ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
IMPACT REPORT

The Impact Report should be completed and submitted using the grant reference as the email subject to, reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk on or before the due date.

Please complete each box as fully as possible, adhering to the word counts, please do not include images within the text. Appendices are not accepted.

Principal Investigators are expected to consult with co-investigators on the content of this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Reference:</th>
<th>RES-000-22-4031</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigator/s:</td>
<td>Dr Jieyu Liu (PI), Dr Joanne Cook (CI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>Ageing in Rural China: Exploring the Impact of Rural-Urban Migration on Familial Support for Older People</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

Please include a short overview of the projects impacts *(max 2000 characters with spaces)*.

This project examined the impact of rural to urban migration on the support of the older generation in Chinese rural families through intergenerational life history interviews with two and sometimes three generations in 17 families residing in two villages in China. By probing local socio-cultural meanings and interpretations of notions such as ‘care’, ‘obligation’ and ‘(inter)dependency’, this project has made an essential and timely contribution to understanding how intergenerational support is being renegotiated and the implications this holds for experiences of growing older in rural China. Further it has contributed to an emerging global literature on rural ageing and the agency of older people and their families in responding to the need to ‘care at a distance’. Since the project provided some much needed ethnographic lived experiences data detailing how older people and their families interpret and respond to the rapid socio-economic changes, the study provides a valuable reference source for both policy making and practice in rural China and for international development agencies who are concerned with the challenges of population ageing. One particular contribution is that the study coincided with the expansion of welfare provision in rural China from 2009; therefore it provided a first-hand valuable insight into local restructuring of familial support and offered empirical evidence for the development of these new policies during their expansion to wider rural regions in China.
1. **Scientific impact**

A Please **summarise** below the scientific impact(s) your project has had. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

A key aim was to examine the extent to which rural-urban migration has reshaped expectations and experiences of familial support in old age. This research has furthered academic understanding in four major respects. First, it addresses debates on modernisation, ageing and intergenerational support in developing/emerging economies. Modernisation theory points to the threats to elder support posed by migration, urbanisation and increased individualisation within emerging nuclear family units. We show that while modernisation theory raises important concerns, these approaches risk overplaying the demise of support, underestimating the role of culture and under-examining the important role of older people as providers of support to their families. Second, it adds to the emerging global literature on migration and ‘care’ at a distance and proposes a gendered and intergenerational approach to the study of Chinese rural ageing. To fully understand the changes in familial support it is essential to analyse gender and generational hierarchies embedded in filial piety which result in older women experiencing the most significant changes. Third, as one of the research villages was included in China’s first pilot pension scheme, the study is among the very first to examine the household-effects of the state’s recent move towards encouraging a mixed welfare provision in rural China. We argue that the familialization approach embedded in state social policies failed to consider rural-urban segregation and the under developed rural economy and infrastructure, leaving in tact gendered inequalities embedded in familial support systems which allow the state and market to reap the benefits of older women’s unpaid labour. Fourth, as existing literature on rural ageing is mostly based on survey data, our ethnographic research has made a methodological contribution, providing invaluable qualitative data on the agency and dynamics of rural households in China.

B Please outline the **findings and outputs** from your project which have had the scientific impact(s) outlined in 1A. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

All our presentations and papers have addressed the various aspects of the scientific impacts outlined in 1A. For example, our findings illustrated weaknesses in Modernisation theory’s ‘abandonment thesis’ which led us to develop nominated output 1 (submitted to *Ageing and Society*), where we examine the renegotiation of familial support in rural China. We critically review modernization theory in the rural Chinese context and develop an analytical frame that draws upon gendered and intergenerational approaches to the renegotiation of familial support that situate these relationships as fluid, bilateral and enduring in the face of mass youth migration. The vital role older women, in particular, play in enabling the migration of their adult children is a key finding as is the continued relevance of the extended family in rural China.

In output 2 (submitted to *Social Policy and Administration*), we employed the care diamond framework (Ochiai 2009) to examine the roles that multiple actors (i.e. state, family, market and community) have played in providing support for older people in rural China. We show that the current welfare mix in rural China is deeply embedded in a familial ideology with market, state and community sectors, indirectly or directly, relying upon the family sector. Whether such a pattern is sustainable is subject to the employment status of the migrating children as well as the family relations between the older generation and the adult child.
generation. This article exposes the limitations of the familialization approach adopted by the state; instead, it calls for public policies that are based upon *citizenship* which allocates access to benefits based on universal rights.

C. Please outline how these impacts were achieved. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

Publications: two journal articles submitted; one journal article published (*Geoforum* 2014)

During the life of the project and beyond, seven conference papers were presented internationally: ‘Householding in East and Southeast Asia’ Workshop at the National University of Singapore (Liu, 2011); British Gerontology Association Annual Conference at University of Oxford (Cook, 2013); 12th EastAsia Net Conference at University of Lyon (Liu, 2013); ‘Care, Crisis and Leadership in East Asia’ Workshop at University of Duisburg-Essen (Liu, 2013); Inaugural Worldwide University Network Global China Conference ‘Family Transition, Ageing and Social Security in China’ at Chinese University of Hong Kong (Liu, 2013); ‘Gender and Sexuality Research Symposium: Masculinities, Modernity and Heteronormativity in the UK and China’ at University of York (Liu, 2014); International Conference of Social Quality and Sustainable Development in China at Zhejiang University (Liu, 2014).

One seminar lecture has been delivered at the School of Modern Languages at the University of Newcastle (Liu, 2011).

Two findings reports have been produced; one in English and one in Chinese which have been utilized for dissemination among mailing lists including both academic and non-academic research users.

As part of dissemination, Dr Liu delivered an end-of-project seminar *in Chinese* in May 2013 at Peking University, attended by local academic audiences with direct links to policymakers in China.

An end-of-project workshop on Family, Migration and Intergenerational Relations was held at the University of Leeds on 30th May 2013 at which a total of three project teams, including this team (PI and CI), reported on the insights and key findings of recent research in the field. This involved 35 scientific experts on intergenerational relations from the UK and Europe, all of whom received a copy of the end of project report and the presentation.

D. Please outline who the findings and outputs outlined above had an impact upon. This can include specific academics/researchers through to broader academic groups. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

Findings have been presented at various workshops and conferences involving audiences in a wide range of disciplines including Sociology, Social Gerontology, Social Policy, Geography and Area and Development Studies (as reflected in our publications). Our research findings have reached a large international audience. In particular, as Dr Liu is fluent in Chinese, the research findings have been presented in China, through seminars at Peking University,
Chinese University of Hong Kong and Zhejiang University. Feedback has been very good; while no citations are yet available, various scholars have enquired further about our research, including:

UK-based scholars: Prof. Stevi Jackson (York, Sociology and Women’s Studies); Prof. Delia Davin (Leeds, China Studies); Prof. Maria Evandrou (Southampton, Social Gerontology); Dr Joanne Smith Finley (Newcastle, China Studies); Dr Katherine Brickell (Royal Holloway, Geography); Dr Derek Hird (Westminster, China Studies); Dr Emanuela Bianchera (Institute of Population Ageing, University of Oxford)

European scholars: Prof. Flemming Christiansan (Duisburg-Essen, Politics); Prof. Karen Shire (Duisburg-Essen, Sociology and Gender Studies); Professor Claudine Attias-Donfut (Edgar Morin Center, EHESS/CNRS Paris).

Non-EU based scholars: Prof. Yeoh Brenda (National University of Singapore, Geography); Prof. Mike Douglass (University of Hawaii, Sociology); Dr Jaco Hoffinan (North West University, South Africa/Institute of Population Ageing, University of Oxford); Dr Jacka Tamara (Australia National University, China Studies); Prof. Zheng Xiaoying (Peking University, Demography); Prof. Lin Ka (Zhejiang University, Social Policy); Prof. Zhang Dayong (Chinese Agricultural University, Gerontology).

2. Economic and societal impact

A Please summarise below the economic and societal impact(s) your project has had. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

The research has highlighted ‘the internal dynamics of communities, neighbourhoods and family relations’ (Risseeuw 2001) and has thus been of considerable interest to practitioners and policymakers in Asia and Europe who are concerned about both the financial and social implications of an ageing population.

Coinciding with the expansion of welfare provision from 2009, the project provided a first-hand valuable insight into local restructuring of familial support and offered empirical evidence for the further refinement of these new policies during their expansion to other rural regions, i.e, the data exposed the familialization approach embedded in rural social policies and revealed policy gaps which leave rural families vulnerable when welfare provision for older people relies on household income and relations with adult children. Through a micro-level analysis, we also found that the reliance of family welfare was built on unpaid labour of older women and the broader gender constraints experienced by women of all generations which calls for urgent policy attention.

The project findings, informed directly by the voices of rural families, reveal the significant impact that migration and the renegotiation of familial support is having on growing older in rural China. The lives of older people are profoundly affected; deferring retirement well into frail older age, with older women in particular carrying the heavy burden of domestic, farm and child care into later life. These processes all have urgent implications for policy and local community support systems, highlighting the negative social and health impacts of migration on older people in the face of inadequate welfare and health provision.
B Please outline the findings and outputs from your project which have had the economic and societal impact(s) outlined in 2A. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

Two plain-language findings reports (in English and Chinese) have been produced. In the reports, we call for public awareness of the role older people have played in helping their families and community and show that the lived experiences of growing older in rural China are now characterised by a greater responsibility of care and farm work as a result of adult child migration.

Dr Liu (PI) has also written an analysis of Chinese social policies which was included in a policy briefing for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; recently she submitted a research-based report on migration and ageing in China to be published in an online magazine Discovery Society. Both reports call for a defamilialization approach to be adopted in China’s rural social policies on pension and medical care insurance. Rather than relying upon household capacity to pay, rural residents should be entitled to receive them on a citizenship basis. Only through further market development to provide better jobs for rural migrants and the state’s intervention to improve financial support and care infrastructure in rural China, can the culturally-valued familial support system remain sustainable. In addition to these written outputs, Dr Liu (PI) has given lectures on ageing and migration in China to a wide range of audiences including the general public, policymakers, the media and NGOs, bringing to light the demographic challenges China has faced and is facing, and the gender and generational inequalities embedded in socio-economic transitions.

C Please outline how these impacts were achieved. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

At the proposal stage, PI (Dr Liu) and CI (Dr Cook) had already built links with relevant organizations such as China Agricultural University, and national and international NGOs such as AgeUK and HelpAge International.

Throughout the project, the PI maintained an on-going dialogue with Chinese academics, many of whom were also advisors for national and local policymakers in China.

A plain-language project summary report was produced in English and Chinese. The English report was distributed to the attendees at the end of project workshop held in Leeds on 30th May 2013. These contacts also sent the pdf onto their own networks, including many non-academic research users and organisations, enabling the project’s findings to reach a broad field of interest. The Chinese language report has been sent to international non-academic Chinese-speaking communities through mailing lists and personal networks.

At the final analysis stage of research, an end of project seminar was held in Peking University, promoting a debate among local scholars with direct links to policy makers in China. All participants received a copy of the end of project report in Chinese and the presentation resulted in developing rich debate and shared learning on this area.

Dr Liu has disseminated the research findings to a wider range of audiences by giving seminar talks at HelpAge International, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Leeds Oxfam Group Meeting and attending China affairs discussion meetings with policymakers including FCO officers and MPs. She has also given research-informed interviews to various media outlets such as BBC, gbtimes, The Guardian.
Please outline who the findings and outputs outlined above had an impact upon. This can be at a broad societal level through to specific individuals or groups. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

| The research has been disseminated to a wider public audience including government bodies, charities, NGOs and media outlets as outlined above. Specific groups are as follows. |
| China-based groups: |
| - Villagers in two villages: the interviews conducted by Dr Liu were welcomed particularly by the older generation as the occasion itself was empowering in that it gave the older people an opportunity to talk about themselves. A summary of the research findings had also been explained by Dr Liu in Chinese. As the literacy level was relatively low in rural China, the summary was verbally delivered. |
| - Officers in the research villages: throughout the whole period of fieldwork, Dr Liu had communicated with village administrative officers in an attempt to convey the needs and concerns of older residents and discuss possible solutions. Although it can be difficult sometimes in communications, such feedback was welcomed by some local officers. |
| - Chinese academics: as Chinese academics were often consulted by policymakers in China, on-going dialogue established with them had the potential to impact upon future policymaking in China. |

| Uk-based groups include: HelpAge International, Leeds Oxfam Gender Inequalities Discussion Group, Asia Pacific Research Group at Foreign and Commonwealth Office. |

| General English-speaking public: Due to the increasing interest on the social impact of economic changes in China, Dr Liu has been often invited to contribute to such debates by various media outlets. On these occasions, she has provided an up-to-date knowledge and sometimes corrected Western stereotypes towards Chinese families and gender relations. |
3. Unexpected and potential future impacts

A Unexpected Impacts
Please note which, if any, of the impacts that your research has had were unexpected at the outset of the project, explaining where possible why you think this was the case. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

N/A.

B Potential Future Impacts
If you have a clear idea of the impact your project is likely to have in the future please detail these below. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

Further writing of the data into journal articles is planned. For example, Dr Liu will lead writing on gender and Chinese family relations. Dr Cook will lead writing on ageing and intergenerational relations. A book proposal has also been solicited by Edward Elgar.

Given the interest in this project from policymakers in China and the rest of the world, the team will continue to offer consultations/presentations. The Chinese policy-making arena has inevitably formed the primary target in the initial stages of dissemination and impact however, we now have the opportunity to pursue other policy avenues. i.e the research findings carry significant relevance for debates within the World Health Organisation and UN through the World Assembly on Ageing where the abandonment thesis of Modernisation theory seems to be uncritically embraced. As an ongoing strategy for policy impact the research team will develop contacts with relevant policy personnel to discuss the research findings and identify avenues for influencing international policy debates.

In terms of ageing policy and practice the project has illuminated significant risks for quality of life of older people and gaps in familial support that can render them vulnerable to extreme rural poverty. The team will work with China-based development agencies; for example, Dr Liu has recently been consulted and will remain involved in a social enterprise that is to be launched in Shanghai in October 2014 to tackle the challenges of ageing in China. In the domestic policy arena, the team will work with UK based ageing NGOs, including Age UK and HelpAge International to influence their approaches to ageing in the Chinese context and beyond. These are longer-term processes that are just coming to fruition now.

4. Impact limitations

A Limited scientific impact
Please state below any major scientific difficulties that have limited the scientific impact of your project. The statement should refer to an effect on impact rather than simply detail research difficulties or other project activity problems. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

N/A.
B Limited economic and societal impact

ESRC recognises that some of the research it funds will not have an economic or societal impact in the short term. Please explain briefly below if this is the case for your project, and refer to your grant application where relevant. [Max 2000 Characters with spaces]

Given the relative distance of the research team from policy–making networks in China, shaping social welfare policy is always going to be a difficult impact to achieve. However, we have worked strategically to get the research findings to reach audiences who have direct access to these policy networks with the aim of influencing them. Inevitably this work is ongoing and will continue as academic and policy publications continue to develop.