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## Parental gender-specific expectations of their children in Mainland China: An intersectional analysis

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in  
Education

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of traditional Chinese culture and the diverse social backgrounds of parents on their gender-specific expectations for their children in China, particularly in the post-one-child policy era. This study conducted qualitative interviews with six parents in Beijing, who have both sons and daughters and represent diverse gender and socioeconomic backgrounds. Though the study findings reveal parental ambivalence in raising children according to traditional gender roles, the systematic and pervasive nature of the traditional culture within families continues to prioritize boys, resulting in ongoing disadvantages for daughters. This research emphasizes the importance of addressing the challenges that girls encounter within the Chinese family setting. These challenges include systematic sexism and gender stereotypes, inequitable distribution of household responsibilities, the objectification and discrimination of women in traditional marriage and family dynamics, as well as the perpetuation of sexism through classism and class-based oppression.

## Keywords

Gender equity, family, China, parental expectations, intersectionality

## Summary for Lay Audience

In recent years, gender equity has made great progress in China, with the increase in female's access to education being regarded as a signifier of improvement in gender parity. This shift is particularly obvious in China, where the media constantly points to the fact women outnumber men in higher education to prove women and men are already equal. However, most people focus on gender equity in public arenas, such as access to education and job opportunities, but do not explore gender equity in families, thus a nuanced understanding of girls' experiences in contemporary Chinese families is lacking.

Focusing on the gender perspectives and gender-specific expectations of Chinese parents with more than one child following the official end of the one-child policy in China, this study asks: In what way does traditional Chinese culture influence parental gender-specific expectations of children? How do parents' social identities and status influence the gender-specific expectations they have of their children? This study positions the voices of urban and rural Chinese parents as its sources of knowledge. Specifically, six parents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in Beijing were asked for their perspectives and lived realities based on their different social identities.

Through critical and intersectional analyses of the interviews, the study reveals the persistent and systematic prejudice against girls and women in Chinese families, as well as the lack of support from the government. This study presents the realities of Chinese girls in families, profoundly influenced by the gender hierarchies of traditional Chinese culture and their family backgrounds. In this presentation, it unravels the myth of "gender equity" in China by unveiling the hidden injustices and biases within families. Additionally, it is hoped that this study's findings and recommendations will increase awareness among Chinese parents of the effect of culture on gender expectations. This, in turn, may enable families to become better

advocates for gender equity and improved fairness for Chinese girls. Furthermore, through investigating the impact of individual's diverse social identities on gender perspectives in the Chinese context, this study aims to contribute to the advancement of social justice and gender equity.

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# Chapter 1

## 1 Introduction

This qualitative study aims to examine the gender-specific expectations Chinese parents have for their children in families with more than one child after the one-child policy. The implementation of the one-child policy by the Communist Party of China from 1979 to 2015, spanning over three decades, has led to an improved social status for daughters within Chinese families (Huang et al., 2015; Lee, 2014). However, with the end of the policy and recent shift towards larger families, it is important to investigate whether the status of daughters within the family will change. This study seeks to explore whether there have been any shifts in expectations for Chinese girls since the end of the one-child policy, as gender inequality and regional disparities in gender contribute to unequal power dynamics, agency, and functioning in China.

This study also aims to explore how parental expectations are influenced by Chinese traditional culture and parents' unique social identities, for each individual has distinct and complex social locations based on class, gender, residence status, etc. Feminist theory and intersectionality that guided this study prioritize identity locations to reveal and challenge oppression and inequities.

By examining the gender perspectives of parents in families with more than one child and exploring how social factors influence their gender-specific expectations, the thesis sheds light on specific gendered practices within families and relates these practices to the larger socio-cultural context. In this chapter, I will first briefly explain the definition of Chinese traditional culture, and why parents' gender-specific

expectations need to be studied. I will also demonstrate the research objectives and research questions. Then I will provide an overview of the thesis outline.

## 1.1 Background to the Study

What is culture and Chinese traditional culture in this thesis? Culture is a fundamental component of every society, serving as a cohesive force that binds individuals together and dictates patterns of behavior, influencing how people lead their lives (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). In the context of this thesis, Chinese traditional culture is particularly noteworthy. It has been significantly shaped by patriarchal norms and Confucianism. Confucianism, a philosophical system rooted in the teachings of Confucius and evolves in different stage of history, has played a central role in shaping Chinese socio-political life for most of Chinese history (Gu, 2019). It has left a profound imprint on China's societal values, ethical principles, and overall mindset. Prejudice against women had existed in China before Confucianism. However, Confucianism was held as the dominant social ideology for almost every feudal dynasty from approximately 200 B.C.E to 1911. It was Confucianism that turned the marriage system into bondage of women, treating them as possessions for their husbands (Gao, 2003). This traditional Chinese culture has had a substantial impact on people's value systems, including the gender-specific expectations that parents hold for their children, which are explored in this study.

Why is gender important in the context of family? The quote by Simone de Beauvoir (2010) "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman," emphasizes the significance of understanding the concept of gender. Gender is a social construct, as highlighted by Butler (2004) and Lorber (1994). It involves categorizing individuals

based on various factors such as gender, class, religion, race, ethnicity, disability etc., which are often accompanied by inequalities (Deutsh, 2007). Gender can be described as the cultural distinctions between women and men, which are influenced by but not entirely determined by the biological differences between females and males (Connell, 2002). Practices of gender are regarded as one of the most segregating and biased practices worldwide, found in various settings such as families, schools, or society (Cole, 2009; Wodak, 2008).

For educational research about gender equity, many researchers have shown interests in educational access for girls (Liu, 2018; Liu, 2020; Tsui & Rich, 2002; Zeng et al., 2014) because scholars believe a crucial determinant for gender equity is the distribution of education (Liu, 2006). Researchers have observed a narrowing gender gap in terms of access to education, particularly evident in Asian countries like China, where the disparity used to be more pronounced (Liu, 2017). However, achieving gender equity should not be limited to public domains like education; it should also extend to the nuances of daily life and everyday family interactions (Stormquist & Fischman, 2009).

In the Chinese context, various forms of oppression against women, such as polygamy, footbinding, and the phenomenon of the missing girls all happen in families (Jiang, 2009). This oppression was perpetuated by a patriarchal system, reinforced by the influential presence of Confucianism, which resulted in a specific form of sexism in feudal Chinese society (Zhang, 1998). According to Confucianism, men were considered the primary pillar of social order as well as family clan, while women were predominantly viewed as caregivers and bearers of offspring (Hamilton, 1990).

Confucianism, being deeply ingrained in Chinese culture, continues to shape people's daily lives in China (Goldin, 2014). Among everyday interactions in families, parental gender-specific expectations play an important role in shaping children's future paths. Researchers have pointed out that parental gendered expectations, influenced by traditional culture, have a significant impact on child socialization (Bodovski, 2014; Rinehart, 1993). Parental expectations are commonly understood as the beliefs or judgements parents hold about their children's future achievements, whether in the present or the future (Glick & White, 2004; Goldenberg et al., 2001; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). The term "socialization" refers to the process of forming children into social beings. This process implies that each individual lives in a group in order to learn specific patterns of social behaviour (Groesch & Lytton, 1988). Families serve as the primary context where children actively and rapidly acquire patterns of behaviours; therefore, families and parental gender-specific expectations are key agents of socialization (Grusec & Lytton, 1988). Within families, gendered practices and gender power dynamics are hidden and normalized, influenced by societal expectations of how different genders comply with the social rules (Sensoy & DiAngeko, 2017). Gender expectations are further complicated as they intersect with other social factors like race, class, and cultural contexts (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

This research aims to explore the factors that influence parental expectations within families with more than one child after the one-child policy. The one-child policy, introduced in 1979 to address social, economic, and environmental problems, mandated that each couple could only have one child, resulting in millions of couples involved in this strict family-planning program for over three decades (Grenhalgh, 1986). However,

following the end of the one-child policy in 2016, the Chinese government has renewed its focus on population planning and attempted to steer the population in various ways, including efforts to increase the birth rate (Alpermann & Zhan, 2019). The demographic challenge of rapid ageing and a declining labour force have prompted population planning bureaucracy.

The central leadership in China employs top-level design to incorporate population policy into various policy fields. For instance, the State Council has crafted a comprehensive mid-term plan for population development, spanning from 2016 to 2030. As a result of these policies, family arrangements are affected across three generations, with middle-aged couples now expected to have a second or third child. At the same time, this may also lead them to depend on the older generation for childcare or face challenges in caring for their elderly parents. All these changes could result in altered resource distribution within families and influence parental expectations for their children. Given the complexity arising from parents' diverse social intersections, integrated theories such as critical feminist theory (Crawford & Unger, 2000; Gergen, 2001; hooks, 1990; Lykes & Qin, 2001) and Crenshaw's intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho et al, 2013; Hill Collins, 2015; May, 2015) have been employed to demonstrate the perpetuation of gender-specific expectations within families and uncover the social injustice underlying such parental expectations.

## 1.2 The Research Objectives and Questions

This thesis explores parental gender-specific expectations, as described by Chinese parents, that happen in our smallest unit of societies-families in order to advocate for more gender equity and social justice. The key point of this thesis is to investigate

how Chinese traditional culture and parents' social backgrounds influence gender-specific expectations for their children in the Chinese context.

Research questions can be seen as expressions that indicate what the researcher aims to explore or understand in their study (Bryman, 2012). This research seeks to explore parental gender-specific expectations of their children, as well as certain reasons for such expectations. The research questions for this study are:

- 1) In what way does Chinese traditional culture influence parental gender-specific expectations of children?
- 2) How do parents' social intersections influence parental gender-specific expectations of children?

### 1.3 Outline of Chapters

This thesis comprises seven sections: introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, research findings, discussion, and conclusion. Chapter 1 sets the contexts and rationale for the study's objective. Chapter 2 conducts a review of existing literature covering gender roles, traditional culture in China, and the impact of social factors on parental expectations. Chapter 3 explores the theoretical considerations and introduces the key concepts of critical feminist theory and intersectionality lend to this study. Methodological foundations, research design, participants inclusion, and research instruments of this study are detailed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, research findings are organized into themes. In chapter 6, the collected data is discussed and analyzed. Finally, chapter 7 offers a summary of the study's implications and provides suggestions for further exploration.



## Chapter 2

### 2 Literature Review

The dynamics of gender relations in a society are significantly shaped by various factors such as social progress, traditional cultures, the degree of urbanization, and more. (Wang, 2019). Since this study focuses on gender issues in family, understanding the cultural and social background in the Chinese context will help to get deep insight into the gender structure in this state. I'll start the chapter with an introduction to gender roles and traditional culture in China and in doing so, demonstrate the social context in which this research is taking place. This is one way to demonstrate cultural reasons for current gender equity. Then I will connect gender equity to variations in parental expectations regarding gender roles for children in urban and rural areas of China. I will also account for more gender inequity observed in rural areas, helping to elucidate both the political and economic reasons for gender inequity's persistence. Finally, I will introduce more factors that impede equal gendered expectations in the Chinese context.

#### 2.1 Gender Roles and Traditional Culture in China

In the Chinese context, gender is translated using the same word as sex. This interpretation emphasizes a strong connection between biological sex and social identity, which maintains a belief in which gender differences are created by nature rather than culture and social structure (Wang, 2020). Under the belief behind the translation of the term gender, social norm perpetuates the belief that gender inequity is rationalized and difficult to change, as it is perceived to be biologically determined (Clow & Riccardelli, 2011; Otis, 2011; Peng et al., 2021). The perception of biological differences and natural

division are used to reinforce the gender binary system and gender roles in Chinese culture.

Gender issues in China are also inextricably linked to their historical and cultural context. For example, because current Chinese society evolved from an agriculture-based society, the traditional labour division in agricultural society has shaped today's gender expectations. According to the traditions inherited from an agriculture-based economy, men's role was outside the home as the main labour force, while women's role was inside the home to care for families. Men were able to keep the family name, the family lineage and family property. In contemporary China, despite improvements in women's economic status and the diversification of their roles in current society, there may still be societal expectations for women to conform to traditional feminine identities, which may include prioritizing family responsibilities and their physical appearance (Jung, 2018).

Based on this tradition and belief, Confucianism, as an ideology, supports men's dominating role in society. This philosophy has been influential in China's feudal dynasties, guiding people's behaviour in their families and social lives for more than 2000 years (Du, 2016). Families, according to Confucianism, are a system that regards girls and women as subhuman beings inferior to boys and men in families and society (Liu et al., 2020). Confucian thoughts show very unequal relations between two genders, such as three areas in which obedience is imposed on women and four virtues of women (三从四德), which could be explained as a principle requiring the obedience and submission of females to their fathers when unmarried, to their husbands when married, and even to their sons when widowed (Tang et al., 2010).

Under the influence of traditional Chinese values and Confucianism, preference for sons has been widespread in Chinese history, and remains popular among many families today. In a patriarchal system, women's social roles are defined by their relationships with men within families (as daughters, wives or mothers) rather than their own personal positions and contributions (Tang et al., 2010). All these factors have led to Chinese parents' preference for boys. This kind of preference manifests in a variety of ways, including wanting at least one son, relying on daughters to take more responsibilities for household chores, treating sons better in daily lives, saving more family properties for sons, as well as having higher expectations of sons compared with daughters (Wang, 2020). The superior position of sons reflects the superior position of men in the Chinese context. Consequently, females in China are disadvantaged in both private and public spheres, as only men are deemed responsible for family order and social order.

## 2.2 Variation in Parental Gender-specific Expectations in Urban and Rural China

In terms of education for girls in feudal dynasties, girls were not allowed to go to school because Confucianism insisted that the virtue of women lay in their ignorance and lack of talent (Gao, 2003; Gardiner, 2016). Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, social hierarchy was challenged, and the status of girls and women was affected by a series of measures and radical social changes (Bauer et al., 1992). Since 1949, the egalitarian movement has enabled girls and women to make more progress in Chinese society, especially urban girls (Shu, 2004).

China's economic development has improved gender equity in females' survival rates by implementing major reforms of its health care system and improving living conditions and nutrition. Economic development also has increased access to education for young females, which is more prevalent among urban girls. (Tian et al., 2018). The centralized government's power also has a direct and important influence on requiring all children to receive compulsory education before proceeding to higher education, which is well enacted in cities (Fang et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2017). Females' increased access to education has led to the female literacy rate increasing from 10% to 76.4% in the first 50 years after the founding of the People's Republic of China (Shu, 2004). Furthermore, social reform, along with a market-oriented economic system, has required more skilled labour, allowing more women to work (Wang, 2020). In addition, the one-child policy in China has had unintended consequences for daughters by spreading the belief in urban community that only daughters' education should be supported (Ebenstein, 2010). Scholars argued that females were better educated under the one-child policy due to women's more rights and access to education (Huang et al., 2015; Li, 2022; Sudbeck, 2012). As a result of these changes, Chinese girls and women now have greater access to education and labour market, previously unavailable to them.

However, China is a huge country with a large population of 1,425,671,352, as such, the gender issue in families in China is complicated and varies by areas. The strategies and experiences of rural families should not be assumed to be the same with urban, local families (Ling, 2017). Cheng (2009) argued that urban-rural gender inequity varies significantly due to the uneven distribution of social resources and different policy implementation and enactment.

Many families in rural China continue to prefer having more children and risked being fined under the one-child policy, especially when no son is born in the family (Ling, 2017). Parents in rural China have more traditional gendered attitudes toward their children due to limited social resources and the influence of traditional culture (Hannum et al., 2009; Cheng, 2009). In rural China, parents have to face the reality of limited financial support from the government, lack of old-age support from the government, and limited economic resources compared to parents in urban China (Cheng, 2009). Sons have higher value in rural China because they carry the family line, live with and take care of their parents in their parents' old age (Ling, 2017).

Cultural beliefs in rural China still inherits the traditional idea that girls will marry out of the family. As a result, families prefer to invest in boys' but not girls' education, and they still prefer to let their daughters take on more household chores (Zhang et al., 2007). Although more than two decades of economic reforms in China have greatly improved life quality of girls and women, cultural values concerning specific gender roles and patrilineal family structures in rural China still impact gender equity within families and reinforce the preference for sons (Li & Lavelly, 2003).

Even though many parents in rural settings show more egalitarian attitudes towards their daughters concerning girls' right to education, their attitudes are motivated by rational economic strategies for maximizing family returns (Hannum et al., 2009; Nugent, 2013; Zuanna, 2007). Some studies have suggested that when parents have limited resources and when parents have more than one child, parents tend to invest in the most promising child to achieve maximized returns on their investments (Stash & Hannum, 2001). When girls perform better in school, parents may be more willing to

invest in their daughters' education and expecting future returns from their daughters, such as financial help in the future. Girls' school performance is a strong predictor of parents' educational aspirations (Zhang et al., 2007).

However, families are more tolerant of boys' performance in school. They strive to keep boys enrolled in school as long as possible, regardless of their performance and achievements (Li et Lavelly., 2003). A dominant patrilineal family structure establishes a strong connection between sons and their families, making investments in sons' education more natural (Wang & Feng, 2021). This preference for sons in educational investments and higher expectations for boys persist in rural China (Deng et al., 2014). One empirical study of 400 rural households revealed the persistence of a "gender hierarchy", where parents have lower educational expectations for girls when making educational decisions (Li & Tsang, 2003). Next section will present mentioned policies such as one-child policy and household registration policy in more details.

## **2.3 Gender, One-child Policy and Household Registration Policy**

In this section, I will examine two pertinent policies that are associated with parental gender-specific expectations within the scope of this study. These two policies are the one-child policy and the household registration policy.

### **2.3.1 One-Child Policy**

In 1979, China officially implemented birth control policies known as the one-child policy (Chow & Zhao, 1996; Nie, 2014), in order to address social, economic, and environmental problems (Grennhalgh, 1986). The introduction of the one-child policy aimed to lower the birth rate and limit the number of children per family. According to

this policy, each couple was restricted to having only one child, with variations in implementation observed across regions and over time (Huang et al., 2015). This policy remained in effect for over 30 years, impacting hundreds of millions of couples. The one-child policy was terminated in 2016 due to the pressure associated with continued low fertility (Feng et al., 2016).

The implementation of the one-child policy in 1979 marked a significant policy shift that brought an end to thousands of years of family structure and the preference for large families in China. Since the 1980s, the generation born under the one-child policy has experienced immense social and economic changes. Alongside increasing life expectancy, the implementation of the one-policy has significantly altered parental gender-specific expectations for their daughters. The policy change and societal shifts have altered the context of child socialization in many ways in China (Goeking, 2019). There has been a growing interest in examining the impacts of the one-child policy, particularly in relation to girls' education. Lee (2014) believed that the one-child policy unintentionally fostered a strong shared belief among Chinese families in prioritizing the education of their only child, regardless of gender. Most Chinese families have prioritized investing in their only child, especially in the only child's education (Lee, 2012; Li, 2001; Zhang & Goza, 2006). Moreover, the one-child policy has created a new social context that undermines traditional value such as patrilineal norms and the idea that females are inferior to males (Tsui & Rich, 2002).

The one-child policy was more strictly enacted in urban areas (Zhang, 2017). Women residing in urban areas were restricted to having only one child, and the penalties for violating this policy were severe enough to affect their employment and welfare

benefits (Huang et al., 2015). They refrained from having one more child as it would jeopardize their jobs and social benefits. Conversely, in rural areas, the one-child policy was less strictly enacted due to limited job opportunities and welfare benefits available to rural residents (Settles et al., 2012). Rural parents were more likely to have more children with the aim of having a son, despite the risk of being fined, as the consequences were not as severe. The varying levels of enforcement of the one-child policy in different regions has resulted in differing levels of gender equity (Li et al., 2011).

### 2.3.2 Household Registration System in China

The origins of the division between rural and urban populations, along with the disparities in available resources, can be attributed to China's household registration system, also known as the hukou policy (Huang et al., 2015; Ling, 2017). Established in 1952, the hukou policy aimed to regulate population mobility and ensure a sufficient labor force for each sector of production (Hu & Scott, 2016). It enforced geographical restrictions by assigning individuals to specific locations, which determined their access to various welfare benefits such as employment, unemployment subsidies, medical care, and educational resources. The division between rural and urban hukou further intensified the contrast between agricultural and industrial modes of production (Wu & Treiman, 2007), although recent reforms have led to large scale internal migration within China. However, obtaining an urban household registration remains challenging for rural migrants, along with the associated resources (Wang, 2005).

## 2.4 More Gender Inequity Under the Surface



Liu (2006) argued that focusing solely on girls' access to education within the context of the one-child policy overlooks the complexity of achieving gender equity. To truly understand gender equity, it is essential to examine parents' gender ideologies and expectations, as they have a significant impact on child socialization (Leaper & Friedman, 2007; Rinehart, 1993). Liu's (2006) study showed that social class had not completely transcended gender. Even high socioeconomic status (SES) parents in urban areas still held traditional gendered expectations for their children, without challenging binary gender norms. Notably, Liu (2006) found that High SES parents' emphasis on women's beauty reflected their adherence to traditional gender roles and differing expectations for boys and girls. Similarly, Shek et al. (2019) conducted a study in Hong Kong, which demonstrated the persistence of traditional gendered attitudes towards sons and daughters, despite rapid economic development. Their study found that over half of the 5,707 parents surveyed expected their daughters to possess traditional feminine characteristics such as gentleness, obedience, and elegance. Additionally, these parents expected their daughters to prioritize family commitments in the future (Shek et al., 2019).

After the one-child policy was ended in 2016, many scholars argued that larger households, particularly those with boys, might not be able to prioritize girls and spend generously on girls' education (Liu et al., 2020). The same situation would happen when resources are limited. Girls and women often find themselves sacrificing their own interests for the benefit of their brothers and families due to the influence of Chinese traditional values, which fosters a sense of worthlessness in them (Tsui & Rich, 2002), as well as the impact of Chinese culture's emphasis on collective norms and social goals

(Leung, 2003). Such feelings of worthlessness and self-sacrifice are commonly experienced among girls, particularly those from rural China (Tsui & Rich, 2002). With the termination of the one-child policy, the context that eliminates feelings of inferiority and the need for girls to compete with their brothers for resources may no longer persist (Liu et al., 2020). Having more siblings in families could lead to a resurgence of neglect or discrimination against girls (Liu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, there is a current revival of Confucianism by the Chinese government, aiming to endorse the ideals of collective benefits, social stability, and a harmonious society (Yu, 2008). This resurgence may lead to lower expectations for girls, as the government utilizes Confucianism as a moral philosophy to encourage women to prioritize their domestic roles in order to address the challenges posed by an aging society and low fertility rates. Consequently, there has been a notable rise in gender discrimination in the workplace, as traditional values that diminish the worth of women to their roles solely as wives and mothers resurface (Jayachandran, 2015). Chinese women suffer from gender stereotypes in the workplace which devalues women's economic contributions. Generally, Chinese society considers traits associated with masculinity, such as competitiveness and ambition, as desirable qualities in the workforce. However, when women display these "male" characteristics, they are often perceived as arrogant and impolite (Tang et al., 2010). In Chinese society, women are required to strike a balance between work and family in order to have their economic contributions acknowledged, while men are rarely expected to maintain such balance. Men are often encouraged to prioritize their careers over family responsibilities at any stage of life (Wang, 2020).

Regardless of whether women are encouraged to join the labor force or expected to prioritize their roles within the family, the prevailing male-as-superior stereotypes still persist and influence the division of household chores in Chinese families (Tang et al., 2010). Domestic tasks continue to be seen as primarily women's responsibility. Most Chinese women lack the freedom to choose between work and family and are compelled to bear the dual burdens of both family and work in order to conform to traditional feminine gender roles (Wang, 2020). The discourse of "returning home" surrounding women reveals the enduring influence of traditional patriarchal culture and the gender-blindness of the Chinese Communist Party, as the Chinese Communist Party formulates and promotes China's policies and public discourse. It demands that women assume unpaid family duties in addition to their paid work to fulfil societal expectations of their gender roles. Meanwhile, men are exempt from marital and domestic responsibilities (Cook & Dong, 2011). The stereotypes for women have never been changed, but they have been adapted to align with the demands of the new market conditions.

## 2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the Chinese context, including cultural and social changes, in order to shed light on the intricacies of gender issues in China. As a result of rapid economic and social development, traditional gender role expectations have evolved. Women now bear the additional responsibilities of social labor alongside their existing roles as family caregivers and child bearers. On the other hand, men's roles have remained largely unchanged (Cook & Dong, 2011).

The one-child policy influenced parents' expectations of their only daughters, and improved girls' social status in Chinese urban families to some extent. One-daughter

households in China have the potential to serve as a force for challenging the prevailing gender inequity, and enhancing the well-being of urban women (Du, 2014). Nonetheless, parents continued to be influenced by deeply ingrained traditional gender stereotypes that permeate society, and girls still find themselves competing for family resources in the post-one-child era (Wang, 2020).

Additionally, within the Chinese context, girls hailing from rural areas encounter distinct circumstances and different expectations compared to their urban counterparts. They also endure heightened gender discrimination from both their families and society. Achieving gender equity remains a formidable task influenced by a multitude of intricate factors. Recognizing and comprehensively analyzing the disadvantaged position of girls in China is imperative, as regional disparities in gender contribute to unequal distribution of power in China, which can be detrimental to social equity principles. In China, moral justification for bureaucracy is widely assumed to be based on Confucius' work (Qi, 2015). The nature of moral conventions and practises in governing, as well as how good officials should deal with those in political power, are all distinct elements of Confucian ideology (Frederickson, 2002). As a result, a social equity ethic rises to the level of a bureaucratic moral imperative, becoming obligations of the Chinese government and its public sectors. These inequalities highlight the failure of the Chinese government to fulfill its obligations towards social justice.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on a critical feminist position and also intersectionality to conceptualize parental gender-specific expectations of their children in China. For the parents who participated within this research, this dual framework enabled me to understand the complexities of their identities and experiences; and to contextualize their perspectives, experiences, and the power relations behind them. First, significant elements of critical feminist theory and research are reviewed. Next, intersectionality follows, intersectionality is a concept that encompasses the primary purposes and the research assumptions and approaches of intersectional research.

Critical feminist theories provide various perspectives to challenge traditional norms, challenge dominant ideas of oppression, and explore multiple forms of resistance as a means to reimagine social justice (De Saxe, 2012). Critical feminist theory urges us to reevaluate our current perceptions of knowledge, power, and spaces of empowerment (Wood, 2008). I'll provide an overview of feminist theories and critical theories as a basis for explaining the focus of critical feminist theories.

#### 3.1 Feminist Theory

Feminism is the belief in equity between men and women, advocating for equal rights and opportunities in all aspects of life-personal, public, social, and work (Baldwin, 2017). Feminist theories examine women's social roles, history, activities, experiences, and perspectives to value their lives and expose gender inequity in society. Gender is something we perform in everyday life (Butler, 2004). Through various mundane and performative practices, we simultaneously enact and construct gender. According to

Butler, gender only exist when individuals adhere to societal expectations of masculinity and femininity (Wood, 2008).

Feminist theory also examines “patriarchy”, a system that reflects the collective interests of men (Hamilton, 2012). Consequently, our society is structured in ways that do not fully reflect the experiences, needs, interests, and perspectives of women and minorities (Shields, 2008). Patriarchy, an old system, persists to this day, even though women are no longer considered property of men; the current societal model is still patriarchal (Gneezy et al., 2009).

Feminist theory today is a vibrant, diverse intellectual and political movement. It extends beyond solely focusing on women and encompasses a broader understanding of the world, emphasizing critical intersectional perspectives (Ferguson, 2017). As Mohanty (2003) has noted, it represents a collective effort, driven by shared political engagement. Many of the greatest achievements of feminist theorists stem from their passionate pursuit of understanding and improving the lives of not just women, but also men, children, and the planet (Allen, 2023). Feminist theory thrives when scholars cast a wide net across various fields. It involves thinking interrelationally about power and resistance while seeking alliances with others who share a critical view of existing conditions and envision collective possibilities for freedom and justice (Ferguson, 2017). Studies like this one have the potential to envision new possibilities for girls’ and women’s freedom and justice from both feminist and critical perspectives.

### 3.2 Critical Theory

Critical theory posits that reality is socially constructed, influenced by changing cultural, temporal, and historical contexts (Kincheloe et al., 2011). In the process of

social construction, numerous inequities including gender exist (Butler, 2004; Deutsch, 2007). Critical theorists assert that the foundations of truth are embedded in specific historical, economic, gendered, and social structures of oppression, injustice, and marginalization (Lincoln et al., 2011). They also place emphasis on identity, recognizing its multifaceted feature, encompassing aspects such as gender, class, and the consequential relations of power such as sexism and classism (hooks, 2000; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Critical research strives to understand individuals in the context of their complex race, class, gender backgrounds, seeking to expose the forces that shape people insidiously (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). Therefore, adopting a critical theory has facilitated my understanding of individuals' experiences, perspectives, and how their backgrounds shape their lives. For example, this study investigates the intricate connections between participants' intersecting identities, taking into account class distinctions and urban residence nuances. Furthermore, within critical frameworks, reality is perceived as being shaped by power struggles and privileges, as well as by various forms of oppression, such as those related to gender, class, and race (Creswell, 2013). In the context of this research, gender expectations for girls and women can legitimize and reinforce unequal power distribution among constructed social groups (Ridgeway, 2001).

Critical research also has a transformative agenda and purpose to move from social injustices and social inequalities to the bringing about of social justice and social equity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). This purpose of critical research fights for a just society that challenges injustices such as gender, social, cultural, and economic injustices. So, this study has an agenda as well, which is to challenge injustices that

Chinese girls experience within families, injustices such as sexism and classism. It aims to investigate whether parental expectations based on gender still favor and prioritize boys and influenced by traditional culture and parents' intersecting identities. Critical research challenges the ideologies of privileged groups and learns from the margins, from those who have traditionally been silenced (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Throughout this thesis, critical research is about the perspectives of parents and lives of girls in Chinese families, while also giving voice to those who often gone unheard - the parents with rural backgrounds.

### 3.3 Critical Feminist Theory

Critical feminist theory focuses on addressing gender-based inequities and social injustice with the goal of promoting systemic transformation (Keedle et al., 2019). As a form of critical theory, critical feminist theory also places emphasis on identity factors beyond gender to challenge inequities (Olesen, 2011). According to critical feminist theories, various identity factors, such as race, social class, ethnicity, and cultural and historical contexts, play a role in shaping women's experiences and identities within patriarchal systems worldwide (hooks, 2000). In critical feminist research, women's knowledge and experiences are considered as a primary source of knowledge, utilized to drive social change (Hesse-Biber, 2012).

Critical feminist theory also acknowledges the varying levels of oppression faced by women, shedding light on the impacts of patriarchal hierarchy on gender and power dynamics (Moosa, 2005). The inequities in power encompass multiple dimensions, including gender, race, ethnicity, and class (Lykes, 1994). Human beings exist within a complex web of social relations governed by different and fluid dimensions of power



(Qin, 2004). It is essential to recognize that gender power dynamics in families may be subtle, normalized, and invisible due to societal expectations of gender roles (Connell, 2005). While there is nothing natural about these power structures, power must be maintained through repetition and expectations of specific behaviours (Butler, 2021). Critical feminist theory insists that patriarchal domination is the core of women's subordination in all societies (hooks, 1990; Lykes & Qin, 2001). Under the theoretical framework of critical feminist theory, more inequitable distribution of power in a patriarchal society can be discovered and analyzed. Critical feminist theory helps in understanding the structural barriers that hinder females progress and offers insights into recognizing and addressing these issues.

Intersectionality is a conceptual and methodological framework that fits nicely with critical feminism. Within this research, the critical feminist perspective prioritizes intersections of gender, class, and city residence while contextualizing historical and social aspects in China.

### 3.4 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a useful methodological framework in my study because gender is socially constructed and intersects with culture, race, and class along different power relations at different historical moments (Collins, 2002; Crawford and Unger, 2004; hooks, 1989). Crenshaw (1989) coined the term "intersectionality" to describe the ways in which black women's experiences intersected with gender and race discourses. Intersectionality has now spread to more disciplines in social science across countries (Cho et al., 2013), and is one way to understand and analyze the complexity of social identities among people in the world (Zhang et al., 2021). Single-axis thinking revealed

by intersectionality, such as focusing solely on gender, undermines efforts and struggles for social justice (Cho et al., 2013). Greater emphasis on important facets of people's identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, class locations, and nationality/residence and how these social dynamics are intertwined to conceptualize the socialization process and inequitable distribution of power in society can be found in intersectional studies (Rice et al., 2019).

Intersectionality addresses an important concern in feminist theory: the acknowledgement of differences among women (Davis, 2008). Specifically, intersectionality includes a variety of identity characteristics to problematize women's life experiences and understand the diverse oppressions they suffer (Ngunjiri et al., 2017). It enables researchers to explore the interconnection of all forms of subordination, such as gender inequity within classism. By doing so, intersectionality reveals how relations of power are produced. Furthermore, intersectionality supports the deconstruction of binaries while simultaneously providing a platform that can address the concerns of all women (Cole, 2009).

Intersectionality is consistent with my theoretical framework, as critical feminist theory prioritizes multifaceted aspects of identity and individual differences (Crenshaw, 1990). During the course of this thesis, examining the experiences of individuals within intersecting oppressions allows for a critical examination of how unequal power distribution and complex social identities influence their perspectives and actions. From this perspective, understanding the multidimensional nature of intersectionality and how intersections of parents' identities affect their gendered expectations for their children holds the greatest potential for social change in gender issues (Cole, 2009).

This study aims to uncover the complexities of the gender, class, and residence identity intersections of participants and how these factors influence parental gender-specific expectations. In the Chinese context, gender and class can be used to explore sexism and socio-economic inequity, while residence identity can replace racism in the Chinese context because 92 percent of the population in China is of the Han nationality. residence status can be a helpful indicator to reveal more socio-economic inequity due to the strict household registration system in China. These intersections of parents' identities in the Chinese context may shape parental expectations of their children, which in turn shapes their children's sense of identity during the socialization process. According to Collins and Bilge (2016), in order to identify and understand how power is functioned and operationalized, we need to analyze the interpersonal domain of power, which emphasizes on how power relations manifest themselves in people's daily lives and interactions with others. In the context of gender inequity against Chinese women, it is important to locate this interpersonal domain of power to understand how sexism, racism, and socio-economic inequity are reproduced in each realm (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality can provide important support for methodological approaches such as qualitative research, which allow for exploring new connections and alternative understandings (Cole, 2009).

In this chapter, I use critical feminist position and intersectionality to conceptualize parental gender-specific expectations for children in China. The next chapter will delve into the methodology, providing comprehensive details on the research methods and data collection instruments informed by the theoretical underpinnings of the study and research ethics.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Methodology and Methods

With a desire to challenge social inequalities and contribute to meaningful changes in families and society, I conducted an intersectional, qualitative research study to examine parents' gendered perspectives and parental expectations of their children-an aspect of social issue that has received less attention in the Chinese context (Liu, 2018; Liu, 2020; Zeng et al., 2014). A qualitative, intersectional analysis can help me to explore the hidden and normalized gendered expectations and power dynamics in families through parents' perspectives of how women and men (girls and boys) should behave or comply with social rules.

The overarching question for this study is, how do traditional Chinese culture and parents' intersectional identities influence parental gender-specific expectations? This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used within this research. I will begin this chapter by discussing the use of qualitative research which is informed by an intersectional methodological framework. Following that, the research design including data collection methods and recruitment procedures will be included. Then, a detailed demonstration of the data analysis especially intersectional data analysis will be demonstrated. Finally, the chapter will conclude with ethical considerations and limitations.

#### 4.1 Epistemological Issues

Each researcher brings certain epistemological assumptions to the study, which influences how the researcher acquires, understands, and analyses his/her qualitative data (Gray, 2018; Bunge, 2012). Among the epistemologies discussed in standard

encyclopedias are: constructionism, critical theory, feminist epistemology, phenomenology, poststructuralism etc. (Hjørland & Hartel, 2003). I am conducting a study from a critical perspective to question what are the outcomes of the way gender perspectives are constructed in Chinese families and whose interests are being served by investigating how different elements of class, gender, and residence status intersect and contribute to patriarchal oppressive structures in families and society. Under critical research tradition, the researcher understands and expects their understandings and findings to be transformative in ways that encourage resistance to the norms, practices, and institutions that encourage the “conformity and obedience”, which reinforces normalization (Taylor, 2014). According to Kinchloe and McLaren (2011), there is a transformative potential of critical research and a unique position of the researcher in critical research, that is, research done from a critical perspective are always connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a specific society or public and private sphere within that society. Thus, critical research becomes a transformative endeavor, unembarrassed by the label “political,” and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness. Concerning the researcher’s position, critical researchers frequently see their work as a first step toward more forms of actions to challenge injustices (Kinchloe & McLaren, 2011).

This study is also a feminist one, with the aim to question and challenge power imbalances based on gender, and also on other factors such as race and class etc. (Dankoski, 2000). As a researcher, therefore, I am a part of the process of discovery, understanding, and change (Kelly et al., 2013). Both feminist study and critical study are concerned with social inequities and seek to promote social change. Because of their

common interests, synergies between critical and feminist studies should be explored. Several methodological considerations are believed to be the foundation of critical feminist research: 1) attention to language/discourse (Burman, 2015); 2) the politics of asking questions such as what assumptions are inherent in the concepts under investigation and what might be the consequences of the findings be; 3) representation and intersectionality; and 4) desire for social change (LaFrance & Wigginton, 2019). These methodological considerations of critical feminist study are consistent with this study's methodological focus on discourse, which is based on the recognition that truth claims are situated and intertwined with power relations (Kinchloe et al., 2011).

## 4.2 Qualitative Research

Within this research, I will use a qualitative research approach to understand what people say about a phenomenon through their own words and stories, rather than statistical data. For, as Merriam & Tisdell (2015) claims, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Because qualitative methodology is often concerned with examining the "how" behind behaviors and words (Cohen et al., 2013), qualitative interviews fit well with my investigation into how gender, and other social identifiers, shape Chinese parental expectations of their children. Qualitative research involves information-rich cases and in-depth understandings of human experience (Patton, 2002), with smaller sample sizes adding "depth, detail, and meaning at a very personal level" (Patton, 2002, p.17). As a result, the small and purposeful sampling size in my study is justified, as I intend to explore the perspectives and understand a specific few with more details.

This study contains two fundamental characteristics of qualitative research. First, As part of this study, qualitative research is a social process created by the researcher and participants, which allows for a deep understanding of the real world, the experiences of participants, and complex interrelationships (Patton, 2015). Second, qualitative research generates meanings in context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), and the context throughout this investigation, especially the macro context, will provide greater breadth, depth and complexity in understanding participants' perspectives and expectations of their children. The emphasis on context is consistent with critical research's concern with whose interests are being served, what are the outcomes of the way the Chinese context is structured, and who has the power to make changes.

Qualitative research analyzed data from different ways, such as direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents (Patton, 2002). The essence of traditional qualitative inquiry is about trying to understand people through their own words and stories (Patton, 2002), with extra potential to provide in-depth understanding of the attitudes and intentions that lie beneath the surface of the phenomenon being studied in researches (Cohen et al., 2013). Using qualitative study as a methodology allowed me to hear the voices of differentially situated parents and to show how structural inequalities beneath the surface of parental expectations shape power relations and gendered parental expectations in family settings.

The approach to qualitative research taken throughout this investigation aims to not only demonstrate and understand gendered parental expectations and power relations in families, but also to confront the injustice in families and encourage resistance to the normalization of gender views in the families. This study emphasizes not only the

identities of urban and rural Chinese parents, but also their voices, perspectives, subjectivities, and lived realities based on different social identities. Because social identities are socially-constructed categories rooted in power relations, using a qualitative approach, informed by an intersectional theoretical framework will assist me in dealing with different social identities while contextualizing gendered parental expectations and power relations in families through a broader structural analysis.

As a result, as a critical feminist researcher, qualitative research allows me to learn about power relations from the perspectives of participants, allowing me to raise questions about how power relations advance the interests of one specific group while oppressing the interests of others (Merriam, 2002).

## 4.3 Research Design

To answer the research questions, this qualitative study consists of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and an interview guide of open-ended question included as an appendix, designed to learn about the participants' perspectives on gender and parental expectations. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, translated, and anonymized, as described in more details below.

### 4.3.1 Data Collection Methods

The semi-structured interviews are an effective method to collect data like personal perspectives, understandings, and interpretations compared to other methods such as direct observation, because it enables researchers to have topics they preferred within the limited amount of time, while still providing participants freedom to participate in a conversation in their own way (Cohen et al., 2013)). The researcher and



participants socially co-constructed knowledge in semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The power of the researcher in the interview process comes from determining interview topics and data collection practices, whereas the power of participants comes from their decisions about how they will answer questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Edwards & Holland, 2013). Although a semi-structured guide may narrow down the possible topics, the way I phrase questions remained flexible and create more possibilities in conversations (Patton, 2002). An interview guide guided semi-structured interviews in order to maintain the power balance between the researcher and participants (Hesse-Biber, 2014). With less structure, power balances were more likely to be achieved (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

In qualitative research, researcher flexibility and active listening could promote a good rapport between the researcher and the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2014, Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). For example, in order to make participants comfortable, each interview began with conversational and open-ended statement like “tell me about yourself”. An informal start to the interview may, hopefully, increase the participant’s comfort level. After which I asked follow-up questions seeking descriptive information. These questions were able to reveal more themes related to the topic in the study. Open-ended questions enabled participants to fully understand the questions in their own way, to share their perspectives without the worry about wrong answers, and to be able to answer the questions in rich details and depth (Hesse-Biber, 2014). It was hoped that relaxed, conversational interviews would be able to produce relatively rich information about gender roles in families, parental perspectives on gender based on both traditions and social changes in contemporary society.

### 4.3.2 Recruitment Procedures

Purposive sampling strategy was used in this study's recruitment to find participants who meet the specific criteria, and would best contribute their insights to this study. Purposive sampling strategy is used to recruit participants from various social backgrounds. Recruitment posters were used to approach parents with different social identities. The target city within this research was Beijing – China's capital city with the greatest social class and wealth disparity. This study's target participants were parents who lived in Beijing with at least one boy and at least one girl. Parents who didn't fall into these two categories were excluded for this study. In order to capture as much of the social differences among participants as possible, recruitment posters were posted in a private school community in Beijing, as well as in a housekeeping chat group with both people who provide services and people who hire services. Maximum variation sampling is one of the purposive sampling methods that seeks to look at a subject from all possible angles in order to achieve a better understanding (Etikan et al., 2016). When the sample pool is too small and when a random sample is not used, this type of sampling is useful. Maximum variation sampling justifies my small sample recruitment and helps me to answer my research questions about how gender and parents' different intersecting identities shape parental expectations of their children in China.

A research package was given to participants who have agreed to participate in my research. A research package included 1) an introduction to my research and the consent form; 2) my self-introduction and contact information; 3) an explanation of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of my research.

Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Under the influence of the pandemic and current quarantine policy in China, WeChat as instant communication software was chosen as an appropriate way to communicate with the participants throughout this investigation. I informed participants that all information collected from our interviews would be confidential and stored in a locked cabinet. Pseudonyms would be used to hide the identities of my participants. Voice recorder which is password protected would be used to record interviews for accuracy and later transcription.

### 4.3.3 Participants

Six participants participated throughout this investigation. Parents were eligible to participate if they met the recruitment criteria: parents who were currently living in Beijing with at least one boy and at least one girl were eligible to participate. Gender was not distributed equally among the six participants due to the time constraints and difficulty in recruiting fathers who are willing to participate in a family study in China. All of the participants were given pseudonyms. I provided their basic information in a chart and introduced them briefly in alphabetical order.

**Table one: information of the participants**

Pseudonym	Number of children	Occupation	Household registration status
Ann	3	Stay-at-home mom who used to be a staff in a high-tech company and	Temporary resident in Beijing with a work residence permit

		whose husband is an entrepreneur	
Lily	<b>2</b>	Stay-at-home mom who used to be a lawyer and whose husband is a lawyer	Beijing permanent resident
Peter	<b>2</b>	Foreign enterprise employee whose wife is a stay-at- home mother	Beijing permanent resident
Sharon	<b>2</b>	Domestic service worker who used to be a farmer and whose husband is a migrant worker	Temporary resident in Beijing with rural background
Van	<b>2</b>	A farmer who takes odd jobs and whose wife is a housekeeping agent	Temporary resident in Beijing with rural background

Ya	<b>3</b>	Stay-at-home mom with a bachelor's degree and whose husband is a business owner	Temporary resident in Beijing
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The first participant interviewed was Ann. Ann is a stay-at-home mom with three children who live in Beijing. All of her children are enrolled in one of Beijing's top private schools. Her husband recently established his own business by forming an investment firm. Ann is supportive of her husband and takes care of their children with the help of a housekeeper and a driver.

The second participant was Lily. Lily was a lawyer before she had children. She lives in Beijing and she is now a stay-at-home mom with two children, one boy and one girl. Her daughter attends a private school in Beijing, and her son is too young to start school. She is busy taking care of her family, but she is willing to participate and share her perspectives.

The third participant was Peter. Peter is a father of two children in Beijing. He has a boy who is currently in middle school, and a daughter who is currently in primary school. He is primarily responsible for work, while his wife takes care of their children. Peter works for a foreign company in China.

The fourth participant was Sharon. Sharon works and lives in Beijing, but her family is in a village in Northwest China. She works as a domestic worker. She has an

adult son who is married now and a newly married daughter. Both of her children are residents of the small city to which their village belongs.

The fifth participant was Van. Van is a father of two children who sometimes work and live in Beijing when the farm work is not busy. Van's family is located in a village in Northeast China. His son attends high school in the small city to which their village belongs to. His daughter recently graduated from university and is currently residing in a city near Inner Mongolia.

The sixth participant was Ya. Ya is a stay-at-home mom of three children who live in Beijing. Her first child has an intellectual disability, and she only wants to mention her last two children in our interview. Ya's children attend private international schools in Beijing, and her husband owns a business in Beijing.

#### 4.3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the first interview and continued through to the final writing about the results. In this case, the goal was to describe gender perspective in Chinese families and describe how traditional Chinese culture and the social backgrounds of parents influence parental expectations. After the interviews, I transcribed each interview on my own. Transcribing my own interviews helped me understand the interviews better, even though there were a variety of computer programs available for the transcriptions. Furthermore, transcribing helped me to make more sense of my field notes and observations, such as each participant's tone of voice, their hesitations, and silences. Since immersion in the data was important in effective data analysis in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), each interview audio recording was reviewed three to four times before transcription. The pre-coding data analysis processed

transformed audio-recorded data into written text data (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014). After drafting written copy of interviews, the texts were corrected for errors and annotated for intonation, pauses, and emphasis (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014). I tried to represent participants carefully and I was reflexive about my influence on the transcription process. However, due to privacy concerns expressed by Western's Research Ethics, transcripts were not shared with participants because of the privacy and security of the WeChat and risk of sending documents including private information via WeChat.

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, I began analyzing the transcripts into themes. The organization of participants' interviews into themes was completed in a four-step process. The first step involved open coding with a "start list" of any information that stood out as interesting, or relevant to the research questions (Houghton, 2015). As I kept moving, many information and explanations appeared under the "start list" codes. The second step was to shorten the information into keywords. The next step following the completion and identifying the key terms, was axial coding, which connected the words and expressions that appear in multiple interviews. Lastly, I identified themes that were common across interviews to make connections between the interviews of different participants. This process identified patterns and commonalities amongst the Chinese parents' gender perspectives, as well as their unique identities and perspectives. My analysis of the codes was changed as more data was analyzed. According to Creswell & Poth (2016), researchers must modify data analysis constantly as new data emerges.

#### 4.3.5 Translation in this Study

Once the interviews were transcribed and the themes in the interviews were identified, I began the translation process. Although the thesis is written in English, the primary language used in this study's interviews was Mandarin because China is not an English-speaking country, and most participants in Mainland China felt more comfortable and confident speaking Mandarin. According to Maclean (2004), whenever possible, it is best to conduct, transcribe, and analyze interview data in the first language of the interviewee. Also, carrying out interviews in participants' first language could make participants feel easy to express themselves and require less encouraging feedbacks from the interviewer (Maclean, 2004). Throughout this investigation, interviews were conducted in Mandarin to enable participants to express their perspective and share their experiences with more depth and richer details. The following transcription and the analysis were also conducted in Mandarin, and then the analysis was translated into English. Although the entire translation process could be more time consuming than conducting interviews only in English, it allowed me to capture more details in interviews, as well as current real Chinese gender views and expressions. Throughout the translation process, I tried to make the translation as accurate and fluent as possible. I immersed myself in the interview transcripts and tried to represent my participants carefully. English version of my transcripts was checked by a third person who is both fluent in Mandarin and English.

#### 4.3.6 Intersectional Data Analysis

The similarities between qualitative research and intersectionality, according to Hunting (2014), are "the context-bound nature of research, the importance of foregrounding voices of differentially situated individual" (p.1). What distinguishes an



analysis as intersectional is its adoption of the intersectional way of thinking, which pays attention to the sameness and difference of problems as well as their relationships to power (Collins, 2015). Furthermore, Hunting (2014) argued that all intersectional analysis must keep the social and historical background in mind in order to identify the relevant intersections and scope of a research problem, which means data must go beyond micro personal level factors and experiences to its roots in the macro and structural factors in order to have a better understanding of social inequalities.

According to Collins (2015), there are important areas of intersectional scholarship that expand the focus on race, class, and gender to incorporate ethnicity, nation etc., as similar categories of analysis and emphasis of identity. My analysis incorporates the leading principles of intersectionality: different intersectional social identity, domains of power, and structural inequalities (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Cole, 2009; Rice & Friedman, 2019). In my study, I explored how different intersectional identities lead to distinct social experiences and different perspectives. I investigated parents' intersectional identities in relation to social inequity and social structural problems in China, such as the household registration system, unbalanced economic development, and unbalanced economic resources among people, as discussed in the literature review chapter about the context. Furthermore, conducting further analysis of my participants' intersectional identities helped align the power relations with structural analyses of patriarchy in Chinese society. This approach allowed me to reconsider gender-specific parental expectations in families as a social problem rooted in complex social inequalities at the macro level. As an intersectional analysis, it is important to

examine how intersecting identities and power function on a structural level within intersecting systems (Collins, 2019).

#### 4.4 Ethical Considerations

In order to protect participants within this research, this study followed all policies and protocols established by the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct (2014) and Western University's Office of Research Ethics and Research Ethics Board. Ethical considerations prioritized respect and care for participants throughout this investigation, and paid special attention to informed voluntary consent and confidentiality.

The Letter of Information (LOI) and consent forms followed Western University's ethical standards and requirements to ensure that all participants within this research understand the anticipated benefits and risks of participating as part of this study before their engagement. The LOI provided information on the purpose, procedures, potential benefits and risks, and other relevant details to gain the informed consent from participants. I answered questions about interview processes and research procedures before my participants signed the consent form (verbally within this research). Also, I made sure all participants understand their right to decline to answer or to withdraw consent at any time throughout this study.

Participants' confidentiality and privacy were protected according to Western University protocols, and identifiable information has been anonymized including participants' names, their children's names, and the places of their work.

#### 4.5 Issues of Trustworthiness and Limitations

### 4.5.1 Trustworthiness

Study trustworthiness should be maintained throughout the whole research process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015.) Within this research, for example, the study findings had enough rich descriptions to reflect participants' voices, and their words were extensively and judiciously quoted (Hennink, 2013). Immersion in research data boosts trustworthiness by increasing confirmability and dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Sufficient time was dedicated by the researcher to thoroughly explore the data, including any discrepant or negative cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015); The researcher also engaged in self-reflection to promote the validity and reliability of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) because researcher bias can jeopardize study trustworthiness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), and researcher reflexivity is one important strategy to reduce bias and increase dependability (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Reflexivity enables the researcher to be aware of their biases and assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), their roles in the research process (Edward & Holland, 2013), their impact on relationships with participants (Edward & Holland, 2013), and their power over data.

### 4.5.2 Limitations

Findings from this study cannot be generalized in a representative sense due to the nature of this study and the limit of time available for recruiting more participants. Instead of making definitive predictions, the goal was to interpret the specific contexts under investigation.

It is important to acknowledge that this study is susceptible to participant bias, as it relies on participants' retrospective memories, perspectives, and interpretations of

certain phenomenon, which creates additional biases (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, participants were approached with the understanding that they were experts in this study's topic. Therefore, participants' words should be viewed as their own interpretations of their life experiences and perspectives at the time of the interview, regardless of whether these interpretations involved revisions of previous events.

One additional limitation of this study is my position as an insider researcher. According to Hesse-Biber (2014), neither insider nor outsider status guarantees research trustworthiness. Especially for my participants with a background as rural immigrants, my position as a privileged Chinese parent attempting to understand their life experiences and perspectives, as well as my presupposition that I could understand their perspectives despite our differences in class and residence status, could present another limitation. Throughout the entire research process, I made a conscious effort to be aware of my power and avoid imposing them on the various aspects of this study, including the processes and findings of this study.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Findings

The study takes place in China, where traditional Chinese values influenced by Confucianism is still used as a moral philosophy to guide people's lives. Despite the fact that China is no longer as traditional as it once was, it still has some of the most patriarchal family systems in the world (Cheng, 2020). Patriarchal and male-dominated gender ideology remains unaddressed in China. This study targeted parents with more than one child because family structure has been changed after the end of the one-child policy in China in 2016. The one-child policy, which has been in place in China for 35 years, had created higher expectations for girls from their parents (Huang et al., 2015). It is worth investigating whether or not expectations of Chinese girls have changed since the end of one-child policy in China, as behind parental gender-specific expectations are the unequal gender relations and the national social order. Six participants were interviewed in the study. They came from a variety of backgrounds because this study focuses on participants' different social locations. Each individual has distinct and complex social locations based on class, gender, residence status, and race. Feminist theory and intersectionality that guided this study prioritize identity locations to reveal and challenge oppression and inequities. Four participants were mothers, and two of them were fathers. Their family background ranged from a company founder to a farmer who also does odd jobs in China's capital city. Two parents come from an entrepreneur background, two from a company staff background, and two from a background related to domestic service or construction work.

This chapter comprises research findings based on the research questions: In what way does traditional ideology influence gender-specific parental expectations? How do the intersections of parents' identities influence parental expectations of their children? With these research questions in mind, I aim to explore how parents understand their gender-specific expectations for their children, and the reasons and potential consequences of such gender-specific expectations.

First, themes and sub themes related to gender-specific parental expectations in the Chinese context are presented. These themes include how traditional gender ideologies influence parental expectations, and what are gender-specific expectations in families with more than one child. Then, I further explore how different social backgrounds of parents influence their gender perspectives and expectations of their daughters and sons.

## 5.1 Traditional Gender Culture in China

Traditional gender culture exists in people's lives in an invisible but deeply ingrained way. This section presents traditional gender culture in the Chinese context, which influence the gender views and parental expectations of all participants to some extent. First, I will examine the traditional cultural phenomenon of regarding daughters as outsiders in Chinese families.

### 5.1.1 Traditional Gender Roles in Chinese Families

According to traditional Chinese values, there is a different division of labour between men and women. It is believed that men play the key role in the society while women are confined to the family. In other words, women are expected to engage in

everyday family practice and simply be child bearers and care providers within a Confucian hierarchy system that regarded women as inferior to men.

Throughout this investigation, three mothers are stay-at-home moms whose husband play most of their roles outside of their homes in their work, and the other mother works but still takes on most of the household responsibilities. One father is primarily responsible for work, while the other father takes care of his children.

Ann, as a stay-at-home mom who states that her family comes first over her career:

I spend more time with our children, and my husband is always working. When he has free time; he prefers to play with them rather than really participating in daily activities such as tutoring or driving them to all kinds of extracurricular classes. My husband needs stable and consistent support, and I want to be always there for him. That's the way our family works because my family is more important than my career.

During the interview with Peter, he described the way his family works: "I feel like when they are making big decisions, my children communicate more with me and listen to me more because I work outside and know the world better. They take more advices from their mom when it comes to daily trivial things." That's quite consistent with Ann's family: fathers occupy the role of leader in their family.

Sharon clarified gender roles in rural families by emphasising girls' responsibility to care for their entire family:

My daughter has to learn. She can't just expect to have everything handed to her, especially when she gets married and have to take care of her husband, parents-in-

laws, and children. That's not realistic... The burden of earning money should be on the men's shoulders, while the women should take care of the household and raise the children.

### 5.1.2 Regarding Girls as the Outsiders

There are three areas in which obedience is imposed on women in traditional Confucian philosophy: an ancient China woman was required to obey her father before marriage, and her husband during married life and her sons in widowhood. In ancient times, women who were married were almost completely deprived of the social ties they previously possessed, which made them morally unable to be filial to their own parent. As a result, parents regard their daughters as outsiders because they will marry out of their own families and marry into other people's families eventually, and girls are forced to prepare to be completely separated from their own family at a young age.

During the interview process, Van claimed that perspectives of regarding daughters as outsiders were quite common among people around him; for example, his friends favored their sons because "daughters will marry into other people's homes eventually, while sons belong to their own family." So, many parents choose to pay only for their sons' marriages, including buying houses for their sons, in order to help them start families. Van also claimed that if his son marries, he will buy him a house, but he would not do the same for his daughter because it is not his duty to buy his daughter a house.

Sharon shared similar perspectives as Van. She "did not have high expectations" for her daughter "because of traditional thinking that girls are supposed to get married and marry out." Sharon admitted that most of her family's property would go to her son



rather than her daughter, and it is very normal for parents to offer more financial help to sons than daughters after they reach adulthood. Actually, most of the time, daughters cannot get any money from the family at any time.

Similar things also occur in cities. Ann, as an urban parent, although she did not treat her daughter as an outsider, can still remember her uncle's insistence for a son because her uncle insisted that only a son can carry his family name. No matter how good his daughter is, she will never be able to carry his surname. That is the reason why her uncle desires a son so strongly, despite the fact that her aunt does not want a boy at all.

To summarize, some parents within this research still regarded boys as the only successors of the family clan and girls as family carers and offspring reproducers of their future families, or at least they are surrounded by people with this kind of perceptions. The cultural phenomenon of preference toward sons and male privileges will be introduced in the following section.

### 5.1.3 Son Preferences and Male Privileges

Regarding daughters as outsiders is closely related to son preferences. Confucianism talked about relationship of fathers and sons, relationship of brothers etc. Confucianism did not talk about daughters. There are different expressions for having a son and a daughter in Chinese traditional culture: when a daughter is born, it is called adding additional mouth to feed, and when a boy is born, it is called an additional glory to families.

Sharon admitted that she "prefers sons a little bit" when she talked about her daughter-in-law giving birth to two grandsons for her. What's more, Sharon shared the experiences of people preferring boys in rural areas:

In rural areas, when there's heavy work to be done, people always prefer boys. because they think girls are always not as good as boys ... My parents have three daughters and only one son, and they treated him like a precious treasure, not wanting him to do any chores and demanding girls do lots of chores... Even though my parents had a son, other people in our village were still rude to us because my parents didn't have enough sons. Nowadays, people are not that harsh or mean to people without sons, but have this traditional preference of sons and different attitudes for boys and girls disappeared completely? No, it had not been completely broken yet. For example, when a man or a boy goes out, he can easily chat with people by starting a topic. But for a girl, even if she is very good at talking, people don't seem to want to talk to her.

Ya shared a story of her daughter in a swimming club. Her daughter dived better and swam better than the other boy in the club, and "that boy's father got so furious with the fact that his son could not beat a girl in swimming." Ya declared that many parents are used to the idea that boys are better than girls in many ways, especially in sports, so "many parents cannot accept that boys may be weaker than girls."

The phenomenon of son preference still exists in both rural and urban areas of China while making it more difficult for girls. I will expand on this point in my discussion chapter. Next, I highlight the value that participants argued was placed on women's appearances.

#### 5.1.4 The Societal Value Placed on Women's Appearance

In Confucianism, four virtues are placed on women as a requirement, including women's physical appearance or physical charm. Appearance is something several

participants brought up in their interviews. Most parents interviewed have very different requirements and expectations for the appearance of their daughters and sons.

First Peter said that “appearance is important for everyone”, and “people with good appearance have natural advantage.” Then, as our conversation proceeded, Peter admitted maybe he is biased, but “people do have more requirements for girls’ appearance.” He also expressed his different ideas about the importance of appearance for his daughter and his son:

Good appearance or talent will bring you advantage when you try to find a spouse in future... For my son, I don’t pay attention to his appearance, and I don’t expect him to be handsome.

When asked why he thought appearance is so important for girls, Peter claimed that “it could be due to a long patriarchal history and women’s subordinate status in such patriarchal society.” “That is why women all over the world have to be attractive to attract better males.” Peter declared that things would be the same for men if we were in a matriarchal society. To Peter, “it is the ultimate goal of gene replication that makes people put emphasis on girls’ appearance, and everyone definitely wants to find a good gene to copy. It has nothing to do with culture.”

Van also argued that “appearance is more important for girls.” Van demanded more than neatness in a girl’s appearance.

For girls, apart from looking neat, at least you have to wear some makeup.

Appearance will have an impact on girls’ future relationships and marriage. For girls, even though abilities are important for them too, they have to wear makeup to look pretty and have good figures too.

Mothers throughout this investigation also shared their perspectives on girls' appearance. Ya was aware of people's emphasis on girls' appearance and tried to weaken traditional beliefs about girls' position and role in society. Ya did not want her daughter being constrained by social norms in the future. However, Ya claimed that many other people and society still have a higher standard of beauty for girls:

Although we don't put pressure on this issue, others in society judge you based on your appearance. No matter where you are, whether you are taking sports lessons, dancing lessons, or some other lessons, there is always a judgment of a girl's appearance. They would say 'oh, your daughter has a good figure, so she is suitable for this or that'. Although it's a compliment, it's still a judgment.

Unlike Ya's perspectives on daughters' appearance, Lily, like Van, was more concerned with her daughter's appearance. She described it as a valuable asset when getting married, saying:

Appearance is actually important for girls. Your appearance will affect whether you can date or enter into marriage. To be honest, whether or not you can marry a good man, I think about 60% to 70% of it depends on your appearance including body shape. If you are a person who doesn't take care of your appearance, or if you are overweight and not very good-looking. I think your choices will be much narrower... For boys, I think as long as they have a good job and can make money, that's all that matters. No matter how ugly a man is, he can still find a beautiful wife, right?

As Lily was more concerned with her daughter's appearance, she had not enrolled her daughter in any outdoor sports lessons because "too much outdoor sports will tan her

skin color” and make her strong like boys. Instead, Lily made her daughter practice rhythmic gymnastics:

I don’t want her to get too dark because being fair-skinned is also important. I’ve seen. in America, there are actually a lot of girls who play soccer, but I’m a bit unable to accept it, and my husband also can’t really accept the idea that these girls being so tanned and strong.

In contrast to Lily, Ann claimed that girls’ appearance is not important. She had no anxiety about her daughter’s appearance because she cared more about her daughter’s personality and ability. For her, “appearance can be improved in the future through advances in medical technology, but personality and ability are something that are difficult to change once it is developed.” However, Ann recalled that she sometimes still expects her daughter to act in a ladylike fashion and sit with her legs closed.

To summarize, most parents being interviewed pay more attention to their daughters’ appearance and regard appearance as an important ticket for daughters’ future career and marriage, even if they do not, they can still feel the pressure from Chinese society for girls’ appearance. The next section will look into families with more children after the end of one-child policy in China, as well as parents’ gender perspectives and priorities in their families.

## 5.2 Parental Expectations in Families with More than One Child

As already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, prior to 2016, the one-child policy governed Chinese families for 35 years, resulting in a large number of only-child families. This study, on the other hand, targeted families with more than one child

in order to better understand parents' gender-specific expectations of their children. Many parents interviewed appear to have higher expectations for their sons. They do, however, begin to prefer their daughters' attentive natures, and they begin to change their attitudes towards their daughters in the hope that they will care for them in old age. First, I will examine how participants discussed their higher expectations for sons.

### 5.2.1 Higher Expectations for Sons

Lily, whose son is three-years-old, stated that she has "higher educational expectations" for her son because he is "brave, intelligent, and focused." Lily expected her son to "achieve educational success, attend a good university, and make a lot of money after graduation to support his own family." According to Lily, the most important thing for boys is their career.

When Lily was asked about her academic expectations for her six-year-old daughter, she stated:

My daughter may not be as academically gifted as my son... um... for my daughter, I don't think the probability of her being able to get into a top university is as high as my son's. It's up to her to choose what kind of university she wants to attend, as long as we can afford the tuition... For girls, family is the most important thing. I hope she can have a job she enjoys, not necessarily one that pays well, and then meet someone who treats her well and live a stable life. I think that's enough for her.

To Ya, the birth of her daughter brought her great happiness and comfort because she and her husband had hoped for a daughter for a long time. However, she also had

relatively lower educational expectation for her daughter, and believed that no matter how hard a girl tries, she cannot escape inferior social status:

I believe girls are disadvantaged in society... My husband and I don't have high educational expectations for our daughter, but he believes that he should leave her with enough resources, including money, to resist future challenges. Both of us want to protect and support our daughter... Our son needs to work hard on his own...the way we raise our children is different because social standards on them are different.

Sharon expressed the similar idea that “people will naturally expect different things from boys and girls.” For example, she had higher expectations for her son’s education because he will be the man of the family and the only supporter for her in her older years.

As a father in this study, Van emphasized that “girls and boys are just different, and it has nothing to do with society.” Van stated that when his children get married, he would support his children financially, with his son receiving more. However, Van had relatively equal educational expectations for his two children; for example, he hoped his son would be able to attend university like his daughter, and he was willing to and eager to support his daughter in her pursuit of a master’s degree.

Unlike unconditional supports for only daughters under the one-child policy, it appears that most parents interviewed had different expectations for their sons and daughters. The following section will be about another different expectation for daughters in families with more than one child: expecting girls to be the main care providers in their original families as well as their own future families.

### 5.2.2 Reliable Daughters as the Main Care Providers

During the interviews, parents also expressed their preference for their daughters, particularly when their daughters are attentive, caring, and warm. Ann teased her daughter for being a tigress because she is quite aggressive and not gentle. Sharon asserted that “girls are more caring and thoughtful towards their parents, and girls will give back more to their parents,” particularly as parents age or become ill. Van also stated that daughters can support parents better than sons in their old age.

Lily, an interviewed urban parent, claimed that many differences between sons and daughters are innate, and she recognized and embraced such different social positions for boys and girls:

I hope my daughter’s personality will be gentle and less bossy, as I think it’s not a good thing for her future family life... After all, unlike her brother, she will be mainly responsible for the household and raising children once she gets married... Girls will always face the issue of having children, raising them, and caring for the elderly in families. There is nothing wrong with it. When it comes to raising children, all women have the same fate, regardless of whether they work or not.

Such parental expectations of daughters reinforce stereotyped social gender roles in families while also encouraging girls to develop more pleasant personalities, such as gentleness and caring. The following section will discuss the influence of parents’ different social locations on their expectations, including parents’ different social class and parents’ residence status.

## 5.3 Influence of Parents’ Different Social Locations on



## Gendered Expectations

This section will focus on participants' unique social locations, such as social class and residence status, which influence their parental expectations and reveals social inequalities. I'll begin with the parents' different social class and its influence on parental expectations.

### 5.3.1 Influence of Parents' Social Class Status: Resources and Parental Strategies

Findings suggest that parents from different social classes had different resources, parental strategies, and gendered perspectives. They made their choices based on their individual circumstances.

Although Sharon had limited resources and higher expectations for her son, she had relatively equal expectations of her children in terms of education. She did not let her daughter give up her studies and supported her daughter to “attend high school and university despite being financially strapped” at a time when she and her husband were building a house for their son.

Sharon instilled in her children the importance of hard work and diligence, citing the rat race in China as the reason for her parenting strategy:

They must keep going without looking back. It's extremely competitive right now. Don't rest! You must move faster or you will be left behind by others. There must be someone running while you are walking. I told my children that they need to study and work hard with all of their efforts. They cannot afford to be idle and must keep going.

Van, the other rural parent in this study, referred to himself as “the bottom of society,” because of his rural background and inability to provide his children with as many opportunities as rich people. Van, like Sharon, stated that he wanted his children to go to college to study and work hard to make their own way, “or they would become nothing if they didn’t study hard.”

The term “connections” appeared many times during the interview with Van. He insisted on his son getting a college degree to secure a good job because he did not “have connections”, and he wished his daughter could apply for a master’s degree because he did not “have connections and abilities to help.” Higher education, Van argued, is the only way for his children to be competitive and find a good job with a good salary.

Peter, on the other hand, defined himself as middle-class during the interview. When asked what advantages and privileges he has as a middle-class person, he explained:

Although I don’t feel we have more advantages and resources, we’re definitely better. off and have more resources than parents in small cities and people in rural areas. You see, you can’t find poor rural students anymore in top universities in China now, which means their opportunities have been taken...taken by whom? By us, by middle-class. We can’t compete with upper class, so we need to take opportunities from the lower class.

With more resources than his rural counterparts, Peter adopted a different parenting strategy and prioritised his children’s wellbeing, stating:

Most parents in big cities in China, as far as I’m concerned, they pay more attention to their children’s health and wellbeing. Parents in big cities don’t

expect their children to make lots of money or have a great career success. I just expect our children to find something they love and develop that into a career. I don't want my children to be evolved in the stressful rat race in China.

Ann also defined herself as middle class with a big laugh during our conversation.

She defined herself as middle class because for her, being middle class means having "the ability and power to make choices." As to her educational strategies, Ann mentioned lots of resources, supports and help during our conversation:

We do hope all of our children will be accepted to Ivy league colleges, but ultimately, our children will make their own decisions. As my husband puts it, all we can do is provide them with the best resources at their every step. Because we have these resources, we have higher expectations for them... However, it is up to them to decide what kind of person they want to be, and they have our full support.

Ya described that she found it difficult to define herself in terms of social class. For Ya, social classes in current China are in flux because the traditional class system in China has been changed by the revolutions. Ya described social class in China as being based on economic divisions, that is, social class is still divided by money in order to "screen out a better part of people in society." Ya also shared her perspectives on the influence of social class on educational expectations:

Instead of being pushed to pursue a degree or become someone else, our children can receive a better education with more options, and they can develop in the areas they are interested in. They're free to do whatever they like. In fact, my daughter has a bit of tomboyish personality, which I adore...My children will

have access to a bigger world. They can go to the US, the UK, Japan or Hongkong. Even if the worst happens and my children don't succeed in their study and career, they can still have the life like we do. It's not that bad, right?

People's different social locations can also be reflected by another social factor- residence status (the household registration system in China). The influence of the household registration system in China on parental expectations will be introduced in the next section.

### 5.3.2 The Influence of Household Registration Status

The household registration system (hukou in Chinese) has divided the Chinese into two parts: residents in urban areas and residents in rural areas. People with different household registration status have different resources and options. Although rural residents have been able to go to work and live in urban China in recent decades, rural residents who are not accepted by the urban household registration system still face different living experiences than their urban counterparts. Being accepted by the urban household registration system and becoming permanent residents in urban areas requires efforts. Big cities in China such as Beijing and Shanghai have more requirements for people who want to be accepted and become permanent residents in big cities.

Ann and her family did not have Beijing hukou which means they were not accepted as permanent residents in Beijing according to the household registration system in China. However, it did not affect her and her family that much, as she said:

We don't have Beijing hukou, but it doesn't affect our daily life. We have a work residence permit (to obtain this permit you need to be a company executive and reach an annual salary of a certain amount), so it doesn't affect anything like

buying houses or finding the best school for our children. Nationality matters to us more. All our friends want to send children abroad. We're applying for American Citizenship because if we are American citizens, then our children will have advantages in applying for top American universities.

Ya and her family did not have a Beijing hukou either. Ya mentioned in our conversation that her husband has the ability to overcome the inconvenience brought by the lacking of Beijing hukou, such as paying enough tuition to get educational resources in Beijing for their children and sending their children to get higher education abroad.

Sharon had worked as a domestic service worker in Beijing for years. Like Ann and Ya, she did not have a Beijing hukou. Sharon did not talk about other options and abilities to overcome the inconvenience brought by the lack of a Beijing hukou. She never talked about going abroad or settling in a big city, and the only time she mentioned going abroad was when she talked about wanting to earn more money doing domestic work abroad. She was quite satisfied with her children and grandchildren living in their village or in the town to which their village belongs:

I don't think the fact that we don't have a Beijing hukou has had much of impact on us. It's difficult to earn a living and own a place to live in the city, especially in Beijing. My children and grandson will not go to the big cities. They'll stay in our town, and my grandson can go to the schools in our town, so it doesn't matter to us. That's enough for us.

Van sometime took odd jobs in Beijing and did not have the Beijing hukou either. His daughter worked in a small city near their hometown, and his son attended high school in the town to which their village belongs. He was quite satisfied with that because

he was unsure of the differences between schools in small towns and schools in big cities such as Beijing, which vary greatly in China:

My son's school is quite strict with students, so I'm quite satisfied. What's more, the university enrollment rate of my son's school is the best in our town, so I think our hukou doesn't have much impact on my children's education. My daughter is in Halaer (a small city in Northern China near Van's village), it's quite enough for her.

Lily's family, unlike the parents above, had a Beijing hukou, but with a plan to take her children to the United States later, a hukou is not necessary for her family. As she said:

For those who live in Beijing without a Beijing hukou and without money, their children's options might be limited to returning to their hometown to take the provincial college entrance exam (which is different from college entrance exam in Beijing and more difficult). I don't have that concern because I have more options in terms of educational paths I can choose for my children. That's the reason why I want to give birth to my children in the US and plan to take my children to the US when they are in high school.

Peter, another parent with a Beijing hukou, had no plans to send his children abroad for education yet. With a Beijing hukou, Peter had been able to send his children to public schools in his neighbourhood. Attending public education and preparing children for the college entrance examination in China is still the "rat race" for Peter, with a lot of pressure due to the large population, but he still had some options:

I hope my children can go anywhere they want in the future. They can choose Beijing, Shanghai, or even overseas... Compared to the generation of our parents and some parents, we have better ability to adapt to the new environment including overseas.

To sum up, rural parents are constrained but accepting of their household registration status, and are satisfied with the resources available to them, whereas middle-class parents and more affluent families can have more options and educational choices for their children, regardless of whether they have Beijing hukou.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a description of my participants' perspectives regarding their gender-specific expectations of their children in the Chinese context. Loyalty to traditional gender culture varies between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, participants' social intersections, such as social class and residence status, influence and determine their expectations for their children, including the resources they can provide to their children and their parenting strategies. In the following chapter, I will discuss the results of my findings and relate them to relevant research.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Discussion

This chapter discusses my findings and connects the findings to the existing research. Overall, the purpose of this study is to explore gender equity in some specific Chinese families by examining the respective parents' gender-specific expectations of their children, the reasons behind such expectations, and the possible consequences of these expectations. This chapter will discuss my findings based on my research questions about how traditional Chinese gender ideology and parents' social intersections influence their gender-specific expectations of their children. Although it is not possible to generalize from such a small sample, the interviews data do suggest that traditional Chinese gender ideas still deeply impact the parents interviewed and their expectations of their children. Traditional gender perspectives quietly persist in interviewed Chinese families, limiting the chances for girls to be successful in the future. Furthermore, parents' different social backgrounds greatly influence their resources, parental strategies, and their children's future possibilities. Families with more resources can help their daughters to achieve more gender equity, but these families also have their limitations if they lack understanding of gender equity, resulting in problematic gender equity enactment in such families.

In this chapter, I first examine the patriarchal nature of Chinese traditional culture by examining gender roles and gender values in Chinese families and problematizing the phenomenon of objectifying women and unconscious bias in families. Following this, I discuss parental expectations in families with more than one child, including privileges and higher expectations for sons and a preference for daughters based on the care and



support they can provide to parents in their old age. Finally, I discuss the influence of participants' different social locations on their parental expectations and the consequences of this influence.

## 6.1 Gender Values in the Chinese Context

Traditional Chinese families have maintained a patriarchal, patrimonial, patrilineal, and patrilocal structure for centuries, leading to social advantages for men over women (Xie, 2013). In this family system, sons are traditionally regarded as permanent members of their natal family and maintain close ties with their parents. Sons are expected to take on the responsibility of caring for their parents, even after getting married. Consequently, parents are more willing to invest in their sons for long-term returns. In contrast, daughters are traditionally regarded as temporary members of their natal family before marriage, and care providers of their husbands' extended families (Whyte & Xu, 2003). Because daughters have limited time to serve their natal families, parents often invest less in them, prioritizing their sons to ensure they receive more benefits in return (Greenhalgh, 1985).

The study discovered that many participants who believed in inherent differences between girls' and boys' intellects, personalities and abilities were equating the term gender with sex. By attributing gender bias to "natural" differences between biological sexes, these parents justified their different expectations and treatments of their children as a consequence of nature, rather than choices contributing to inequity in families and society. This legitimization of gender stereotypes as natural and rational reduces the likelihood of challenging unequal gender roles, which eventually leads to the reinforcement of gender roles within patriarchal families and the continuation of a gender

binary society. Treating gender as an inherent trait overlooks the fact that gender is an outcome of repeated social practices in a strict society with established rules (Butler, 1990). It shows that the participants lack understanding about the structures in patriarchal society enabling gender stereotypes and gender inequities.

In what follows, I dissect the patriarchal nature of Chinese families by examining traditional gender roles in families, the phenomenon of objectifying women, such as regarding girls as outsiders, preference for sons, as well as emphasizing girls' appearance. This phenomenon reveals a bias against Chinese girls in parental gender-specific expectations.

### 6.1.1 Traditional Gender Roles in Chinese Families

In terms of gender roles within families, the majority of participants' responses conformed to ideas about traditional labour division in patriarchal families within a Confucian hierarchical system that regards men as superior to women. Throughout this investigation, for example, Peter is primarily responsible for work, while his wife is a stay-at-home mother. Three interviewed mothers from various backgrounds are also stay-at-home mothers, with their husbands taking on the financial leadership roles in their families without involving themselves in trivial family matters. The other mother interviewed works but still handles the majority of the household duties. This observation affirms the conclusion reached by Kim et al. (2010), Ji (2015), Zuo and Bian (2001), and Zuo (2003). These studies found that women in China, regardless of educational backgrounds and income levels, sacrifice more for the family and regard themselves as caregivers for the entire family in that they are responsible for housework. The data

suggests that families in China are still governed by very traditional gender norms. Traditional gender role stereotypes therefore remain unchallenged.

The reasons for women staying at home and the obstacles they face in competing with men in the labour market can be further linked to a lack of structural support from the Chinese government. In the post-reform era, the central government has predominantly adopted market-oriented principles. Employers driven by profit tend to regard women as less reliable and efficient, assuming that women take on more family responsibilities and care for children, with the result that women are disadvantaged in the labour market and face gender discrimination, gender earnings gap, and fewer employment opportunities for women (He & Hu, 2017; Ji et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2008). Meanwhile, in public discourses, the Chinese government does not actively encourage men to take on more family responsibilities (Ji et al., 2017). As a result, Chinese women are forced to return to the domestic sphere or struggle with the idea of balancing work and family under this structural discrimination (Sun & Chen, 2015). Under this circumstance, gender equity is actually deteriorating in China and more unequal gender views may be passed down to the next generation (Fincher, 2016; Qing, 2020).

Confucianism advocates for the leading role of men and the supportive role of women in Chinese families. China, as the place where Confucianism originated, has some of the most patriarchal family structures that have ever existed (Cheng, 2020; Gruijters & Ermisch, 2019). Parents who are influenced by traditional culture pass on gender expectations to their children, preventing them from crossing boundaries they are not supposed to transgress. In other words, parents expect their daughters and sons to

perform their gender roles in socially acceptable ways. Ann's assertion that her daughter must be nice or be mocked as a "tigress", Lily's comments about her daughter being "pushy and bossy", and Van's expectations for her daughter "to be pretty and must wear makeup" all demonstrate that parents, regardless of their different social statuses, still have strict gender-specific expectations of their daughters. Failure to act accordingly will be corrected by parents through mocking or demands. This finding reaffirms the claims of Butler (1988) and Blaise (2005) that gender is a regime with rewards and punishment.

### 6.1.2 The Phenomenon of Objectifying Women and Unconscious Bias in Families

The previous discussion dwelled on how traditional gender roles are practiced in families. In this section, I problematize perspectives that prefer sons and treat girls as outsiders, as well as the overemphasis on girls' appearance, by focusing on the more specific parental expectations for and treatments of girls. Based on the findings and the existing literature, I argue that Chinese girls still face unfair expectations and treatments in their families and that more government involvement, including new discourses encouraging gender equity in Chinese marriage, is needed.

#### 6.1.2.1 Preference for Sons and Regarding Daughters as Outsiders.

In China, similar to many other Asian countries, sons are favored for several reasons. This preference stems from their perceived ability to provide labour in an agricultural-based economy, carry on the family lineage, and offer support in their parents' old age (Liu, 2006; Xie, 2013; Chu et al., 2011; Lei et al., 2013). Studies have found that countries deeply influenced by Confucianism highlight the role of men in

carrying on the family lineage (Gaetano, 2014; Ko et al., 2003). According to Confucian values, only males constitute the family lineage, and this responsibility is closely tied to the concept of filial piety (Li et al., 2010). In other words, in Confucian culture, the family line is believed to continue only through sons and grandsons, and parents in their old age rely on them for care and support. Girls, therefore, were traditionally excluded from their own family line and viewed as outsiders for carrying on the family line for others. In recent years, there have been some changes in traditional gender roles and family practices. For instance, some parents have started relying on their daughters for old age support. However, despite these changes, the preference for sons still persists.

Traditional gender views, such as regarding girls as outsiders and preferring sons, were more prevalent in the rural families interviewed. Such gender views have been influenced by traditional marriage and discourses in China. The Chinese traditional marriage can reveal the unequal positions of women and men in families, as well as women's powerlessness in families as reproductive tools. In the Chinese context, when a woman marries a man, the verb "marry" in Chinese is *Jia*, which means marry-out (of her original family), whereas when a man marries a woman, the word "marry" is *Qu*, which means marry-in (marry a girl into his family). Women are traditionally expected to move into their husbands' households and belong to their husbands' families. In Chinese, the word "*Jia*" is passive, while "*Qu*" is an initiating word, reflecting the unequal status of women and men in Chinese traditional culture (Chan, 2004).

Sharon mentioned the "marry-out" mode of daughters' marriages in China, and how she, like some parents in China, believes that there is no need to have great expectations of daughters because they will eventually marry out to other people's homes

and become outsiders to their original families. Ann's story about her uncle's insistence on having a boy to carry his family name also demonstrates the influence of traditional Chinese culture in urban China, as well as the patriarchal feature of Chinese families, like many other cultures. The discourses about Chinese traditional marriage that defines their sons' marriage as marry-in and their daughters' marriage as marry-out highlight men's dominating role in families and women's responsibilities to fulfil the family's requirement that they marry into. Parents who believe such assumptions that daughters will eventually belong to other families will not have higher expectations of their daughters. According to Rai (1992), investing more in daughters' education is analogous to watering someone else's garden. Similar arguments can be found in the works of Du and Cai (2000), Chan (2004), and Nielsen (2021), who argue that gender inequity and objectification of women's bodies can be seen in traditional Chinese feminine roles of wives and mothers, as well as traditional marriage modes widely accepted in China.

The preference for sons is also related to parent-child co-residence in China. Data from China Family Panel Study in 2012 indicated that approximately one-third of the Chinese population resided in multi-generational households (Xu et al., 2013). In the same year, a survey revealed that about 43 percent of elderly individuals aged 60 and above lived with their married adult children, with a higher co-residence rate in rural China compared to Urban China (Lei et al., 2015). Notably, when elderly parents decide to co-reside with their married adult children, a significant portion of them prefer to co-reside with their sons rather than their daughters (Chu et al., 2011).

For thousands of years, the cultural norm of filial piety in China has required sons to take up the primary responsibility of supporting and caring for their elderly parents,

while daughters' filial obligations shift to their parents-in-law after marriage (Lin et al., 2003; Whyte & Xu, 2003). This tradition implies that parents with sons have two potential caregivers, including their daughters-in-law, during their elder years, while those with only daughters have none, resulting in significant differences in the expected value between sons and daughters (Ebenstein, 2021). Recent studies reveal that many Chinese elderly parents prefer living with their sons but feel uncomfortable living with their married daughters (Cong & Silverstein, 2015; Ebenstein, 2021; Liu et al., 2020). Particularly in rural areas, Chinese families tend to expect future support from their sons and maintain traditional attitudes towards future co-residence with them (Hannum et al., 2009).

The reasons for this phenomenon, as indicated by previous studies, are twofold. Firstly, the traditional Chinese family follows a patrilinear and patrilocal structure, as mentioned earlier. Secondly, Chinese elderly individuals rely on their children, especially their sons, for old age support due to the absence of a well-established welfare system and public support (Chu et al., 2011; Lei et al., 2015). In order to promote gender equity in families, more structural changes and public support are required to change the traditional gender attitudes.

#### 6.1.2.2 Overemphasis on Female Appearance.

Gender bias and further objectification of women are also exacerbated by the emphasis on female appearance. Throughout time, the criteria for beauty have evolved, and various cultures possess their unique sense of beauty. However, in patriarchal societies, beauty has consistently served as a measure for evaluating femininity in women (Black & Sharma, 2001; Eder et al., 1995; Ma, 2023). Different standards for children's

appearance and an emphasis on daughters' physical appearance can be found in both rural and urban families throughout the investigation, with rural families having more direct requirements of their daughters' appearance, whereas urban parents have more subtle and hidden expectations of their daughters' appearance. Van claimed that girls' appearance had to be attractive, and that they had to wear make-up. Compared to Van, Lily and Peter had more subtle expectations of their daughter's appearance. Lily expected her daughter to have "fair skin color" and be less "strong" in order to find a good husband, whereas Peter admitted that people have higher expectations for girls' appearance and that he did not pay attention to his boy's appearance because he is a boy. Even for the parent who have the lowest expectations and requirements for her daughter's appearance, "being elegant" is still a different standard for daughters compared to what they expect from their sons.

However, when compared to other participants, Ann and Ya showed the least interests and emphasis on their daughters' appearance, and instead focused on developing their daughters' abilities. This finding contradicts Liu's (2006) argument that social class has not transcended gender. In Liu's (2006) study, high SES parents continue to prioritize their daughters' beauty, implying that they still maintain traditional expectations for girls, and their views on their children have not surpassed binary gender thinking. It is possible that elite parents interviewed within this research have different perspectives than general high SES parents in previous studies, and that class can transcend gender with enough resources.

Beauty culture is highly complex. Some feminists contend that beauty practices serve as a patriarchal instrument to control women (Chapkis, 1986; Ma, 2023), while



others argue that women's engagement with beauty practices can be a form of liberation and empowerment (Cahill, 2003; Frost, 1999). However, the empowerment women may experience through beauty practices can often be limited and influenced by commercial discourse, presenting unrealistic expectations in real life (Banet-Weiser, 2015; McRobbie, 2008). This empowerment might not lead to significant political power for women or substantial changes in their positions within Chinese patriarchal society, as it tends to overstate women's agency while overlooking the structural constraints of the patriarchal system (Ma, 2023). Furthermore, there are always implications when beauty is involved in the division of the different sex (Bourdieu, 2001). The emphasis on female appearance can lead to serious social and psychological consequences for girls and women (Chodorow, 2018; Liu, 2006). Women may begin to associate their self-worth with their physical beauty as this gender norm becomes ingrained in their identity. Similar arguments about emphasis on women's appearance and objectification of women can be found in the works of Calogero (2012), Heflick and Goldenberg (2009), Morris et al. (2018), and Szymanski et al. (2011), who have argued that such emphasis may lead to perceiving women as less human, reducing them to objects rather than acknowledging their competence as human beings.

Many participants elaborated on their understandings about physical appearance, and saw such physical appearance as an important tool in assisting their daughters in finding a good husband who can provide them with a stable life. Participants' emphasis on their daughters' appearance can also be related to the phenomenon of status hypergamy in China- women's traditional tendency to marry men with higher social status (Xie, 2013). This cultural phenomenon has persisted in contemporary Chinese

society (Xu et al., 2000). In cases of hypergamy, the social class gap between husbands and wives is often connected to an age gap, enabling prospective husbands to accumulate more economic resources than prospective wives. Consequently, this reinforces male dominance, perpetuates gender inequities, and maintains an imbalance of power within families.

## 6.2 Parental Expectations in Families with More than One Child

The previous discussion focused on traditional gender perspectives by investigating how gender roles and gender-specific parental expectations are practiced in families. In this section, I discuss the new family structure after the end of the one-child policy, as well as its influence on girls. In interviewed families with more than one child, different gender-specific expectations of children, unconditional higher expectations for boys, and more filial obligation expectations for daughters can occur in both urban and rural families.

Families with more than one child tended to compare their children and prioritize when offering family resources to their children. Participants with more than one child had different expectation for their daughters and sons. Lily had higher expectation for her three-year-old son because she believed her son is more intelligent and focused than her daughter. Lily expected her son to attend a good university, whereas she expected her daughter to attend a university with affordable and reasonable tuition fees. Van and Sharon believed that daughters and sons are naturally different, and they would support their children differently financially, with their sons receiving more. Gendered practices can be seen in families with more than one child within this research. It is consistent with

Li & Tsang's (2003) argument that gender hierarchy still exists, especially in rural households in China. Scholars such as Hu & Scott (2016) and Liu (2006) have argued that parents with two or more children are more likely to enact traditional gender roles to their children than parents with only one child. Hu and Scott (2016) also argued that younger generations, higher education, and smaller family sizes lead to less support for traditional gender roles. It is safe to say that the one-child policy has created a new social context that undermines the traditional value and idea that females are inferior to males, and advantages for girls might decrease after the one-child policy (Hu & Scott, 2016; Tsui & Rich, 2002).

It is worth noting that, despite changes in Chinese family structures and some gendered practices in the families interviewed, more than half of the parents interviewed expressed a preference for daughters or a willingness to devote more time and resources to their daughters. This change is different from how things used to be. Rural parents within this research, in particular, had quite equal educational expectations towards sons and daughters apart from financial support, with daughters receiving more compliments on their personalities and reliability. Sharon expressed a preference for her daughter in her heart because girls are more caring towards their parents and tend to give back more to them. Van agreed that daughters can better support their parents than sons in their parents' old age. Rural families' attitudes towards their daughters' education are more egalitarian than they used to be; for example, Sharon managed to support her daughter to attend university, and Van expected his daughter to get a Master's degree. It contradicts previous research, such as claims of Li & Lavelly (2003) and Deng et al. (2014) indicating that son preference in education investments and higher expectations for boys are still

prevalent in rural China. This inconsistency may be related to an ageing population and inadequate welfare system for senior citizens, particularly in rural China.

During the interviews for this study, rural parents began to discover the thoughtfulness of their daughters, and they also talked about how they can rely on their daughters too in their old age. According to the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Seniors in China, aged care should rely on the family, and it is family members' duty to take care of the elderly (Qi, 2015). As sons become busier or absent from their parents' care, daughters are increasingly taking on the role of caregiving (Hu & Scott, 2016). As a result, parents may prefer to have a daughter after already having a son (Hu & Scott, 2016). This feminized care work often increases the burden on daughters and requires more sacrifices from daughters. Similar arguments can be found in the works of Chappell et al. (2012), Liu (2014) and Yi et al. (2016), who have argued that parents in their old age receive better filial piety and care from their daughters than from their sons in China. These authors also claimed that in China, daughters assume the role of primary personal caregivers and emotional support for their aging parents without receiving compensation or appreciation, while sons receive material benefits from parents and symbolic status within families. My research findings are consistent with previous scholarly arguments that parents may adopt a more equitable approach when investing in their daughters' education, expecting future financial support in return. This can be seen as a form of patriarchal exploitation of women (Zhang et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the increased filial obligation of daughters signifies a shift from the traditional patrilineal emphasis, integral to Confucian principles of filial piety, to a more bilinear orientation that has the potential to improve women's social standing

(Hansen & Pang, 2008; Qi, 2015). As daughters take on a more significant role in family matters, which was unheard of in traditional society, they gain more influence in both family and social affairs, especially in the absence of a good welfare system in China (Qi, 2015). The growing social power of women allows them to change their approach to fulfilling filial obligations. Instead of being expected to look after parents-in-laws like they used to be, contemporary daughters have more power to decline this burden and prioritize caring for their own parents (Xu, 2001). It is the absence of public welfare that leaves the elderly individuals with no other choices but to rely on their children, including their daughters.

### 6.3 Intersectional Analysis: Parents' Different Social Locations and their Parental Expectations

The previous discussion has dwelled on gender inequalities within Chinese families with more than one child. Is there more gender inequity among families from various backgrounds? Over the past decades, China has undergone great social changes, including the founding of the People's Republic of China, economic reform and opening-up, urbanization, and globalization. These social changes have resulted in uneven regional development in China, producing different social locations of people and different family situations. In China, structural changes are interconnected with family differences and gender values (Zimmer & Kwong, 2003). It is critical to examine both different gender values in different families and people's various social locations, such as geographic regions and social class. Intersectional analysis broadens its scope beyond race and gender to include class, nation, and other factors in analyzing individual's identities (Collins, 2015). It carefully considers both similarities and differences among

individuals, while also examining the larger structural forces that shape personal experiences at a macro level. In this section, I focus on how parents' different social locations influence parental expectations and reinforce inequities, including gender inequities.

### 6.3.1 Participants' Different residence Status and Geographical Differences

Participants' different social locations throughout this investigation show clear geographical differences in the Chinese context. In China, the highly developed urban areas and the rural areas are becoming increasingly distinct worlds. Van and Sharon, two rural parents being interviewed, were both satisfied with their lives and the fact that their descendants have less choices like they do, whereas their urban counterparts have more plans for their children's future. Urban parents like Ya, Lily, and Ann claimed that urban life in China is not enough for them and expressed a desire for their children to study and live in other countries in the future. They declared this would provide their children with more options and opportunities for a better life. Furthermore, China's distinct institutional arrangements, such as the household registration system, divide and segregate rural and urban residents, limiting rural people's ability to claim urban residents and provide adequate educational resources for their children. Despite the large number of migrants in today's China, segregation and discrimination persist. Without urban residence, rural migrants can only work in undesirable and low-paying industries such as the construction industry and domestic services. Rural residents also have limited access to good opportunities, adequate resources, and social welfare services, such as healthcare and educational resources. These statements affirm previous research (Chen et

al., 2000; Lu & Zhou, 2013; Sun, 2007) that strong institutional barriers have restricted the educational resources available to rural parents for their children and hindered their ability to integrate socially and economically.

Different residence status and geographical differences among participants reflect their various social locations and are symptoms of structural inequities. The following section will discuss another reflection of the participants' different social locations within this research: social class status.

### 6.3.2 Participants' Different Social Classes and the Influence

In terms of participants' various social classes and the impact on their parental expectations, parental expectations, including parenting strategies, can vary greatly depending on different resources available to families. Participants with a rural background and limited resources expressed their disadvantaged position in Chinese society. They left their children with fewer resources and options, and they had more gender stereotypes and gender-specific expectations for their children, such as expecting more feminine characteristics from their daughters. Participants with an urban background and more resources, on the other hand, expressed their advantages in parenting and family planning. They can either have high expectations and better educational plans for their children, or they can provide their children with more options without excessive anxiety. Urban parents with more resources appeared to be more relaxed and confident in their future. However, they did not necessarily have less traditional gender-specific expectations for their children.

Social class, social connections and personal networks were frequently discussed in the interviews. Van stated that as a rural parent with few social connections and

resources, education is the only way for his children to make their own way in the world. Ann, as an urban elite parent, mentioned quite a lot of resources, support, and assistance she and her husband can provide to their children to ensure they have access to the best resources at all times. It appears that parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds provide their children with different resources, and this difference may shape children differently in the future. This supports the conclusion reached by Louie (2001) and Wang (2011) that different social class backgrounds influence the investments parents make in their children's education.

Aside from resources, another difference between participants based on social class is their parental strategies. Ann and Ya gave their daughters more freedom, encouraged them to cross the gender barrier, sent them to participate in traditional boys' activities like soccer and fencing, and expected less feminine characteristics from them in order for their daughters to compete better with boys. Ann and Ya were more relaxed about their children's study and future career, and they wanted their children to enjoy their studies and future work without worrying about whether they would earn enough money.

The remaining four participants have more traditional gender expectations for their children, such as wanting their daughter to retain feminine characteristics. These parents, particularly rural parents, were more stressed and anxious about their children's studies and future careers, with the ultimate goal of their children having well-paying jobs in the future. Sharon and Van, the rural parents interviewed, had the strictest parental strategy for their children. Sharon told her children over and over again to keep going



with all their efforts, while Van emphasized the importance of his children becoming more independent and working harder because he could not provide any assistance.

In terms of parental gender-specific expectations, parents from higher social classes or parents in better financial positions seem to have a gender-neutral expectations for their children. At a closer look, however, these gender-neutral expectations still revolve around the male/female binary. Although these parents may appear to be moving away from traditional gender roles, their expectations for daughters are still rooted in patriarchal principles, and they do so by incorporating the male standards in a different way (Evans, 2010). Parents from lower social classes and those in worse financial situations, on the other hand, have no choice but to expect their children to play the gender safe card and to study harder or worker hard in order to compete and live in the rat race. This finding supports the claims of Liu (2006) and Louie (2001) that the messages parents convey to their children are influenced by their varying social class backgrounds, and higher SES parents seem to be more open-minded and exhibit relatively gender-neutral expectations of their children.

This chapter connects the findings with the research questions and the existing literature. The influence of traditional gender culture and participants' different social locations on parental expectations have been discussed. In the next chapter, I draw conclusion based on the foregoing discussions and further my argument on the implications of this study.

## Chapter 7

### 7 Conclusion and Implications

In this chapter, I summarize the study and present key findings and arguments reached from the previous chapters. I then go on to discuss the study's implications and significance in relation to the use of critical feminist theory and intersectionality in conceptualizing and conducting this study, such as countering social inequities and social injustice caused by gender and other social factors in families. I then present the limitations of this study, propose suggestions to future research.

#### 7.1 Summary of the Study

This study aims at exploring parents' gender-specific expectations of their children, the possible influencing factors for these expectations, as well as inequalities associated with them. To achieve nuanced understandings, this study targets Beijing, a city in China known for its significant wealth disparity, and includes parents from a variety of, or very different backgrounds. The results indicate that parents' gender-specific expectations persist among families from various backgrounds. Further findings show that these gender-specific expectations manifest differently depending on the family's resources, highlighting both gender inequity within families and social injustice across different families.

The following questions guided my study:

- 1) In what way does Chinese traditional culture influence parental gender-specific expectations of their children?
- 2) How do parents' social intersections influence parental gender-specific

expectations of their children?

The theoretical underpinning of this qualitative study exploring gender-specific expectations of parents in China is based on critical feminist theory. Critical feminist theory recognizes that women's identities and experiences are shaped differently within patriarchal systems, influenced by factors such as race, social class, and culture (hooks, 2000). Critical feminist theory adopts a gender and power perspective to acknowledge and examine various forms of oppressions that women face, including inequities related to gender, class, and other dimensions (Moosa, 2005). It recognizes that individuals exist within a complex web of social relations defined by multiple and shifting dimensions of power (Jones, 2009). It is essential to acknowledge that such possible gender power dynamics within families maybe subtle, normalized, and hidden beneath societal expectations of how men and women should behave (Allen, 2023; Belarmino & Roberts, 2019; Bell, 2016).

Informed by the purpose of the study and critical feminist theory, the research reveals that Chinese traditional culture influences gender-specific parental expectations in an insidious, invisible but deeply ingrained way. During the interviews, parents claimed that daughters and sons are all the same, or even expressed a preference for their daughters. However, parents still expected their daughters to adhere to traditional femininity. Particularly in families with both daughters had sons, many parents, especially those from rural backgrounds, expected their daughters to be modest and take up fewer family's resources. When it comes to appearance, over half of the parents believed that placing emphasis on their daughters' appearance was crucial for securing a

favorable marriage in the future, highlighting the perceived importance of appearance for girls compared to boys.

Parental expectations of children are also influenced by the social intersections of each parent, which encompass factors such as social class and residence status. These social intersections shape the availability of family resources and the adoption of specific parenting strategies. Parents from various backgrounds hold different expectations for their children. Higher-class parents with more resources tend to have flexible and relatively gender-neutral expectations for their daughters, while emphasizing the importance of masculinity for their sons. These expectations of higher-class parents show parents' adherence to gender stereotype to some extent. Higher-class parents with more resources also provide their children with more life options and alleviate some of the pressure they face. Conversely, parents with limited resources place greater pressure on their children, emphasizing the necessity of hard work and competition in the challenging Chinese social environment. Another social intersection explored during the course of this thesis is parents' residence status, which influences their expectations and future plans for their children. The mobility and settlement options available to families are impacted by their residence status. Families with urban residence, providing their children with more opportunities, expect their children to have the freedom to explore a broader world. In contrast, families with rural residence expect their children to stay in the same town or reside in a small city, avoiding the bustling city life or overseas experiences. This study argues that different parental expectations among rural parents from urban parents primarily stems from their marginal positions within society.

In what follows, I consider the implications and limitations of the study and make suggestions mainly pertaining parental expectations and family education.

## 7.2 Implications and Limitations

The primary objective of this study was to explore how parental expectations are influenced by traditional Chinese culture and other social factors, and to gain firsthand insight into parents' expectation for their children within the context of new family dynamics following the end of one-child policy. By examining how parents manifest gendered practices and exploring the possible influencing factors for such expectations, this study hopes to contribute to social transformation and the advancement of gender equity. First, I expatiate on the implications of this study.

To begin with, I designed this study to explore gender-specific expectations among participants from various backgrounds. While most existing studies on parental expectations in the Chinese context are conducted with middle-class parents residing in urban areas, this study compares the expectations of parents from various backgrounds. By placing these parents in the centre, their voices are heard rather than being represented by statistics. It is particularly important to highlight the perspectives of parents from rural backgrounds, as their voices and gender equity enactment have always been overlooked in previous Chinese studies. This study discovered that parents from rural backgrounds display more egalitarian educational expectations for their children compared to previous studies, although some gender bias is still evident.

The study also adds to the existing literature by drawing attention to the critical need for academic attention on gender inequity within Chinese families with more than one child, given the scarcity of research on such families since the end of one-child

policy in Chinese academic research. This study specifically acknowledges the distinctive cultural and political context of China when applying western theories to this domain. The one-child policy has unintended consequences for daughters' increasing social positions in China (Qi, 2015). However, the study reveals that following the end of the one-child policy, the interplay between new government discourses and the resurgence of Confucianism may give rise to a new wave of unequal expectations and unfair treatment towards girls.

Finally, this study is grounded by critical social theory, which seeks to bring about social transformation, which are quite uncommon in Chinese academic research on gender equity. Through this research, the study delves into the intricate dynamics and consequences of perpetuating gender stereotypes within certain Chinese families. The problem is systematic and carries long-lasting implications within the existing social structure. It is anticipated that this study will contribute to the understanding of gender issues within private spheres, enabling Chinese scholars to gain a more profound insight into this matter.

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, China is a huge country in which gaps exist in economic and educational levels between different regions. The target city of the study was the capital city of China which is also a gathering place of the ethnic majority in China- Han Chinese. I was aware that girls from minority groups would face more difficulties than daughters of my participants within this research including accessing learning opportunities. It would have been beneficial to include more social intersections, such as ethnicities, if time constraints had allowed. Second, as a long-term resident of the target city, my familiarity with the local social

environment facilitated data analysis. However, being an insider researcher, my position, gender, and my educational background may have influenced the research process, potentially leading to certain issues being overlooked or requiring further exploration (Hesse-Biber, 2014). My position as a privileged Chinese parent, and my attempt to understand their perspectives, as well as my presumption could also be another limitation for this study, especially for my participants with rural backgrounds. Moreover, this study was limited by the sample size of only six participants due to time constraints and limited knowledge in relevant areas.

### 7.3 Suggestions and Recommendations for Future Study

Considering the study's content and purpose, I offer recommendations to Chinese parents, society, academia, and policy makers in general. Foremost, addressing gender stereotypes and gender-specific expectations for children is crucial to empower girls and enable them to achieve greater success. Families, being influential in shaping children's development, should prioritize gender equity and strive to create a fair and equal environment for all children, particularly daughters. Chinese parents would benefit from receiving education on gender equity, which can help them comprehend the concept of gendered practices and enhance gender equity within the family.

In terms of gendered practice, I firmly support the idea that Chinese society should move away from traditional marital discourses that perpetuate male dominance and subordinate women in marriages. Instead, it is crucial to promote the notion of couple living independently, rather than residing with the husbands' parents. Additionally, the Chinese government has a responsibility to support women in the workforce by

eliminating any disadvantages they may face due to their marriage and family plans, while also encouraging men to take on a greater share of household responsibilities.

For academic and societal contexts in general, I emphasize the importance of placing greater emphasis on family education, addressing the challenges faced by Chinese girls, and amplifying their voices. Rather than simplifying girls' educational achievements as evidence of gender parity, it is crucial to adopt a nuanced and comprehensive perspective that acknowledges the diverse difficulties women currently encounter in China. This study is limited in scope, focusing solely on parents from the ethnic majority in one city. However, I expect this study to inspire further studies that explore the interplay between gender, geographic location, social class and ethnicity in the Chinese context. Additionally, including a policy analysis perspective would be essential to examine how labor and employment legislation, national and local policies concerning the household registration system, and regional welfare systems in China influence families. This will provide a deeper understanding of how these factors shape different family dynamics and uncover the underlying social injustice.

For education research, it is important for scholars and educators to focus more on the education of girls in Chinese families in the post-one-child era. This includes developing more programmes to foster girls' self-identity and sense of worthiness, and encouraging them to break free from traditional gender expectations in order to have more opportunities in the future. It is crucial to acknowledge the persistence of sexism and gender bias in families, as only through recognition can we address and improve the situation.



Policy makers in the post-one-child era must prioritize the implementation of additional policies to prevent the resurgence of discrimination or bias against girls. For instance, they should work progressively to reduce the disadvantages faced by women in traditional marriage practices and develop policies that promote gender equity within marriages. Policies should strictly prohibit sex selection during pregnancy and develop public discourses in favour of or at least being equal to girls. Simultaneously, the social pension and welfare system should be improved in order to better support the elderly and reduce the burden on families.

## 7.4 Concluding Thoughts

This study has uncovered the far-reaching implications of gendered practices and gender-specific expectations that go beyond individual experiences and contribute to the perpetuation of structural inequity. The findings demonstrate the influential role of parents in upholding a gendered system, with society as a whole being complicit in this process. Within this complex gender system, both individuals from marginalized groups and those from privileged background face limitations in their life choices and value systems. However, due to the presence of a dominant group within the gender hierarchy, the restrictions placed on males and females differ.

To conclude, gender inequity is a systematic and pervasive issue which cannot be isolated from social power relationships. In other words, gender issues are more than gender issues. Combined with the Chinese background, the gender inequity nowadays can be understood as “socialism-and-Confucian-patriarchy hybrid gender inequity” (Ji et al., 2017), in which patriarchy, paternalism, and politics are seen as the three main sources of oppression for Chinese women.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix A: Poster Script for Recruitment**

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of parental expectations of their children based on gender who meet the following criteria: 1) living in Beijing with at least one boy and one girl; 2) agree to having their interview audio recorded for accuracy and better transcription.

If you are interested and agree to participate you will be asked about your gender views and expectations of your children based on traditional Chinese culture and your own experiences.

Your participation would involve one WeChat video interviews. The interview will take approximately 45-90 minutes.

your perspectives and experiences can help to improve understanding of gender equality in families and contribute to future changes.

For more information about this study, please contact: [REDACTED] Faculty of Education, Western University, or the PI in this study: [REDACTED] Faculty of Education, Western University, [REDACTED]

**Appendix B: Letter of Information**

**Project Title:** Gendered parental expectations of their children in Mainland China: an intersectional analysis

**Document title:** Letter of Information and Consent- all participants

**Principal Investigator + Contact:** [REDACTED]

**Additional Research Staff + Contact:** [REDACTED]

**Invitation to participate**

You are invited to participate in this research about how traditional culture and parents' social backgrounds influence gender perspectives and parental expectations of their children. My name is Xuan Liu, and I am an MA student in the Faculty of Education at Western University (Canada). I am currently conducting a study on gendered parental expectations in Mainland China. Your experiences and perspectives as Chinese parents are valuable to me to explore parental gendered expectations of their children.

**Purpose of the study**

Education, whether at school or at home, is essential to human rights and a necessary first step toward reducing gender inequality. Chinese studies on gender equality have paid more attention to gender equality in schools and the labour market. Fewer studies, however, have focused on gender issues in families. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how different backgrounds of Chinese parents interact with traditional

Chinese culture such as Confucianism to influence specific gender expectations.

Throughout this investigation, parents' gender views and expectations of their children will be used to investigate the complexity of gender issues in families and power relations in Chinese society.

### **Study procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to an interview. The interview will last between 45 and 90 minutes. You will be asked about your gender views and expectations of your children based on traditional Chinese culture and your own backgrounds. Under the influence of pandemic, only meeting through WeChat will be used to conduct interviews. Interviews will be audio-recorded for accuracy. Participants cannot take part in the study if they do not wish to be audio recorded. Your verbal consent to participate in the study will be needed and audio recorded. A paper copy of your verbal consent can be sent to you via WeChat at your preference. The verbal consent recording and the interview recording are separate, so the interview recording can protect participants' confidentiality by using their unique pseudonym. All participants' names and identities will stay confidential.

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

Parents who are currently living in Beijing with at least one boy and at least one girl are eligible to participate in this study. Individuals who do not consent to having their interview audio recorded will not be eligible.

### **Voluntary participation**

Participants in this research is voluntary and not mandatory in any way. The activities can be stopped at any time if you experience any discomfort or fatigue. You may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. If you decided to withdraw, any information collected prior will not be used and will be securely destroyed using data deletion software and an industry-standard shredder. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

### **Possible Risks**

There might be some conversations about different expectations for your children. You have the rights to refuse to answer if you are uncomfortable discussing these issues.

### **Risks about the usage of WeChat**

WeChat will be used to facilitate dialogues and carry out this research. As a social media platform, WeChat presents several issues in terms of risk profile. Among these are the following :1) WeChat does not provide end-to-end encryption, which means hackers can access and read your chats easily; 2) There is heavy censorship, surveillance, and data sharing within the app, implying that there is a high risk of the Chinese government monitoring your messages through WeChat; 3) Data logging and third-party involvement: along with WeChat surveillance and monitoring, your information is constantly recorded by the app developers, who can easily forward the information to any third-party applications, including the government; 4) No guarantees can be made to participants regarding the security and privacy of data captured and stored within the platform. To be more specific, the risks associated with using WeChat to conduct this research include the risk of your identifiable information, such as your name (as will be stated in your verbal

consent), might be leaked by the WeChat developer Tencent, as well as the risk of your indirect identifiers, such as your voice, gender, social class status, and Beijing residence status, might be leaked. Every effort will be made by the researcher to minimize the chances of information leakage, such as removing private content when appropriate and migrating to a more secure platform, such as Western's OneDrive. There are more mitigation strategies suggested: 1) create a secure password: create a difficult and unique password for your WeChat account, one which is not similar to any of your other handles. This will keep your app private and secure; 2) logout every time to make sure no one can access your account from your device when you are not around; 3) connect to a secure network: It's more safe to access WeChat when connected to a known and secure network, and avoid using public Wi-Fi on WeChat since they are vulnerable to hack attacks; 4) adjust privacy settings: WeChat's default privacy settings are not the safest. It is better if you visit the privacy settings page and set them according to your preference. A link to the WeChat privacy policy is added for your reference:

[https://www.wechat.com/en/privacy\\_policy.html](https://www.wechat.com/en/privacy_policy.html)

### **Possible Benefits**

The possible benefits to you may be that the information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole which include making an intellectual contribution to new knowledge in gender issues and power relations in family researches in the Chinese context.

### **Compensation**

There are no compensations associated with participating within this research.

## **Confidentiality**

This study will collect both indirect and direct identifiers, such as recording of voice, gender, social class status, Beijing residence status, and full name. The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any reports, publications or presentations of the study results. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym, and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity. Only with consent, unidentified quotes obtained during the interview may be used in the dissemination of research findings. Outside the research team, only representatives of The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board can require access to the study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. Any personal information about you in a form of a hard copy will be kept in researcher's locked cabinet in Canada before project completion. A list with your first name, and your pseudonym will be encrypted and kept in a password-protected file, separate from all other files, in the hard-drive of the researcher's laptop before project completion, which is encrypted and has personalized lock system. The data including transcripts will be stored on Western's OneDrive. Only Xuan Liu (the student researcher) and Dr. Rita Gardiner (the Principal Investigator) have access to data within this research. After project completion, all study records will be transferred to the sole responsibility of the PI for long term (7 years) storage. All the data will be securely destroyed using industry-standard shredders and data-deletion software after the retention period of 7 years.

## **Contacts for further information**



If you have any questions about this research, you may contact the Principal Investigator,

██████████, or the student researcher, ██████████

██████████. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the

conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research ethics █

████████████████████

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Xuan Liu

**Appendix C: Verbal Consent**

Study title: Gendered parental expectations of their children in Mainland China: An Intersectional Analysis

Do you have any questions?

Yes No

Do you agree to take part in this study?

Yes No

Do you agree to receive the findings of this study via WeChat after project completion?

Yes No

We would like to provide you with a paper copy of the informed consent today, which will include your name and the study title. Can we send this to you via WeChat?

Yes No

Are you aware of the risks of sharing documents on WeChat including surveillance and no guarantees can be made to participants regarding the security and privacy of data captured and stored within the platform?

Yes No

---

Name of Participant

---

Date of Participant Verbal Consent

---

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Signature of person obtaining consent

---

Date

## **Appendix D: Interview Guide**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on parental expectations. The purpose of this interview is to discuss your experiences – as a Chinese parent – of parental expectations and gender perspectives. I have a number of questions to guide the interview, but these are only guides. I am interested in understanding your experiences and perspectives as a parent. Therefore, anything you would like to share with me that will help my understanding would be most welcome.

Reminders for participants prior to starting the interview:

your participation throughout this investigation is voluntary. Some of the interview questions may refer to sensitive topics that make you feel uncomfortable. You have the right to skip answering any of the questions, without explanation.

### **Introduction and personal information**

Tell me something about yourself that you would like to share (for example, your background such as gender, and how do you see your role as a parent?)

Tell me a bit about your family (for example, how many children do you have, gender of your children?)

1. Can you tell me what the term “gender” means to you?
2. Can you share your experiences about how Chinese traditional culture influences your expectations for your children?

Prompt: Describe how Chinese traditional culture influences your idea about gender?

3. Can you tell me how your expectations of your children differ from your parents' expectations of you?

Prompt: Can you describe a story in your childhood about your parents' expectations of you?

4. What are your expectations for your children in terms of academic success?

5. What are your expectations for your children in terms of their future career?

6. Can you describe an experience when your children's interests, personalities, or behaviour did not accord with your gender expectations?

Prompt: Can you tell me about the different social expectations of boys and girls from your perspective?

7. Can you tell me how do you identify yourself in terms of household registration status? Is there a particular story you want to share with me?

8. Can you describe how your household registration status has influenced your expectations for your children? Is there a particular story that springs to mind?

9. Can you describe how you identify yourself in terms of social class?

10. Can you describe how your social class has influenced your expectations for your children?

11. From your perspective, what significance do parental expectations have on children's well-being?

12. From your perspective, how do different expectations for boys and girls influence children's future success?

As we've spoken, have any other thoughts related to parental expectations and gender perspectives come to mind that you would like to share? It's been a pleasure talking with you!

## Appendix E: Ethic Board Approval Letter



# Western Research

**Date:** 16 February 2023

**To:** Dr. Rita Gardiner

**Project ID:** 121696

**Study Title:** Gendered Parental Expectations of Their Children in Mainland China: An Intersectional Analysis

**Short Title:** Gendered Parental Expectations

**Application Type:** NMREB Initial Application

**Review Type:** Delegated

**Full Board Reporting Date:** 03/Mar/2023

**Date Approval Issued:** 16/Feb/2023 14:20

**REB Approval Expiry Date:** 16/Feb/2024

Dear Dr. Rita Gardiner

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. **All other required institutional approvals and mandated training must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.**

**Documents Approved:**

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Interview Guide Feb15	Interview Guide	15/Feb/2023	4
Debriefing Form Feb15	Debriefing document	15/Feb/2023	4
Recruitment Poster Feb15	Recruitment Materials	15/Feb/2023	2
LOI_C Feb15	Verbal Consent/Assent	15/Feb/2023	4
Translation (Chinese) of Letter of Information and Consent	Translated Documents	15/Feb/2023	3
Translation (Chinese) of recruitment poster	Translated Documents	15/Feb/2023	3
translation (Chinese) of interview guide	Translated Documents	15/Feb/2023	3
Translation (Chinese) of Debriefing Form	Translated Documents	15/Feb/2023	3

**Documents Acknowledged:**

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
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Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
WeChat TRAC Guidance	Technology Review document	23/Jan/2023	1
Translation Contestation_Yixuan Pang	Translation Certificate	15/Feb/2023	2

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Katelyn Harris , Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

**Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).**



## Appendix F: Chinese Version of Recruitment Poster

您好，我们在寻找志愿者参加一项关于家长性别观和对孩子期望的研究。凡是符合以下两条标准的家长都可参与：1) 生活在北京，有一儿一女；2) 同意对访谈录音，以便后期更好的转录访谈内容。

如果您愿意参加此项研究，您会被问到关于传统文化影响和您个人经历是如何影响您的性别观点和对子女的期待的问题。

您会被受邀参加一个微信视频访谈，访谈大概 45-90 分钟。

您的观点和经历能帮助更好的研究在家庭中的性别公平，并有望对中国的性别平等作出贡献。

如果您想知道关于这项研究的更多信息，请在微信上联系我（此项研究的学生研究员）或邮件联系我 [REDACTED]

您也可以研究这项研究的主要研究者： [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix G: Chinese Version of Letter of Information

**研究项目名：** 中国大陆地区家长对于子女基于性别的期待：基于交汇理论的分析

**文件名：** 项目知情同意书-所有受访人

**主要研究人员：** [REDACTED]

**学生研究人员：** [REDACTED]

### 邀请

您好，我想邀请您参加一项关于传统文化和家长的社​​会背景如何影响性别观点和家​​长对孩子期待的研究。我叫刘璇，我是加拿大西大教育学院的​​一名在读研究生。我目前正在进行一个关于中国大陆父母对子女基于性别的期望的研究项目。您作为家长的经验和观点对这项研究很宝贵，有助于我更好的理解家长的性别观点和对孩子的期待。

### 研究目的

无论是学校教育还是家庭教育，都是保障人权和缩小性别不平等的重要途径。在中国关于性别平等的研究中，人们更多关注的是入学机会和劳动力市场中的性别歧视。然而，较少有研究去关注家庭中的性别问题。这项研究的目的是探究中国传统文化比如孔孟之道和家长的社​​会背景是如何影响对不同性别子女的期待的。在这项研究中，家长的性别观和对孩子的期待会帮助我们理解更复杂的社会性别平等和中国社会中的权力分配。

## 研究流程

如果您同意参加此项研究，您将接受一个半开放式的访谈谈谈您的看法，访谈时间大概在 45-90 分钟。访谈问题涉及到您的性别观、对孩子的期待、对传统文化中性别观点的理解，和一些您的基本信息。由于疫情和距离的原因，微信视频会被用来进行访谈。为了之后转录访谈内容的准确性，每个访谈都会被录音，录音仅用于帮助把访谈录音准确转换为文字。在访谈开始前，需要您的口头同意声明并对口头同意声明也进行录音。录音过程会更好的设计去保护受访者的隐私，比如受访者的同意声明和正式访谈会被分开录音以便于更好的保证访谈内容的私密性。每个受访人的名字和身份都将被保密。

## 纳入和排除标准

目前居住在北京，至少有一儿一女的家长适合参加此项研究。不同意访谈被录音的家长不能参与此项研究。

## 自愿参与原则

参与这项研究是自愿的，没有任何强制性。如果你出现任何不适或疲劳，可以随时停止活动。你可以在任何时候拒绝回答任何问题或退出研究。如果你决定退出，之前收集的任何信息将不会被使用，有关于您的任何信息也会被数据删除软件或行业标准的碎纸机安全的销毁。你不会因为签署本同意书而放弃任何法律权利。

## 可能的风险

可能会有一些关于您对不同性别的孩子的不同期望的谈话，如果您对讨论这些问题感到不舒服，你有权利拒绝回答。

## 关于使用微信的风险

微信将被用于促进对话和开展这项研究。作为一个社交媒体平台，微信在风险状况方面存在几个问题。其中包括以下几点：1) 它不提供端对端加密，这意味着黑客

可以轻松访问和阅读你的聊天记录；2) 应用程序内有严重的审查和监控，这意味着政府通过微信监控你的信息的风险很大；3) 数据记录和第三方参与。伴随着微信的监控，你的信息不断被应用开发者记录，他们可以很容易地将信息转发给任何第三方应用，包括政府；4) 无法向参与者保证在平台内捕获和存储的数据的安全性和隐私性。更具体地说，使用微信进行这项研究的危险包括你的身份信息，如你的姓名（将在你的口头同意中说明）可能会被腾讯公司泄露，以及你的间接身份信息，如你的声音、性别、社会阶层地位和户口信息，有可能被泄露的风险。研究者将尽一切努力减少信息泄露的机会，比如在适当的时候删除私人内容，并迁移到一个更安全的平台，如西大的 OneDrive 软件。还有更多的保护隐私策略建议：1) 创建一个安全的密码：为您的微信账户创建一个困难和独特的密码，一个与您其他应用不相似的密码。这将保持您的应用程序的私密性和安全性；2) 每次使用完微信退出登录，以确保当您不在身边时，没有人可以从您的设备上访问您的账户；3) 连接到一个安全的网络。当连接到一个已知的安全网络时，访问微信更安全，避免在微信上使用公共 Wi-Fi，因为它们很容易受到黑客攻击；4) 调整隐私设置。微信的默认隐私设置不是最安全的。如果您访问隐私设置页面并根据您的偏好进行设置，效果会更好。现添加微信隐私政策的链接供您参考：

[https://www.wechat.com/en/privacy\\_policy.html](https://www.wechat.com/en/privacy_policy.html)

### 可能的好处

您可能得到的好处是，所收集的信息可能为整个社会带来好处，其中包括对中国背景下家庭研究中的性别问题和权力关系做出智力贡献。

### 补偿

参与这项研究没有任何补偿。

### 保密性

本研究将收集间接和直接的识别信息，如声音记录、性别、社会阶层状况、是否有北京户口和全名。所收集的信息将仅用于研究目的，您的姓名或可识别您的信息都

不会被用于任何报告、出版物或研究结果的介绍中。您的名字将被替换成一个化名，并将尽力不暴露您的身份。只有在征得同意的情况下，访谈中获得的未识别的引文才可能被用于传播研究结果。在研究团队之外，只有西大非医学研究伦理委员会的代表可以要求查阅与研究有关的记录，以监督研究的进行。在项目完成之前，任何有关您的个人信息将以硬拷贝的形式保存在加拿大的研究人员的锁柜中。在项目完成前，一份写有您名字和化名的名单将被加密，并保存在研究者的笔记本电脑的硬盘中，与所有其他文件分开，该硬盘是加密的，有个性化的锁系统。所有研究数据将被储存在西大的安全平台 OneDrive 中。只有刘璇（学生研究者）和 Rita Gardiner 博士（主要研究者）可以访问本研究的数据。项目完成后，所有的研究记录将被转移到 PI 的唯一责任人处（Rita Gardiner 博士处）进行长期（7 年）储存。所有数据将在 7 年的保留期后使用行业标准的碎纸机和数据删除软件安全地销毁。

### 更多信息请联系

如果您对这项研究有任何疑问，可以联系首席研究员 [REDACTED]，或联系学生研究员 [REDACTED]。如果您对您作为研究参与者的权利或本研究的进行有任何疑问，您可以联系人类研究伦理办公室 [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

本信供您保存，以供后续参考。

刘璇

**Appendix H: Chinese Version of Verbal Consent**

**项目名称：**中国大陆地区的家长对孩子基于性别的期待：一个交叉研究

您是否还有任何问题？

是 否

您同意参加这个研究吗？

是 否

这个研究项目结束后，您同意通过微信接受这项研究的研究结果吗？

是 否

我们可以给您一份基于您今天口头同意的纸质版同意书，同意书包括您的名字和这项研究的题目。您同意通过微信接受这份同意书吗？

是 否

您是否意识到在微信上分享文件的风险，包括监控，并且不能向参与者保证在平台内采集和存储的数据的安全和隐私？

是 否

是 否

---

受访者姓名

---

日期（日/月/年）

---

研究者姓名

签名

日期（日/月/年）

我的签名意味着我已经向上述受访人解释了有关此项研究的所有问题。

## Appendix I: Chinese Version of Interview Guide

感谢您接受我关于家长期待的访谈。这次访谈的目的是谈谈您的性别观，谈谈您作为中国家长对孩子有些什么样的期望。我准备了一些问题来辅助我们进行此次的访谈，但是我们的对话更多的会基于您的想法展开。欢迎您分享您作为家长对孩子期望特别是基于孩子性别的期望来帮助我更好的理解。

友情提示：

您的参与是完全自愿的。如果有些题目让您不舒服，您可以毫无理由的跳过或者拒绝回答。

### 自我介绍

可以介绍一下您自己吗？（例如性别，您如何看待自己作为家长的角色）

可以介绍一下您自己的家庭吗？（例如您有几个孩子，孩子的性别是什么；您和配偶的职业）

1. 您能告诉我您是怎么理解“性别”的吗？
2. 关于中国传统文化是如何影响您对孩子的期望的。您能分享一下您的经验吗？  
提示：描述一下中国传统文化是如何影响您对性别的看法的？
3. 您能告诉我您对孩子的期望和您父母对您的期望有什么不同吗？  
提示：您还记得您小时，您父母对您有什么样的要求和期望吗？
4. 关于学业，您对您孩子的期望是什么？
5. 关于未来事业，您对您孩子的期望是什么？
6. 您能具体描述一下当您孩子的兴趣，性格或行为和您的期待不一致的时候您的感受吗？  
提示：您能告诉我，在您看来，社会对男孩和女孩有不同的性别期待吗，即她（他）们应该做什么不应该做什么？
7. 您能告诉我您的户口属性吗？
8. 您能描述分享一下您的户口是如何影响您对孩子的期望的吗？有具体的故事和例子吗？
9. 您能告诉我你怎么界定您的社会阶层吗？
10. 您能描述分享一下您的社会阶层是如何影响您对孩子的期望的吗？
11. 您觉得家长的期望对孩子的身心健康有什么影响？
12. 您觉得，对男孩和女孩的社会偏见和不公平会如何影响孩子们未来的成功？



在我们聊天过程中，您有其他的关于家长期望和性别观点的想法想分享吗？感谢您参加此次访谈！

## Curriculum Vitae

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**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario  
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