

According to Palos (1972:90) traditional Chinese medicine divided the causes of illness into the following nine categories: (1) The six "bad" causes of wind, cold, heat, damp, dryness, and fire; (2) the epidemics; (3) the seven emotional states: joy, anger, anxiety, worry, grief, fear, and shock; (4) physical upsets and states of exhaustion

caused by diet; (5) excessive sexual activity; (6) injuries; (7) visceral parasites; (8) poisoning; and (9) hereditary factors. According to Ahern (1975:99-100) another popular classification is the two-fold one which distinguishes between illnesses "arising from within the body" and illnesses caused by bumping into something or being "hit by something," e.g., a malevolent spirit. These two kinds of illness require very different kinds of specialists. While few old people referred to the germ theory of disease, this theory is not incompatible with traditional thought, i.e., if one had been more particular about balancing one's diet, the germs would never have had the chance to get a foothold.

Most of my informants when discussing minor ailments such as fevers, flu, sore throats, and rheumatism attributed their problems to Palos' categories one or four. A sore throat, for example, implies either too much fire in the body or having eaten too much hot food or both. Drinking either cold salt water or a "cooling" tea is the first appropriate medication. Aching joints are a consequence of too much water or too much wind in the body. A number of informants explained their bouts of rheumatism (fung sap = wind-wet) as a result of having spent too much time in the wet rice fields especially when in a vulnerable condition characteristic of new mothers. The appropriate remedy is to rub the affected area with keui fung yauh (drive out the wind oil) available in any pharmacy.

Certain types of headaches and bone aches are believed caused by an excess of fire in the body. In the case of the headache, the person forcefully pinches the brow between the eyes and attempts to draw out the fire. In the case of an ache along the spine, another person will

use a Chinese-style spoon (made out of ceramic material and having a flattened bottom) to rub the backbone forcefully. In both treatments, the resulting redness is taken as a sign that the fire has been forced out of the body. Though Mrs. Ip felt that older people did not need this kind of treatment (since they rarely suffer from a surfeit of fire), Mr. Seun's grandchildren told us that they often had to do this for their grandfather.

Other headaches are caused by the blockage of hei which is best treated by massage. And still other headaches, especially sinus headaches, are caused by the presence of wind. By inhaling a powder, the patient induces a sneezing fit which presumably forces the wind out. There are also dietary remedies for headaches. Mrs. Wong said that she cooks up some pig brain with herbs while Mrs. Ngai prefers to cook a fish head. Perhaps the most common treatment for a simple headache is the application of an oil to the temples or the forehead. Tiger Balm and White Flower Oil are the two most common oils used, and nearly all of my informants kept these remedies on hand.

Another common ailment, constipation, has two main causes: one is yiht hei (hot air), and the other is insufficient or obstructed air inside the body. If the constipation is due to yiht hei, the solution is to eat more vegetables and drink more water. If it is due to lack of air, then one should exercise and eat more in order to gain more blood and air. Most minor problems are not taken to a doctor but are dealt with by the victim himself. Other problems such as high fevers or flu usually are taken to a doctor, but self-medication will accompany professional treatment.

I, for example, was suddenly struck down with a high fever when I had the flu. When I asked the Chinese family with whom I lived what I should do, they immediately sent me to the emergency room of a government hospital. Their normal recommendation would have been to go to a private western-style physician, but since it was a Sunday, none was available. At the hospital I received conventional western medications and was sent home to sleep. When I had recovered my appetite, my landlady brought me a bowl of juk, i.e., "cooled" rice. Obviously since I still had a fever, I was in no position to eat "hot" foods. However, later that day I began snacking on some roasted peanuts only to be loudly berated by my landlady who explained that the peanuts had been cooked in oil and I should be avoiding oil. I assumed that all this dealt with the usual dietary prohibition, i.e., things cooked in oil are "hot" and, therefore, contra-indicated for patients with fevers, but in fact the explanation was more complicated. When my landlord returned from work, he too was upset by my transgression and very carefully spelled out the rationale for me. The flu is caused by cold air getting into the lungs. In order to be cured, the cold air must leave the body, but if you eat fatty things like oil or butter, the fat congeals inside the body thus blocking the exit of the cold air. Thus western-style treatment of the flu was accompanied by a rigorous adherence to Chinese dietary principles.

My own dietary practices were a source of wonderment to the family I lived with and to their neighbors. They were particularly impressed by the great quantities of butter I put on my toast with no apparent ill effects, and several told me that were they to eat as much butter, they

would suffer indigestion. This is entirely likely as most Asians cannot digest raw milk or raw milk products except when they are children because the enzyme lactase which is important in the digesting of milk is no longer produced in the adult. As the Andersons (1977:341) point out, however, other Asians such as the Indians and the peoples of the steppe treat the milk with bacteria before consuming it and thus break down the otherwise problematic milk sugar before it ever reaches the stomach. They interpret the historical Chinese avoidance of dairy products as a consequence of more economical protein sources in bean and pig products and of the identification of dairy products with the nomads beyond the Great Wall.

An important aspect of medical treatment by the elderly in Hong Kong is the use of several different techniques. The same ailment may be treated at home by dietary maneuvers, taken to an herbalist, and taken to a western-style doctor or a public clinic. Over the period of several months, I observed Mrs. Wun's numerous efforts to bring a persistent stomach pain under control. When she first mentioned this problem, she began restricting her diet to juk (valuing its softness more than its coolness in this case) and took aspirin which she could buy four at a time. When I asked her why she didn't go to a public clinic, she stated that she was "afraid of western medicine." Within the next month in addition to eating juk and occasionally rice noodles, she tried a Chinese patent medicine for stomach problems, but this was not as effective as the aspirin. She had also tried "cupping" by heating a glass jar and placing it mouth down on her stomach in an effort to draw out the pain, but this too did not work.

Although Mrs. Wun never commented on the origin of her stomachache, the use of the "cupping" technique suggests that wind might have been viewed as the cause. According to Palos (1972:174) cupping is:

used in the treatment of colds and rheumatic ailments, abdominal pains, diarrhea, and headaches. . . .

According to a report in a Chinese medical journal, excellent results were achieved by cupping in the treatment of chronic bronchial catarrh and rheumatic ailments, thus proving that it fully justifies its reputation as a method of curing.

She again rejected our suggestion that she go to a doctor, repeating that she was afraid of western medicine, that she could not take the long wait to see a doctor, and that since she had no clock, she would not be able to schedule properly any medication the doctor might give her. She finished by saying that she had already lived a long time, and she didn't care whether she died. When we next visited her, she was taking an herbal brew of leaves from the "yellow bark tree" which she had purchased fresh from a special herbal stand. A passerby had suggested this treatment when noting Mrs. Wun's look of distress. At our last visit a month and a half later, we found her taking another Chinese patent medicine which a friend had recommended to her, and she combined it with aspirin. She had also finally broken down and gone to a public clinic at a nearby government-subsidized hospital, but she ceased going after three visits. She still had the prescription provided by the hospital, but it was not clear whether or not she was still taking it. Although Mrs. Wun finally went to a western-style doctor, it is clear that her ideas of illness and treatment are traditional.

When I asked a number of informants what prepared medicines they kept on hand, the most frequently mentioned were White Flower Oil or

Tiger Balm, Po Chai Pills, some type of keui fung yauh (drive out the wind oil), and tit da yauh (fall-hit oil) or tit da jau (fall-hit "wine"). These are all patent medicines made either in China or by Chinese companies in Hong Kong or Singapore. Most informants considered White Flower Oil and Tiger Balm interchangeable. According to the instruction sheet accompanying a bottle of Tiger Balm, the medication:

is a safe and reliable treatment for the symptomatic relief of muscular aches and pains, sprains, rheumatism, insect bites, itching, lumbago, and headache.

Most of my informants used it to treat headaches, dizziness, and motion sickness, and it seemed to be the medication most readily resorted to for minor ailments even including "warding off colds."

The rheumatism that Tiger Balm claims as its province is usually treated by the application of keui fung yauh, and muscular and bone injuries are most likely to be treated by the application of tit da oil or tit da liniment since these are the kinds of ailments usually treated by tit da doctors ("bone-setters"). Po Chai Pills are the most frequently used medication for digestive problems. According to the instruction sheet accompanying a packet of the pills, they are good for "Fever, Diarrhoea, Vomitings, Motion Sickness, Over-eating, Over-intoxicating, and Gastrointestinal Diseases." The normal dosage is one or two vials at a time (each vial containing upwards of 50 small pills), but Mrs. Lau in a characteristic effort to be economical takes only three or four of the pills at a time. In addition to these basic four types of Chinese medicine, an old person might also have aspirin or Phillips Milk of Magnesia and old prescriptions on hand. If there are young people in the family, the medical kit expands to include mercurochrome and bandaids among other things.

Mrs. Wun never really articulated just what it was about western medicine that she feared, but it is probable that she shared the common opinion of Hong Kong residents (Lee 1975:229) that while western medicine can be very effective in removing the symptoms of a disease or in curing infectious or acute diseases, it is less reliable than Chinese medicine for dealing with the underlying causes. Chinese also frequently complain that western medicine has many dangerous side-effects that do not occur with Chinese medicine. It is also possible that she feared the possibility of an operation. Despite these reservations, it remains true that most people in Hong Kong including most old people turn to western-style practitioners rather than traditional Chinese practitioners for most ailments.

The terms western medicine and Chinese medicine are taken from the Chinese language. A sai yisang (western doctor) is a doctor trained in western medicine; a jung yisang (Chinese doctor) is a practitioner of traditional herbal medicine--a doctor who takes the pulse as the primary diagnostic procedure. Most sai yi in Hong Kong are Chinese in ancestry as are all the jung yi. Lee (1975:230) found that:

Concerning the relative utilization of Chinese versus Western services, it is noted that (1) among those respondents who consulted doctors during the previous 3 years, 83 per cent reported that they visited Western-trained doctors more often; (2) among those whose parents used medical services during the previous 3 years, 68 per cent reported that their parents visited Western-trained doctors more often, while 20 per cent preferred Chinese practitioners; (3) among those whose children used medical services in the previous 3 years, 92 per cent reported that their children consulted Western-trained doctors more often, while 5 per cent preferred Chinese services. . . .

Although Western services are more widely utilized, there are combined uses of Chinese and Western medical care for the treatment of the same illness.

The Social Service Needs Study (1977:41) reported that when asked how they would treat a minor ailment such as a cold or flu, 46 percent of the respondents said they would visit a western-trained practitioner, 6 percent said they would visit an herbalist, 30 percent would resort to self-medication, 16 would rest or ignore the situation, and the remaining two percent would do a combination of things. Among my own informants recourse to a western practitioner exceeded that to traditional practitioners though certain ailments such as fractures and dislocations were nearly always taken to the traditional tit da doctor (fall-hit doctor) known in English as a bone-setter. These doctors are usually associated with the martial arts schools--where people are hit and fall down--and are a separate category of practitioner from the herbalists.

In his study Lee (1975:229) found that when asked to compare the effectiveness of western and Chinese medical practices, informants overwhelmingly endorsed the traditional tit da practitioner (86.5 percent to 8.2 percent) when it came to sprains and fractures. The only other ailment Lee's informants considered more amenable to Chinese treatment was rheumatism by a two to one ratio. Rheumatism, however, is most likely to be treated at home by the application of oils rather than by visits to a doctor.

Acupuncture, the Chinese medical technique best known to the West, is also practiced by a specialist, but my informants rarely resorted to it (see also Topley 1975:265), and two people volunteered that they knew people who had become worse after treatment. Equally unfamiliar was the practice of moxibustion, a procedure sometimes carried out in association with acupuncture and sometimes in its own right. Powdered moxa

(mugwort) is placed on a small metal pan and ignited; the pan is then held over the aching part of the body. Alternatively a slice of ginger is placed directly on the skin, and the moxa is ignited on the ginger. In both procedures the aim is to drive out the wind responsible for the ache. Some of my informants are ignorant of the role of moxa and simply use slices of ginger to brush away the wind.

The two best-known popular books in English on Chinese medicine are those by Palos (1972) and Huard and Wong (1968). Both books deal with the history of Chinese medicine as well as contemporary treatment in the People's Republic of China, and they devote great attention to acupuncture, moxibustion, massage, respiratory techniques, physiotherapy, and herbal remedies. For this very reason they are potentially misleading if the objective in reading them is to gain an understanding of how traditional medicine is perceived and used by old people in contemporary Hong Kong. Among my own informants prevention of disease by proper diet and treatment by herbal remedies and the skills of the tit da doctor are much more important than reliance on acupuncture, respiratory techniques, and massage.

Several informants pointed out that in the old days in the villages the scarcity of doctors meant that the ordinary villager had to be familiar with the medicinal herbs which could be gathered in the nearby hills. The utilization of such knowledge in urban Hong Kong is an impossibility, and young people cannot identify the herbs known to their elders. They must go to the herbalist for all the ingredients. The average Chinese in Hong Kong is as dependent on the herbalist for traditional medication as he is on the western-trained doctor for western medication. The traditional lore is being lost. This is not the case in

the People's Republic of China where the government is making a vigorous effort to gather and test as much of the traditional lore as possible. Families are urged to submit their secret prescriptions to institutes for standard scientific testing. According to Palos (1972:203-204):

Here and there, methods of treatment came to light which were effective in the case of illnesses which could either not be dealt with at all by modern procedures or, at most, with only slight chance of success. Among these are arthritis, chronic nephritis, high blood pressure, poliomyelitis, and leprosy. The treatment of appendicitis without surgery is also a widespread and highly successful technique. Chinese literature even contains references to the complete curing of malignant tumors.

The collection of "popular" prescriptions has also been highly successful. In 1958 some 162,000 were collected in the province of Hopei alone. In the Shihchuan-chuang hospital (Hopei province), for example, epidemic brain fever, type "B" (encephalitis epidemica), was treated by the use of traditional prescriptions and methods. The percentage of successes amounted to 95, and the Chinese Ministry of Health recommended the general introduction of the procedure.

Although it is probably necessary to acknowledge the occasional hyperbole of the Chinese press when it comes to writing about national achievements, it nevertheless remains true that the traditional prescriptions can be tested and evaluated scientifically. This is not currently the practice in Hong Kong where traditional practitioners are tolerated but certainly not encouraged. (See section 5 for a fuller discussion of this topic.)

The present generation of old people are caught between two medical systems. Many of their assumptions about the causes of illness are dismissed by the experts. In the home their opinions may be respected for a while, but the grandchildren soon learn that these home remedies have little currency in school or with the government. When a health problem is not responsive to self-medication, the older person may find that his preferred mode of treatment is too expensive for the family (or himself)

to tolerate. A simple fracture, for example, requiring two months of daily visits to the tit da doctor may run in excess of \$500 HK. The necessity of relying on western (public) medicine, particularly when surgery is a likely course of action, can cause long delays in seeking treatment--as we saw in the cases of Mr. Leung and Mrs. Wun. Thus, for many old people the physical suffering and distress which accompany serious illness are augmented by worries about expense and the appropriateness of the treatment.

4. The Role of the Supernatural

Both Yap (1958:75) and Topley (1976:248-249) refer to the Chinese idea that man is a part of the natural order--in harmony with the rest of the universe--and that a violation of this natural order can result in earthquakes, social disruptions, or disease. There are several ways a person can violate this natural order. Establishing a relationship with a person whose horoscope is incompatible is one such way; burying one's ancestors or erecting a building so that the forces of nature are unbalanced is another. While horoscope readers and geomancers can help to avoid these problems, few people in Hong Kong seemed much concerned about either of these possible sources of difficulties. Fung seui (wind-water: the art of geomancy) was dismissed by most urban dwellers on very practical grounds. Since the Government prescribes where one's ancestors may be buried, it is unwise to attempt to adhere to the old rules since this will only lead to frustration and anxiety.

Jordan (1972:90) provides another example of a violation of the normal order, namely the death of an individual who has not yet produced offspring. Not only is such a person unfilial, but the family that

produced him also suffers some stigma. Later familial difficulties such as illness or interpersonal conflict are frequently attributed to the efforts of such a ghost to gain the attention of family members. Though Jordan is discussing rural Taiwan, the phenomenon of ghost marriage in Hong Kong suggests the operation of the same idea. According to Martin (Oct. 17, 1976) a family experiencing troubles and having a young deceased member will attempt to locate another family with a young deceased member of the opposite sex and effect a marriage between the two ghosts. The family with which I lived in Hong Kong had two ghost marriages among its relatives, and three others to whom I casually mentioned the subject volunteered cases with which they were familiar.

Familial ghosts are not the only source of illness or misfortune. More common are those non-familial ghosts who died a violent or unnatural death or lack descendants to sacrifice to them. These are the ghosts who are especially feared during the seventh lunar month and to whom public offerings are made at that time. Mrs. Wun stated that a ghost had caused her husband's death many years ago. Apparently he was knocked to the ground by a ghost, and even though her family employed five naahm mo louh (Taoists specializing in affairs involving ghosts) to drive out the offender, the attempt was unsuccessful.

Some people, by the very manner of their deaths, make a public statement that they intend to come back to cause trouble for their persecutors. Mrs. Wong told us of a case which occurred in her village during the period of "struggle" following the Communist takeover. A rich man, his wife, and his recently acquired concubine hung themselves from the door post: the husband in the middle with his wives to either side. When

they hung themselves, they were wearing their wedding clothes, and in particular the wives were wearing red--normally associated with happy occasions--which was a sign of their intent to take revenge. The three were placed in coffins and, for efficiency, buried one on top of the other--the normal procedure being to place them side by side. Shortly thereafter the man who did this went mad and kept crying out "Ngoh hou sanfu" ("I am very uncomfortable, in great distress"). The people realized that this was due to the three ghosts and advised the man to dig up the coffins, rebury them side by side, and apologize by burning incense. Another family was assigned the house of the rich man, but the night after they moved in, they suddenly woke up to find themselves in the middle of the street. Everyone was very frightened, and after that no one dared to walk by the house--let alone live in it.

According to an article in the August 31, 1976 HKS:

A former Public Works Department official, all dressed in red, was found yesterday in his Broadcast Drive home.

Ng Sau-suen, 52, left two notes in which one said he hoped to turn into a ghost and seek revenge for his wife.

He also claimed that a Kowloon doctor is responsible for the death of his wife.

Ng, who wore a red shirt, a pair of red trousers and a pair of red shoes, was found dead in his bedroom shortly after 4 pm when firemen axed open his gate following complaints that gas was coming out from his flat. . . .

Ng's neighbours said Ng's wife died late last month after an operation.

They said Ng, who had no children, often told them he would rather die than live without his wife.

Such a tradition of malevolent ghosts makes suicide an even greater source of distress than is the case in Western society, and suicide in China has frequently been viewed as the ultimate weapon of the weak. In addition to the fears a suicide may awaken in those left behind, there is also the

fact that according to Wolf (1975:112) the Chinese are less likely to ask the question "Why?" than the question "Who drove her to this? Who is responsible?" This certainly throws an unpleasant spotlight on the remaining family members as can be seen from the following article which appeared in the May 31, 1976 HKS:

The charred body of a 53-year-old woman was found inside the bathtub of her flat in Shaukiwan yesterday.

No foul play was suspected and the police have classified the case as a suicide.

The dead woman, Lau Chui-gay, was believed to have set fire on herself early yesterday. There was a strong smell of kerosene inside the bathroom when her body was discovered by her son at about 10:30 am.

Neighbours of the dead woman said loneliness might have been a major cause for her suicide.

Lau had been a widow for some years. Her sons and grandchildren used to live with her at her Shaukiwan Road flat.

But she was recently left alone as her sons and grandchildren had moved into the Stanley Prison staff quarters and into another newly purchased flat.

Lau's charred body was discovered yesterday when one of her sons came back to her flat for something he left behind.

Suicide in traditional Chinese society was frequently considered the prerogative of the young married woman. Monographs on the Chinese family have amply described the distress of the new daughter-in-law, and Wolf (1975:122) has shown that the early years of marriage (in Taiwan) have historically had the highest female suicide rates. Her data for males show a historical tendency for older men to be more suicide prone than younger, and, in addition, this rate has been steadily increasing. Whereas in 1905 males 60-64 had a rate of 34.0 per 100,000 and males 65 and over a rate of 23.0, by 1940 the males 60 and over had a rate of 76.7. Since 1915 the suicide rates for both men and women over age 65 have exceeded the rates for those 60-64. Between 1905 and 1940 the suicide rate for

women 20-24, traditionally the age with the highest rate, went from 57.4 to 28.7, but for older women the rates went from 20.0 for those 60-64 and 12.1 for those 65 and over to 42.7 for all women 60 and older. Clearly there has been a redistribution of stresses leading to suicide.

Unfortunately, I was unable to locate such precise data as Wolf's to describe the suicide rates over time in Hong Kong. However, by using data from Yap (1958, the preliminary findings of a University of Hong Kong sociologist (Daniel Han), and the Annual Departmental Report of the Director of Medical and Health Services (1976), I have been able to construct a table showing the proportion of suicides committed by the elderly. Gamble's data on Peking (from Yap 1958:16) is included to show a traditional urban profile. When the proportion of suicides committed by the elderly is compared with their proportion of the total population, it is clear that the aged are contributing disproportionately to the suicide statistics, especially since 1953-54.

Table 8

Elderly Suicides as a Percentage of Total Suicides

Source	Age		Male	Female	Total
	Minimum	Year			
Gamble via Yap (Peking)	61	1917	10.4	4.9	8.5
Yap (18 month period)	61	1953-54	11.0	11.9	11.4
Han	60	1967	14.6	31.2	21.1
Annual Dept. Report	65*	1975	16.9	29.2	21.7

*The exclusion of those aged 60-64 means that these figures understate the actual percentage of elderly suicides.

The 1975 figure of 21.7 percent is nearly four times the percentage of the elderly in the population, i.e., 1976 By-Census figures show that people 65 and over made up only 5.6 percent of the population.

Yap (1958:44-45) was able to examine the police dossiers of 14 of the 30 elderly suicides in his sample and concluded that:

in our series of cases aged 60 and over the factors of penury and chronic physical illness, especially tuberculosis (not normally a disease of old age), were of importance--although the series examined was not large. It is well-recognized that poverty and illness fall with especial severity upon the aged. The presence of members of the immediate or conjugal family does not seem to bring with it a protective effect, but rather it may have encouraged suicide from altruistic motives . . . It may be noted that the high male and female suicide rates in old age are not compatible with the somewhat romantic view often expressed that old age in Chinese culture is a period relatively free from stress.

The interpretation that economic distress and poor health are precipitators of suicide gains some support from my own data. Five of my informants mentioned having contemplated suicide, citing such modes as taking detergent, hanging, or jumping from a building or into the sea. All of these informants were women in their late seventies or eighties; all were either experiencing financial difficulties or living in fear of them. Four cited money problems as the major impetus behind their suicidal thoughts while one, the only one who had already made two suicide attempts, cited quarrels with her now non-co-resident daughter-in-law. All of these informants were in worse than average health, generally suffering from chronic problems such as high blood pressure, rheumatism/arthritis, weakness of the extremities, or stomach trouble. All of these women had been widowed for more than 20 years. Three lived alone; one lived with her employer; and one lived with a married son whose family was in China. Four of the women had either borne no children or their

children were not in Hong Kong. One woman was supported by her adopted son (the husband of the difficult daughter-in-law).

What this admittedly small sample suggests is that it is not family difficulties such as rejection by the younger generation that are impelling greater numbers of old people to suicide but rather economic and physical hardship. As more and more people come to experience the financial hardship and physical deterioration which so frequently accompany aging in contemporary Hong Kong, we can expect to see greater numbers of old people committing suicide. As Yap points out, such an increase may actually reflect concern about being a burden to others.

Another concern of the elderly is what will become of them after their death, i.e., what will be the nature of their funeral and will they be presented with offerings on the appropriate occasions by their descendants. During my stay in Hong Kong I was present at only one funeral, and since the deceased was a Christian, the funeral was a unique blend of Christian and traditional elements. For example, during the Christian service which was held in a hospital, the Christian daughter wore traditional white hemp mourning garments as well as a white "flower" made of yarn in her hair. She later exchanged the white flower for a blue one which she continued to wear throughout the year--the color of the flower indicates the degree of closeness to the deceased. According to my informants, in the distant past, the immediate family was expected to mourn a parent for three years during which time none of the descendants could marry or wear beautiful clothes. Nowadays people seldom mourn this long. The wearing of special mourning indicators--flowers for women and black patches on their shirts for men--lasts 21 or 100 days, and during

this time the family does not visit others though they receive visitors at home. A marriage, however, will still be postponed for at least a year. According to the Green Paper (1977:27), in 1976, the cremation-burial ratio was 42:57, and the Government hopes to achieve a 65-35 ratio by 1986. While a few of my informants intended to be cremated, most preferred to be buried. A funeral with burial may cost several thousand dollars whereas a cremation may cost less than a thousand. As we saw above (Chapter V, page 200) nearly one-fifth of the elderly have joined burial societies to guarantee the availability of funds for their funerals. For those with no relatives and/or no money, the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals provides free burial or offers very inexpensive services, e.g., \$400, \$600, or \$800 HK for a coffin and a hearse depending on options. Prior to 1870 there had been a temple on Hong Kong Island which also served as a house for the dying, i.e., had a room for those about to "enter the Western Paradise" such as still exist at some of the Buddhist homes for the aged in Hong Kong today. Around 1870 the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals was established by local Chinese to provide relief, medical, and burial services for the destitute. They also assumed responsibility for storing the coffins of Overseas Chinese before they were returned to China for burial and continue to do so though it is now very difficult to return the coffins. According to the Working Party Report (1973:86) Tung Wah handles about 60 free burials a year. The Urban Council and the Urban Services Department also provide a free collection and burial service for the poor as well as free funeral services, but the extent to which the public uses these services was not stated in the Report.

As we have seen above, supernatural forces are believed to play a significant role in every day life. While few of my informants seem

concerned with such forces as fung seui, many believe that ghosts including familial ghosts are a potent source of danger. Family disharmony is frequently interpreted as a bid for attention from a deceased family member who wants to get married. Other people through the manner of their deaths proclaim their intention to become malevolent ghosts. In order to forestall attacks by ghosts--familial or otherwise--many Hong Kong residents burn vast quantities of paper goods during the Hungry Ghost Festival. While old people constitute a growing proportion of the suicides in Hong Kong, it is not clear whether their suicides are primarily malevolent or altruistic in nature. Whichever is the case, poverty and serious illness appear to be the major catalysts among the elderly for this desperate act.

5. The Availability of Medical Services

Two points must be kept in mind when discussing the availability of medical services in Hong Kong: (1) medicine operates in a bi-cultural context, i.e., there is western medicine, and there is Chinese medicine, and (2) there is public (= government-subsidized) medicine, and there is private medicine. Furthermore, western medicine is subsidized while Chinese medicine is not, and this fact is one explanation for the greater utilization of western medical services. Osgood (1975:1059) found that in his island community:

Among the poor and the illiterate who comprise most of the population of Lung Chau, modern medicine wins out as much because it is free, or cheaper, as for any other reason. There is also the prevalent notion that if one system is better, there is no harm in a little of the other.

According to the Annual Departmental Report of the Director of Medical and Health Services (1976:4) at the end of 1975 there was a total

of 18,561 hospital beds available to the public in Hong Kong. Of these, 8,533 were in government institutions; 7,849 were in the 21 government-assisted institutions, and 2,179 were in private institutions. In all there were 4.3 beds per 1,000 people, but this figure does not tell the whole story. For example, of the 1,898 beds in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the largest general hospital in Kowloon, 302 were temporary, and in Castle Peak Hospital, the only psychiatric hospital in Hong Kong, 679 of the 1,921 beds were temporary (1976: Table 41). This means that many patients are on cots in corridors or other available space making for incredible crowding and pressure for rapid turnover.

The daily hospital charge for ward patients (the vast majority of patients) in government hospitals is set at \$5, while the charge for semi-private rooms is \$80, and for private rooms \$120. Special diets may add a bit to the daily fee. Another unofficial cost is "tea money." This fee is paid to the non-professional staff who bring food, removed soiled sheets, and otherwise attend to the patient's comfort. A letter to the SCMP of July 17, 1974 from an "Observer" indicates just how significant this unofficial payment can be.

Over a period of months we have observed some elderly patients in a hospital near Wong Tai Sin . . .

The small matter of finger and toe nails becomes a big matter to patients unable to trim their own. They may be in hospital for months on end without having them clipped. Ragged, long nails are most uncomfortable, but apparently the duty of checking finger nails is not assigned to anyone.

In these hot days, many of the patients complain of itching backs. Lying on a wet sheet, over a hot rubber sheet with plenty of wrinkles, and crumbs of food and peeling skin, with an itching back that cannot be reached for scratching -- . . .

A cool bath, or a back rub might solve their itching. But baths are only for those who pay. The going price is \$5 - \$6, and I have seen money change hands on many occasions. Moreover someone must stand by to see that the bath is actually given.

And as for patients who have no relatives and no money--?

Mr. Moy's wife said that each amah (maid) is responsible for several rooms and that whenever she went to visit her mother at Queen Mary Hospital, she paid \$2 to \$5. But Mrs. Ip's daughter, whose son was in Queen Elizabeth Hospital at the same time, said that the hospital workers (at least in government hospitals) no longer dared to accept tea money. Both of these women were describing the tea money situation during the summer of 1976 when the government had instituted an anti-corruption campaign and the abolition of tea money was one of its objectives. The long-term results of this campaign remain to be seen.

In 1975 the Director of Medical and Health Services (1976: Table 42) found that 473,628 in-patients had been treated in the various hospitals and maternity centers in Hong Kong. Of these 252,942 were cared for in government institutions; 147,240 in government-assisted institutions, and 73,446 in private institutions. Government-assisted hospitals were generally established as charity hospitals and as such charge no or small fees only. Originally, and still partially, dependent on donations from private sources for their operating costs, these hospitals have gradually reached the point of nearly total dependence upon the government. According to one officer of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, government "deficiency grants" account for more than 95 percent of Tung Wah's budget for medical services. Tung Wah operates three general and two convalescent hospitals which provided care to 49 percent of the in-patients treated in government-assisted institutions. Out-patient services are also free at the Tung Wah hospitals, and these are the only institutions which also have traditional herbalists and tit da doctors working in a hospital setting--however, their services are not covered by

the government "deficiency grants" as the government supports only western medical services. There is also a doctor starting acupuncture treatment at one of the Tung Wah hospitals.

The quality of the care provided in some of the charity hospitals has been questioned by a number of observers, e.g., the letter quoted above. One high-ranking government doctor told me that charity patients have complained of not seeing a doctor for weeks at a time. There are also private hospitals which though often run by missionary organizations are still fee-charging and have been known to suddenly dump patients on public hospitals when the patients were no longer able to pay the bills. Given the overcrowdedness of some of the hospitals and the pressures from patients suffering from acute conditions, the plight of the chronically ill elderly person is most unenviable.

In this study of the treatment of the dying in a county hospital in the United States, Sudnow (1976:193) found that:

Generally, the older the patient the more likely is his tentative death taken to constitute pronounceable death. Before a twenty-year-old who arrives in the ER with a presumption of death, attached in the form of ambulance driver's assessment, will be pronounced dead by a physician, very long listening to his heartbeat will occur, occasionally efforts at stimulation will be made, oxygen administered, and oftentimes stimulative medication given. Less time will elapse between initial detection of an inaudible heartbeat and non-palpable pulse and the pronouncement of death if the person is forty years old, and still less if he is seventy.

Though Sudnow is talking about emergency room behavior in the United States, the tendency to regard the elderly as perhaps more trouble to treat or keep alive than they are worth also surfaces in Hong Kong. The director of one of the hostels for the elderly told me that sometimes when hostel residents become ill and require hospitalization, doctors will

refuse admittance on the grounds of a lack of beds. Doctors have even said in essence "Look, we have just a few beds, and you are asking me to choose between someone in his twenties who can be up and about and back to work in a couple of weeks and someone in his seventies who might not leave the bed for more than a year." In fact, the reason for long hospital stays is not infrequently because of the lack of convalescent or long-term facilities to which the elderly patient can be discharged. As of January 1977 there were only two "care and attention" homes having a total capacity of 116.

The need to deal with elderly people having chronic problems but not requiring hospitalization was recognized quite early in social welfare and medical circles and resulted in several recommendations by the Working Party in 1973. In keeping with the theme that "care in the community" is preferable to automatic institutionalization of those either too sick or too weak to care for themselves, the Summary of the Working Party Report (1973:5-6) urged the development of a home help (homemaker) service as well as of a meals service, either in the form of "meals on wheels" or "meals in a canteen" for those without adequate cooking facilities. Day care centers particularly for the senile elderly were also suggested, and the Working Party was especially interested in the expansion of the community nursing service. All of the above programs would be accessible to any age groups needing them though the elderly, given their greater tendency to chronic disease, would be the major beneficiaries. In addition the Working Party wanted the development of certain medical services specifically for the elderly including, if possible, an appointments system for attendance at clinics, a regular check-up system and special provision

for dental, optical, hearing and chiropodic care with free glasses and hearing aids where necessary, but as of 1977 none of the latter suggestions exclusively for the elderly had been acted on. The need for an appointments service at clinics was remarked on in two letters to the SCMP in September 1976 by "Leg-weary." He found several patients who had slept overnight outside a skin disease clinic in Yau Ma Tei to ensure that they would receive medical attention the following morning. "One 74-year-old woman who had previously tried unsuccessfully several times to see a doctor queued from 6 a.m. only to be turned away as 'the day's quota has been filled'." One of my own informants, a 79-year-old man, had experienced a stroke while visiting his relatives in China during the 1976 Lunar New Year. At first he suffered nearly total paralysis of his right side, but after receiving medication, injections, and acupuncture in China, he gradually recovered some use of his limbs though he remained quite feeble. Once back in Hong Kong, he continued to require treatment, but as he could not endure the anticipated long wait, he wondered whether I could arrange an appointment for him at a government clinic. I received a quick brush-off from a spokesman for the Medical and Health Services Department, and when I attempted to persuade the Social Welfare Department (from which my informant was receiving the Infirmity Allowance) to intercede on his behalf, I was told they could not "interfere" in the policies of another department. As of 1977 there was still no appointments service, and most of the other Working Party recommendations were also still under consideration, i.e., no decision regarding implementation had been made.

Many of the private agencies in Hong Kong are dependent upon the government for funds to carry out their activities, and they also function as laboratories for public policies, i.e., they establish on a very small

scale a service, which, if successful, may be adopted or subsidized by the government and expanded to serve the entire Hong Kong population. The community nursing service is an example of such an effort, and the information which follows is drawn from a 1976 report on community nursing by Margaret Carter of the Department of Social Work at the University of Hong Kong.

The program was instituted on a very small scale in 1967, and by 1973 five centers (all in the voluntary sector) were providing the service through a total of 11 nurses. It was on the basis of the work being done by these five centers that the Working Party recommended the expansion of the community nursing program in 1973. However, by 1976, though the service had expanded to include 26-1/2 nursing equivalents and three more centers, the funding of the program was still the responsibility of the agencies involved. Generally the fees charged by the nursing service covered only ten to 18 percent of their expenses.

In June 1976 the number of patients of all ages on the books of the community nursing service was 2,676. Yet according to the Social Service Needs Study (1977:1) which was based on data gathered in May 1976, there were 9,500 elderly alone in need of community nursing care. Another 9,000 old people were in need of the homemaker service, but as of 1977 only three agencies sponsored such a program. The elderly make up about one-fifth of the community nursing patients, and their six major medical problems in order of frequency are those involving paralysis, post-surgical care, some element of chronicity requiring dressings and general nursing care, chronic heart problems, diabetes and its complications, and finally chronic conditions with urinary or bowel involvement. Thus the elderly bulk

in the long-term care conditions whereas most of the other age groups require only short-term care, e.g., maternity cases. Carter (1976:13) sums up the case for an expansion of the community nursing service:

if the medical problems of the elderly can be handled at home by a community nurse, there is a much better chance that the person will be able to remain in the community, supported by the family and other social services. However good these support services, such as home helps, meals service and so on, if nursing needs cannot be met by the family or neighbours, the elderly person will not be able to be cared for at home and will necessarily have to take up a valuable hospital bed or a bed in a "Care and Attention Home" for which there is already a dire shortage and a long waiting list.

Unfortunately patients in government hospitals or hospitals not directly associated with the eight (now nine) community nursing centers are infrequently referred to the service. For example, government hospital references constituted only 2.7 percent of the case load in 1976. Thus, many people are unaware of the existence of the program--perhaps this is one reason why hospital staff sometimes have difficulty persuading family members that an elderly patient no longer requires hospitalization.

The alternative to community nursing is some form of institutionalization, but patients requiring some degree of institutionalization are no better off with regard to facilities. The following definitions of institutions are taken from the Social Service Needs Study (1977:5):

Geriatric Unit--a medical institution in which a full range of diagnostic facilities and rehabilitative services for the elderly are provided.

Infirmery--an extension of hospital care. Rehabilitative services with limited medical supervision and regular nursing care are provided for chronics and convalescents of any age group.

Care and Attention Home--a special kind of home where personal and limited nursing care are provided for those elderly people who for physical or social reasons are unable to live independently in the community. Medical care, however, is not offered.

Home for the Elderly--an accommodation providing residential care for the reasonably healthy elderly people who are able to attend to their own needs but are unable to manage in their own homes.

Hostel for the Elderly--an accommodation for the elderly capable of independent living, i.e., residents remain responsible for their own meals and personal maintenance which is not the case in homes for the aged. Only a very limited amount of institutional care is provided for emergency purposes.

In the table below the number of agencies and their service capacities are taken from figures provided to me by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. The figures on needs are taken from the Social Service Needs Study.

Table 9

Medical/Social Service Capacities and Needs of the Elderly

Type of Facility	Number of Agencies Providing the Service	Service Capacity as of Jan. 1977	Need as of May 1976
Geriatric Unit	3	164	5,000*
Care and Attention Home	2	116**	1,500
Home for the Aged	21	2,844	9,000
Hostel for the Aged	4	510	23,400

*Includes the need for infirmary care which is available in facilities for the general population. There are probably less than 1,000 beds in this category not counting the 164 geriatric beds.

**During 1977, 200 more spaces were provided.

Clearly the medical situation of many old people is desperate. Given the gap between supply and demand and the quality of care in some of the institutions, it is no wonder that old people like Mrs. Wun are unenthusiastic about hospitalization. Likewise the government is fortunate that many old people such as Mrs. Lau take a philosophical view of the ailments of old age and that others seek private treatment or rely on self-treatment first as they cannot tolerate the long lines at the out-patient clinics.

What of medical services in the private sector? I will omit discussion of the private hospitals as most of them charge fees beyond the reach of my informants. Western medicine in Hong Kong is regulated primarily by the profession itself. A Medical Council registers western-trained doctors for private practice, and the qualifications for registration are the same as those accepted by the General Medical Council of Great Britain and obtained from schools in the United Kingdom and parts of the Commonwealth, including Hong Kong, where instruction is in English. The English requirement is only one of the obstacles facing doctors trained in western medicine in China or Taiwan but seeking to be registered in Hong Kong.

According to Topley (1975:245) there were 2,585 officially recognized western-trained medical practitioners in Hong Kong in 1971, but in addition to these recognized doctors, the police estimated there to be more than one thousand unrecognized people illegally practicing western medicine in 1974. Not only do these people freely dispense controlled medicines and poisonous drugs and perform surgical procedures in their homes, but they freely advertise in the Chinese press. Some are

refugees trained in well-known hospitals in China, but others are totally untrained. Such marginal practitioners tend to concentrate in the poorer or outlying areas of Hong Kong, e.g., Osgood (1975:804-805) found that of the eight physicians with some type of western training practicing in Lung Shing, all were unlicensed refugees from China. There were also four doctors practicing Chinese medicine in Lung Shing, not including "druggists of the Chinese medicine shops who actually diagnose and prescribe."

Osgood's reluctance to include these "druggists" as physicians is symptomatic of the difficulty in determining just what constitutes a Chinese physician and just what constitutes Chinese medicine. While there are professional associations of traditional practitioners in Hong Kong, they do not have the right to prohibit or prescribe what Chinese practitioners may do. In fact, any Chinese who has paid the \$25 business registration fee may set himself up as an herbalist, acupuncturist, or bone-setter. The government has intervened minimally and primarily in situations involving the use of non-traditional treatment by traditional practitioners, e.g., they may not possess antibiotics, make use of X-ray equipment, or give injections. According to Lee (1975:224) in 1969 there were 4,506 Chinese practitioners of various kinds, and though this was nearly double the number of western-trained practitioners at that time, they did not carry double the case load.

Considerations of expense and convenience affect preferences for treatment. When I went to a traditional herbalist on the recommendation of my landlady, I paid \$20 for a diagnosis and a prescription for a sore throat. My landlady did not think this was out of line, and, indeed,

though it was certainly more expensive than going to a public clinic, it was not much more than a private western doctor would have charged. The herbalist was also readily accessible whereas longer waits would have been anticipated in a private western doctor's office and a much longer wait in a public clinic. On the other hand, the latter two places prescribe medicine which can be quickly injected or ingested whereas an herbalist's prescription requires several hours of boiling prior to ingestion.

None of my informants mentioned having medical insurance. Theoretically they do not need it as their needs can be met at charity or government hospitals, but money is an obstacle to receiving Chinese medicine especially tit da treatment which may require daily visits for several weeks to a doctor. Furthermore, although official charges are low or waived, there still remain unofficial charges in the form of "tea money." Above all the shortages of community nurses and of care and attention homes--as well as of psychiatric services--are of great concern to the elderly and to the family members who must care for them in the absence of these services and facilities. It is no wonder that illness seems to correlate with suicide among the elderly.

In summary, a wide variety of medical services are available in Hong Kong. When sickness or injury occurs, a Hong Kong resident can seek treatment from traditional practitioners--herbalists, tit da doctors, or acupuncturists--or from specialists trained in western medical practice. The variety of services available, however, is at least partly a function of the inadequacy of other services. For example, the long lines associated with attendance at public out-patient clinics no doubt discourage some people for whom convenience is important and send them

instead to herbalists who can attend to their needs immediately. The two major concerns of the elderly are: (1) the differences in cost between traditional and western medicine, and (2) the shortage of services for the long-term ill. Thus, in the first case, patients are sometimes forced to choose between spending their meager savings on tit da treatment or receiving western treatment in which they have less confidence. In the second case there are neither sufficient community nurses to allow the chronically ill to receive care in their homes nor sufficient convalescent or rehabilitation facilities for them to receive institutional care. Given the shortages of these services, the elderly have the remaining options of hiring private staff or of depending upon their families. Those with neither money nor families obviously do not have these options, and they are representative of the miserable situations given attention in the mass media. But even those old people cared for by their families are acutely aware of the burdens their care can impose on other family members.

6. Conclusions

In terms of morbidity and mortality Hong Kong is similar to other urban industrial societies. Declining birth rates and increasing life expectancies have combined to make the elderly a steadily growing proportion of the population. As the incidence of serious infectious diseases has lessened, death is more and more the consequence of cancer and, especially among the elderly, of degenerative conditions. Both these causes of death are usually accompanied by a significant period during which the old person requires some kind of medical supervision,

Illness is invariably an unpleasant experience, but in Hong Kong's bicultural context, it can be even more unpleasant than usual for several reasons. First, many old people even when they present themselves for western medical treatment (as most of them do) interpret the causes of their illness with a framework very different from the practitioner's. In the clinics and hospitals, the pressures from long lines and overcrowded conditions do not allow time for the doctors to explain to the patients the nature of their ailments and the reasons for the particular modes of treatment. Consequently, patients often lack the understanding necessary to assure compliance with the prescribed regimen, and they fall back on more familiar treatments, e.g., Mrs. Wun.

Secondly, in the village the medical assumptions and treatments followed by old people were not inconsistent with those followed by the rest of the village population. In contemporary Hong Kong, however, beliefs about diagnosis and treatment constitute a part of the generation gap. Youngsters in school are taught only western concepts of health and illness and receive only western treatment through the school health service. This dichotomy between home and institutional medicine further undermines the value of the old person's knowledge. In the PRC major efforts are being made to combine aspects of Classical and folk medicine with western medicine, but in Hong Kong while this may be an individual policy, it is certainly not an official policy.

Thirdly, this gap in beliefs and practices may be a source of strain between the old and the young when medical action must be taken. A grandparent may prefer the more expensive treatment of an herbalist or a tit da doctor to the cheaper treatment of a subsidized clinic. Since

other family members are usually paying for the treatment, the potential for strain in family relations is high. Even in choosing western medicine, an old person may require someone to accompany him during the long wait at a government clinic, and therefore someone may have to stay home from school or work to do so.

Fourthly, even when an old person and his family members are in complete agreement about the most appropriate mode of treatment, they still face the problems of expense in the case of Chinese medicine and of availability in the case of western medicine. At present the old people of Hong Kong are not avid consumers of medical services. There are those like Mrs. Lau who believe that in old age "all the diseases come out" and that there is no point in worrying about the gradual loss of teeth, sight, or hearing. Given the scarcity of inexpensive dentists and ophthalmologists, such a low level of expectations functions to lessen the demand for their limited services.

The greatest problem, however, lies in the lack of facilities for those requiring long-term care, e.g., victims of stroke or patients with fractures that must be kept immobilized for long periods. Some families attempt to provide this care themselves, but sometimes at considerable personal cost. One of my elderly informants had tended a daughter who had been rendered paralyzed, mute, and blind by a fever in childhood for nearly 40 years. In the meantime, the other children had grown up and moved out. They refused to take in their old mother later because she could not abandon her helpless daughter, and they did not want this pathetic creature in their own homes. No institution would admit the daughter because she was already receiving care from her aged mother.

When I first met this old woman, her greatest worry was what would become of her daughter when she herself was no longer able to provide the necessary care. In the end, the daughter died very suddenly, but the mother had become so alienated from her other children (who supported her but did not visit her while their sister was alive) that she insisted she would go to a home for the aged rather than to her children when she could no longer make it on her own.

This is admittedly an extreme case, but it illustrates well the kinds of strain that long-term care can place on the family. In the absence of extended kin or neighborly ties, the family gets little respite from the constant attendance such a person may require. Many old people live in dread of becoming such burdens, and some terminate their lives to avoid the eventuality.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation has been to investigate Chinese strategies for providing security in old age and, in particular, to determine how the forces of urbanization and modernization have affected reliance on traditional strategies. Utilizing the models of Lapiere (1965), we examined Chinese decision-making under three different circumstances: (1) in traditional village China under conditions of stable congruence, (2) in the contemporary PRC under conditions of dynamic incongruence, and (3) in contemporary Hong Kong under conditions of static incongruence.

In the traditional village context, the material, social, and ideological facts of life were mutually reinforcing. That descendants were the key to security in old age was so integral a part of the culture that simply following the prescribed cultural pathway to marriage and family led almost automatically to this result. The only individuals compelled to give careful consideration to other options were those who, for one reason or another, lacked descendants. Even these individuals, however, could choose from among the culturally prescribed alternatives. Thus they could adopt children, bind themselves to their natal families, establish fictive kin ties, or otherwise become involved in long-term social relationships with neighbors, employers, or co-workers. The stability and homogeneity of the village population meant that a cohesive public opinion backed up the mutual responsibilities such relationships entailed. Anyone who demonstrated that he took these responsibilities

lightly could not escape the consequences of so doing in a village in which group survival depended upon respect for such ties.

The strategies of old people in the cities were predicated on an extension of the rural ethos. Most old people expected to return to their native villages when too old to work. Others who had married in the city relied on their descendants there. Those who knew they would not be returning to the village and had no kin in the city turned to other kinds of long-term social relationships for security in old age, usually to employers and occasionally to co-workers. Since relatively few old people remained in the city and the interval between their total inability to contribute to household or shop activities and their deaths was comparatively short (given the tendency of the old and the weak to be particularly susceptible to infectious diseases), employers were unlikely to be burdened by large numbers of aged employee dependents. The elderly in the most precarious position in the city were those who had been unable to develop long-term social relationships. At best they could hope to rely on the spontaneous charity of neighbors though this strategy was probably effective only in the stable sub-communities within the city. Otherwise they were forced to turn to the limited services of charitable organizations or to begging around temples or in the market places. The success of these latter strategies was likely to be inversely proportional to the number of old people following them.

In the PRC old people are living under conditions of dynamic incongruence. While many of the previous ideological and social arrangements characteristic of traditional China have been replaced, the underlying material basis of the society has not yet advanced to the point at which

full implementation of the new policies is possible. Whereas before there were great disparities in income and in general standards of living, now official policy attempts to prevent the development of too great disparities in wealth and opportunity and to guarantee a certain minimum standard of living to all. The new forms of social organization--communes and production brigades in the countryside and neighborhood committees in the city--provide new foci for the development of social relationships and social welfare.

In the village, the power of the lineage has been broken. Whatever social services it might once have provided to indigent members have been taken over by the commune to be provided to all eligible commune members. However, the material resources of the communes are not great and they are variable. Frequently the communes do not generate sufficient surpluses to be able to give other than the barest minimum to dependent older people. Indeed, old people with descendants (sons) or from politically stigmatized backgrounds are not even eligible for the Five Guarantees. Thus ineligibility and insufficiency in the material sector make necessary continued reliance on descendants or other long-term social relationships for a more secure, satisfactory standard of living. Old and even middle-aged villagers continue to cultivate neighbors, orphans, and "sent-down" youth as partners. In the early years of the partnership, the older person is the primary service-provider with the expectation that the younger will take the role later. The relative stability of the village continues to make this a viable strategy though the uncertain tenure of the "sent-down" youth introduces a substantial element of risk.

Urban residents of the PRC are more likely than rural to be receiving pensions, but even so old people without descendants continue to seek personal ties to increase their security in time of need such as illness. Since the PRC discourages migration, the turnover in neighborhood residents is relatively low. This fact coupled with the greater penetration of the neighborhood by the neighborhood committee facilitates the development of neighborly interaction. Thus in the PRC while official ideology and policy have led to the formation of new social institutions to provide for the elderly without kin, those old people with families remain ineligible for some of these services and in the absence of substantial pensions continue to work as long as they are able and to rely on their own descendants.

In Hong Kong old people are living under conditions of static incongruence. Hong Kong now has many of the features of an urban industrial society, but these changes in material circumstances and ideology have not been accompanied by compensatory changes in the social sector. According to Burgess (1960:378) industrialization forced the countries of Western Europe, regardless of their different cultural traditions, to develop special programs and services to meet the emerging needs of the elderly. All had to address problems of income, housing, health, and status deprivation. Hong Kong, however, has not yet addressed these problems seriously. Little (1974:8) categorizes Hong Kong's services to the elderly as only a step ahead of those provided by Thailand, Iran, and Greece--all of which are considerably more traditional agrarian societies.

Yet the support networks upon which Hong Kong's elderly must rely are being compelled to carry a much heavier burden than their rural

counterparts. This is the case for several reasons, and I list below some of the differences between traditional rural life and contemporary urban life that make adaptation to aging in Hong Kong a more challenging experience for both the elderly and their families.

1. Personal Safety

In the village narrow lanes restricted traffic to a pace set by pedestrians. An individual with poor hearing, vision, or motor capabilities was in little danger. In Hong Kong congested city streets are controlled by undisciplined motor vehicles. An individual with poor hearing, vision, or motor capabilities is in great danger every time he attempts to cross the street.

2. Public Security

In the village, neighbors and dogs quickly perceived the presence of strangers. In Hong Kong the mobility and density of the population make it difficult to distinguish between neighbors and strangers.

3. Knowledge of Surroundings

In the countryside long residence meant familiarity with the various parts of the village. Physical changes in the appearance of the village were infrequent and gradual. A long-term resident could easily find his way around. In Hong Kong changes of residence make it necessary to become acquainted with new territory. Yet physical changes in neighborhoods are constant and rapid making it easy for a person to lose his way.

4. Knowledge of Neighbors

The small and stable population of the village meant the opportunity to interact with almost all of the other villagers or their families in the course of a life-time. No one was a stranger, and almost everyone was bound in reciprocal obligations to everyone else. The large and ever-changing population of Hong Kong affords only limited opportunities for interaction with a few people over a long period of time.

5. Support Networks

The lineage villages of southeastern China were composed of villagers who were both relatives and neighbors. This double relationship meant a potentially wide support

network in time of need. In Hong Kong the absence of kin due to mortality and migration patterns or their non-contiguous residence if present coupled with the instability of the urban neighborhoods means contraction of the support network to the immediate family, i.e., to descendants.

6. Public Opinion

The homogeneity of the village meant a genuine value consensus. Deviators were noted and sanctioned. The heterogeneity of Hong Kong and the co-existence of competing value systems mean a weak and divided public opinion. Deviators go unnoted and unsanctioned.

7. Public Health

In the village, mortality was largely a function of infectious diseases to which the very young and the very old were especially vulnerable. Weakened unproductive old people were at worst a short-term burden to their families. In Hong Kong death is increasingly the consequence of chronic disease accompanied by a long period of invalidism. More and more old people are a long-term burden to their families.

8. Privacy

Rural housing generally afforded separate sleeping areas for adult couples. Large areas of open space, e.g., rice fields, meant the opportunity to escape from noise, quarrels, or excessive interaction. A severe housing shortage in Hong Kong has resulted in overcrowding. Many couples live and sleep within sight and sound of others. The high population density makes it difficult to escape from the noise and bustle of others.

While these eight contrasts are somewhat overstated for emphasis and are of greatest significance to those who suffer impairment, I think they effectively illustrate the additional difficulties that old people in Hong Kong must face. Because of the traffic situation in Hong Kong an older person's life is in danger any time he attempts to cross the street. Hearing and vision deficits make him slower to perceive danger, and increased reaction time means that he cannot so readily avoid it once he does perceive it. At present old people make up about one-third of Hong

Kong's annual traffic fatalities. When old people go out for walks and begin to wander, the chances of getting lost are much greater than in the village. Buildings are torn down and replaced; shops open and close with such rapidity that districts beyond one's every-day range become unfamiliar very quickly. Furthermore in the village a wanderer is easily identified, and a co-villager will either steer the old person back on the right track or notify the family of his whereabouts. In urban Hong Kong, however, a wanderer need only go around the corner to be in unknown social territory. Worries about injury or disappearance frequently lead families to restrict the older person's activities. He is either accompanied on excursions or he doesn't go out at all.

But even restricting an old person to home or its immediate vicinity does not alleviate all concern. Hong Kong abounds in burglars and robbers who use every ruse to gain entry into a building. Passing themselves off as co-workers or schoolmates of younger family members, they may be able to trick an unwary old person (or young one for that matter) into permitting them entry into the building. Though at least three of my informants (Mrs. Ngai, Mr. Leung, and Mr. Go) were victims of robberies or attempted robberies, the elderly in Hong Kong do not constitute a preferred category of victim as they do in some urban areas of the United States. Both Mrs. Ngai and Mr. Leung (and the writer) fell victim to robbers lurking on staircases. Such robbers will avail themselves of whomever happens to come up the stairs.

The lessened mobility of the elderly frequently means a diminished social life. The scarcity of siblings in this age group and their dispersion throughout Hong Kong even if resident mean that there is no

readily available extra-familial source of emotional gratification. Yet given the attitudinal differences which exist between the generations, there is probably a high need for peers with whom to share familial difficulties. Unless the old person lives in one of the more stable neighborhoods, it can be difficult to operate in a social arena beyond the immediate family. This contracted sphere of social interaction can make the older person's constant presence in the home a source of friction as in overcrowded circumstances it renders privacy impossible.

Fortunately most older people remain capable of making major contributions to the running of the household, e.g., doing marketing, laundry, or cooking and otherwise freeing other household members to engage in money-making activities. The problems of reduced social networks and dependency are most acute in time of incapacitating illness. Given the shortage of services and facilities for those in need of extensive personal care, the burden falls exclusively on the immediate family. If there are sufficient funds to pay for private care, the nature of the burden is primarily financial and may be comparatively light, but where there are no funds, the daughter-in-law or daughter may be forced to quit a job and remain almost constantly on call. The absence of a wider support network makes it difficult for the primary care-giver to take off more than a few hours at a time. The old person lacking descendants is, of course, in an even more difficult position.

It is in the area of medical care that the organizational lag in Hong Kong is perhaps most visible. Western European countries have responded to the special needs of the elderly through governmental welfare programs; the PRC has focussed on locally-based funding and provision of

needed services. In Hong Kong while some services have been provided, they come nowhere near meeting the demand. The elderly are painfully aware that the absence of special services means reliance on children, but they are no longer a guaranteed source of care. Old people are quite concerned about the nature of their relationships with their children because they know that if for some reason the children should become alienated, there are few sanctions which the parent can bring to bear to awaken them to their filial responsibilities. While immediate neighbors may be aware of neglect or abuse, they are rarely in a position to apply sanctions. The offending child may live elsewhere, have gotten employment on his own, and appear a normally responsible person to his peers and neighbors who have no contact with his parents. As Bott (1971:390) pointed out, this "individuated" quality of the urban family guarantees it privacy and freedom of action, but it also means that the most vulnerable members of the family have no extra-familial supporters who will readily act on their behalf. While few descendants take advantage of their parents' helplessness, enough do to result in newspaper stories of abandonment that give every old parent cause to ponder.

Given the lack of pensions and the low levels of public assistance, even healthy old people must rely on their descendants, but the current atmosphere of insecurity means that parents now watch their children for signs of unreliability and try to determine which child is most likely to follow through on filial responsibilities. The wise parent is careful not to antagonize adult children and to impress upon younger children how much they owe to their parents. Parents now must be calculating in

their familial relationships whereas previously calculation was mainly the business of those without descendants.

This latter category remains in a precarious position. In the past there were culturally prescribed alternatives--various forms of long-term social relationships--upon which they could elect to rely, but attempts to follow these alternatives in Hong Kong today are less likely to meet with success. The public opinion which in the village witnessed and enforced the obligations of the partners in fictive kin relationships is weak in Hong Kong. The removal of the partners from the neighborhood which witnessed the establishment of the ties greatly dilutes the incentive to carry on with the ties when they prove inconvenient. Since the older partner usually makes the initial investment of services in such partnerships, it is the older person who loses the most by the weakening of this traditional tie. Reliance on neighbors can work for some such as Mrs. Wun, but this is an increasingly risky strategy. Should her neighborhood be targeted for urban renewal or her particular building be declared dangerous, her support system would break down.

Urban life per se has not created all these special problems for the elderly. It is rather that Hong Kong is undergoing--and likely to continue undergoing for some time--a major redistribution of the population from the congested urban districts to the satellite towns of the New Territories. Even residential instability need not be a serious obstacle to the development of satisfying social relationships for people skilled in initiating social interaction and in choosing their friends with little regard to location. The present generation of old people, however, are largely of rural origins, and the women in particular have continued to

follow traditional pathways to friendship, i.e., propinquity coupled with face-to-face interaction over an extended time period led "naturally" to friendship with those individuals found to be compatible. Such an evolutionary process does not lead to the development of skills effective in searching out compatible prospects and rapidly converting them into friends. The social clubs and centers introduced into the community by outside agencies have little appeal to old people lacking these skills.

In the meantime the incongruence now characteristic of Hong Kong is likely to persist. At the local level there are few support networks beyond the immediate family. There are no indications that industry is likely to expand what limited pensions schemes already exist, and the Colonial Government is reluctant to expand its own social welfare services. LaPiere (1965:93) points out that incongruence tends to persist for one of two reasons--either there is a lack of individuals who are motivated to bring about change or the organizational and ideological components of the society as a whole operate to discourage change. In Hong Kong there is no lack of persons motivated to bring about change. Many people ranging from journalists and social workers to the elderly themselves utilize the pages of the major newspapers to act as advocates for change, but their efforts are blocked by the "organizational and ideological components" to which LaPiere refers.

Hong Kong is essentially a capitalist, laissez-faire economy, and the Colonial Government is reluctant to take any steps which might threaten the economic stability of Hong Kong. Any expansion of social welfare programs (or of pensions) would come straight out of the profits of the corporations. Towner (1973) in reporting on a study done by Rabushka, an

American political scientist, indicates that the reluctance to expand welfare services rests on two reasons. (1) Given the present uncertainty of Hong Kong's future, i.e., the socio-political situation following the expiration of the lease in 1997, investors will soon become reluctant to leave their capital in Hong Kong, and this will mean fewer revenues for all governmental functions. (2) The expansion of social welfare services would necessitate a bigger tax bite which in itself might bring about an exodus of capital. Towner quotes Rabushka as saying "It would be tragic if the well-intentioned welfare policies of the Government, rather than uncontrollable external forces, brought about the decline of Hong Kong." Yet another reason for not expanding welfare services to the elderly is competition from other more dangerous elements, e.g., unemployed youths, who showed their potential for disruption in the mid-1960s when the Cultural Revolution spilled over into Hong Kong. No doubt all of these factors play a role in the slowness of the Government to implement even the highest priority recommendations of the 1973 Working Party Report.

Given the absence of any expanded opportunities for old people to be financially self-supporting and the shortage of medical services and facilities for long-term care, the elderly in Hong Kong have no choice but to follow the traditional strategies of reliance on personal ties. Yet at the very same time, the processes of urbanization and modernization have increased the scope of the services this shrinking support network must provide. Surely the present situation in Hong Kong while neither so bad as the newspapers suggest is also a far cry from the ideal described by Hsu (1953). Aging in contemporary Hong Kong is fraught with insecurity --a situation likely to persist for quite some time.

GLOSSARY OF CANTONESE TERMS

(According to Yale-in-China Spelling System)

阿伯

abaak -

"Father's older brother" = common address term for old men

阿婆

apoh -

"Mother's mother" = common address term for old women

八掛

baat gwa -

A small mirror set in an octagonal frame

補品

bou ban -

Strengthening tonic

符

fuh -

A paper charm

風

fung -

Wind

風車

fung che -

A "wind wheel"

風濕

fung sap -

"Wind-wet" = rheumatism

風水

fung seui -

"Wind-water" = geomancy

街坊

gaalfong -

Neighborhood association

金蘭姊妹

gam láahn jimui -

"Golden orchid sisters" = sworn sisters

結拜兄弟

git baai hingdaih -

Sworn brothers

氣

hei -

Air, breath

氣功

hei gung -

A therapeutic technique practiced by Taoists

好朋友

hou pahngyauh -

Good friend

齋堂

jaai tohng -

A residence in which only vegetarian meals are allowed

酒肉朋友

jauyuhk panngyauh -

"Wine and meat" friend

知己嘅朋友

jigeige pahngyauh -

Friend who knows myself

精

jing -

Vital essence

知心嘅朋友

jisamge pahngyauh -

Friend who knows my heart

粥

juk -

Congee, soft boiled rice

中醫

jung yi -

"Chinese" doctor = a doctor trained in Chinese medicine

契

kai -

A kind of fictive kin relationship

驅風油

keui fung yauh -

"Drive out the wind oil"

辣

laant -

Hot, peppery

涼

leuhng -

Cold

老朋友

lauh pahngyauh -

Old friend

老師

louhsi -

Teacher, a respectful address term

冇錯

mouh cho -

"You said it" or "No mistake about that"

南無佬

naahm mo louh -

Religious specialist dealing with ghosts

我好辛苦

ngoi hou sanfu -

"I am extremely uncomfortable, in great distress"

貧血

pahn hyut -

"Jack of blood"

普通朋友

poutung pahngyauh -

Common or ordinary friend

西醫

sai yi -

"Western" doctor = a doctor trained in western medicine

濕熱

sap yiht -

"Wet-hot"

蝕本貨

siht bun fo -

"Goods on which money is lost" = daughters

跌打醫生

tit da yisang -

"Fall-hit" doctor = "bone-setter"

跌打酒

tit da jau -

"Fall-hit wine"

跌打油

tit da yauh -

"Fall-hit oil"

陰

yam -

Female principle

陽

yeuhng -

Male principle

熱

yiht -

Hot

熱氣

yiht hei -

"Hot air"

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