

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Chinese women's experiences in the context of the two-child policy

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science
In Psychology**

At Massey University, Manawatū, New Zealand.

**Minjia Zhu
2020**

For my mum
and
my two loving grandmas

Abstract

In December 2015, a new family planning policy that allows all Chinese married couples to have two children became a law in China, which represented the end of China's decades-long controversial one-child policy. This universal two-child policy was implemented to help address the aging issue and the looming labour shortage in China through the regulation of Chinese women's reproductive decisions and freedom, where women's bodies and fertility have always been linked to economic development and national survival. Within the operation of gendered institutional power relations, Chinese women's social roles are defined as mothers and wives by the foremost focus on their reproductive functions for the interests and needs of the state. Similar to the one-child policy, women's interests have been marginalised in the formulation of the two-child policy and their voices were and are 'missing' on China's mainstream media after the policy's release. This research listens to the 'missing voices' from Chinese women about their experiences of being a woman in China's family planning programme, explores their stories with the two-child policy within a variety of social power relations, and asks how their lives have been affected as they become the recipients of political agendas in the gendered social hierarchy. Ten young Chinese women residing in New Zealand volunteered to participate in conversational interviews that were focused on Chinese women's experiences and stories in the context of the two-child policy and the changes that this new policy initiative may have brought to their lives. The interviews were voice-recorded, translated and transcribed, and analysed using feminist standpoint epistemology and Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis in a narrative inquiry. Four main themes were identified throughout the participants' narratives, where almost all of the Chinese women in this study have experienced the privileges of living as an only child while also embedded in the stories of son preference in their families or the society. In the context of the two-child policy, even though all participants believed that this policy would be likely to position Chinese women at a more precarious and disadvantaged status in the workplace, most of them

would still choose to accept the state narrative. The analysis showed that Chinese women face both new and recurring challenges of a resurgence of tradition in their lives. The women talked about their acceptance and willingness to have two children despite their recognition of the impact of the policy for their future educational and employment in the future and the complexities of son preference. Within the context of the one-child policy, the two-child policy is recognised within the narratives as reproductive freedom. There were, however, some counternarratives that resist the state call to reproduce.

Acknowledgements

Leigh, thank you for being such an inspiration in the journey of writing this thesis. If it were not for your support and encouragement on the research proposal of this study at the workshop of Advanced Psychology of Women in the first year of my postgraduate studies, this thesis would be unlikely to exist in the first place. Thank you for your invaluable guidance with every step in my research over the past year, your encouragement and help have always gave me the motivation to challenge myself academically in learning new knowledge and practices.

Ann, your inspiring feedback on the research proposal in Advanced Psychology of Women was one of the reasons that I wanted to develop this topic in more depth, and I am glad I did it. Thank you for your insightful understandings of the research question and its literature background, your input on this thesis has made it a much better project and also broadened my horizons in many aspects.

To my friends, two friendly and supportive young ladies, thank you so much for your generosity in sharing your opinions and personal experiences in our conversations. You gave me the confidence and courage to conduct further interviews with the participants, and also helped me to realise the implications of the two-child policy for countless young Chinese women like us. Wishing you all the best in your future endeavors.

To the other eight participants, this study would not exist if it were not for your participation and your trust, thank you for letting me know your experiences and stories with the two-child policy and use them in this thesis. I am truly grateful that you agreed to share one hour of your life with me for the interview, thank you all.

Finally, to my parents and my loving families, thank you for the emotional and financial support to my study. I am so lucky to have you in my life, and I know none of this would have been possible without your selfless support.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
Literature Review	7
The end of an era: The one-child policy	7
Gender selection and son preference.....	7
The imbalanced sex ratio	9
The mystery of ‘missing women’ in China.....	10
Other unintended consequences of the one-child policy.....	11
The empowerment of Chinese women.....	13
The new context: The two-child policy	14
Women’s reproductive decisions to have a second child.....	14
Couple dynamics.....	14
Other influential factors	16
Online opinions of the two-child policy.....	18
Chinese women’s reproductive freedom with the two-child policy	19
The medical manifestation of reproductive power.....	19
Look into the future.....	20
The state feminism in China and Chinese feminists	22
Methodology	29
Standpoint Epistemology	29
A Narrative Approach	30
Method	31
Ethical considerations	31
Recruitment and participants.....	33

Conversational interviews.....	34
Transcription and translation	35
Analysis.....	35
Analysis and discussion	37
Empowerment and discrimination	37
Thanks to the one-child policy, I could.....	38
Growing up as an only child is lonely.....	41
We may be the least wanted employees.....	42
There is nothing we can do about it	46
The unstoppable son preference.....	49
They kept having children until they had a boy	49
Now you have two chances to have a boy	51
Finally this is an opportunity for me to try again.....	52
It will get better for women in the future	55
Chinese women's decisions about having two children	58
I think I will have two children.....	58
When older generations get involved.....	61
I have no reason to have children.....	63
A child is like a money shredder.....	65
Chinese women's reproductive freedom and family life	66
It is ridiculous and cruel.....	66
They were the ones that were oppressed earlier	67
You should...because you are a woman.....	68
Conclusion	71
References.....	75
Appendix A	87
Appendix B	91
Appendix C	95
Appendix D.....	96

Introduction

At the beginning of 2016, the government of China officially ended the one-child policy and implemented the universal two-child policy that allows all Chinese couples to have two children. This policy was originally enacted to address the issues of an ageing population and labour shortage in China. However, in the context of the two-child policy, all Chinese women, not limited to those who are married and had their first child, are facing challenges and ramifications as a result of the policy in a number of areas, including employment, health care, social status, power dynamics in marriage, and gender norms.

The biggest stakeholders in China's birth planning policy are Chinese women. Despite the numerous calls both domestically and internationally to abandon the state birth planning programme or to relax the one-child policy, many concerns about the two-child policy were also raised at the same time. Will the long-existing system of patriarchy and its relation to son preference in Chinese families rise again? Will gender discrimination in the workplace be exacerbated? Is it possible that after the two-child policy, the decision to have children has been transferred from the patriarchal state to the patriarchy within the family? What are the implications for women if husbands now control their reproduction?

As the most relevant population that the two-child policy may have affected, Chinese women have been marginalised and even neglected in the discussions about what living under this new family planning policy might mean for them. Their voices, experiences, and stories are unfortunately 'missing' not only in the mainstream media, but also in the field of feminist psychology. The missing voices of Chinese women made me wonder how they experience the two-child policy in their lives. Do they applaud and embrace this policy because it allows them to have a second child? Or do they psychologically reject the policy as it may initiate pressures to have another child from their husbands,

parents or parents-in-law, or peers? And how would I understand and explain their experiences and stories from my positioning in Western feminist psychology? To answer these questions and to have better understandings of Chinese women's experiences with the two-child policy, feminist standpoint theory is used as the epistemological foundation for this research.

Standpoint epistemologies see knowledge as socially located within each person's cultural, political and historical location (Harding, 2004), and this informs the importance and necessity of the researcher's standpoint and position to be made and presented clearly throughout the project (Harding, 1995). Standpoint theory advocates that feminist inquiry should acknowledge each participant's unique background as well as the researcher's situated knowledge and reveals their positions and values within the research context (Harding, 2004). The emphasis on people's positions enables this research to avoid decontextualising the participants and the researcher from their everyday lives, and to produce the work with interactive knowledge and standpoints. In this study, my standpoint as a woman and an only daughter in an urban family allows me to contextualise the research of exploring the meaning of the two-child policy for Chinese women and my own positioning as an international researcher within feminist standpoint theory.

I am a daughter and a granddaughter. My parents are administration staff in universities. My mum's parents are retired geology teachers, my dad's father used to be a newspaper editor, and my grandma worked as an accountant before she retired. I was born in 1993 when the one-child policy was strictly enforced in cities, so I am the only child in the family. My mum went to Japan to work/study for about two years when I was four years old, and I was taken care of mainly by my four grandparents. When my mum got back home, she found out that my dad invested the money she earned in Japan and all their previous savings in buying stocks without telling her. She was furious, and since my dad did not want to admit using all of their money to buy stocks was a mistake, they got divorced in 1999 and I lived with my mum. In spite of this, I still think I am happy being a daughter and a granddaughter: my mum and all my grandparents are very kind, loving, responsible, civil, and supportive. I am truly grateful that it was these kind people who brought me up and protected me from the malice directed towards a child in

a single parent family in China. In the 2000s, divorce was still considered as a disgraceful and shameful event in Chinese society, and children living with a single parent were likely to be the subject of their classmates' gossip and be marginalised in school activities. But thanks to my loving families, they did their best to minimise the impact of my parents' divorce on me and give me a childhood just like other children with two parents. As for my dad, he did not absent himself from my life, I think he has done his best at being a father in every stage of his life. Growing up as the only child in the family, I have never needed to compete for my parents' attention, family resources, and educational opportunities with my siblings. On the contrary, my parents have provided me with the best education they could afford over the past 20 years. I do not know what my life would be like if I had a younger brother or sister: at least, I would not be able to study abroad because my parents could only afford the tuition of sending one child overseas. It is the experiences of living with the privilege as being an only child that made me wonder how my life would become different if I had a sibling, particularly a brother.

I am a woman. Being a woman has been a privilege for me in my family. My dad's parents had always wanted a daughter, they think daughters are more intimate and caring. But they had three boys, and my dad is the second one. My dad's older brother also had a boy, so when I was born, my grandparents were very happy. Things were basically the same with my mum's parents. They first had a son, and then my mum was born. My uncle had a boy and my mum had me. Therefore, in my family, I have never been disliked or ignored for being a girl, instead, I was favoured. In fact, I did not know about the idea of son preference until senior high school. There was a girl who had two older sisters and one younger brother. Another boy in my class, he had three older sisters. This means that under the one-child policy, their parents kept having children (daughters) until they had a son. These kinds of stories became more and more visible to me as I started to study psychology in the university. They emerged among conversations with my classmates and my teachers, in textbooks and newspapers, on the internet and social media. I have learned over time that there are so many families in China still think having a son is absolutely necessary, and daughters are less preferred offspring as they will eventually marry into another family. As a Chinese woman, even though this is not my experience, I have become interested in the ways that the

two-child policy may exacerbate gender inequality for women. At the same time, as a woman who has not yet had children, I wondered about the implications for my career, and that of other hundreds of millions of women in our place in the gendered social hierarchy.

I am a researcher. As an international student studying psychology at Massey University, I was introduced to Western feminist standpoint theory at the workshop of Advanced Psychology of Women in my first semester of postgraduate study. I was intrigued by its principal claims that value women's experiences as a source of knowledge and emphasise the voices of marginalised groups in feminist studies. It was also the time following the implementation of the universal two-child policy. All the information on mainstream media in China was promoting the positive sides of the policy and encouraging people to have two children, while the comments posted under these news items were telling opposite stories, among which women's voices and their concerns really hit me. These included the side effects about pregnancy, including all kinds of discomfort, unbearable pain and a number of postpartum complications, all of which appear as the ugly truths that the mainstream media in China will never tell. Besides these physical challenges to women's bodies, they are also concerned about whether a second child will cost their career and financial independence, as mothers are always expected to be the primary caregiver for newborn babies. Another issue is how to coordinate and balance the relationship between two children, this may be particularly challenging for some of the young mothers in China because most of them grow up as an only child and have no experiences of living with siblings. Thus, it is important for young parents to adjust children's upbringing from single child to sibling parenting and take care of the firstborn child's mental health at the same time (Yin, Li, Li, & Liu, 2019). Some comments also mentioned the pressures from husbands or mothers-in-law that forced their wives or daughters-in-law to have a second child as soon as possible after the two-child policy was released. I can easily relate to the statements they made and the questions they asked, as I would likely be saying the same thing if I were married and negotiating the two-child policy.

Why do women have to be mothers? The motherhood mandate (Russo, 1976, 1979) is a Western concept but it also applies to Chinese women, in as much as the practices of

mandating motherhood are not only happening in the Global North, they also exist, in differing ways, in China. In accordance with China's state feminism, the motherhood mandate in the context of the two-child policy has become a justified expectation that women's reproduction of a second child is their obligation, and the repercussions of such beliefs are the affected career prospects of some young Chinese women (Cooke, 2017; Prevoo 2019). In other words, the Chinese government has been painting a rosy picture for Chinese families about raising two children by only promoting the good side of the two-child policy: the messages on the mainstream media in China were all about how a second child will bring more happiness and harmony to the family, and how the government would protect women's benefits in the workplace if they want to have two children. Stories like these are the 'governmental' interpretation of the two-child policy, while the rebellious voices towards this policy are telling us what will really happen in women's lives. In reality, if women employees decide to have a second child, it is likely that their employers will get unhappy about it and a variety of countermeasures against the two-child policy will happen. For women who have a legal contract with the company, even if the employers are not allowed to fire them because of having a second child, there are many ways to make pregnant women resign from their work. For example, measures like increasing workload and work time, or moving them to unimportant and negligible positions and then lower their wages, these treatments could force pregnant employees to leave their work voluntarily. Therefore, Chinese women's voices on social media diverge from the state messaging, and so I became interested in the conflicts and divergences between the dominant cultural narratives of the state and the missing voices of Chinese women to understand some of their experiences of making sense of the policy.

From the epistemology of feminist standpoint theory, this study aims to explore the meanings of the two-child policy for Chinese women from their perspectives. How is it going to influence their identities in the family, workplace and society, and how does this policy position women as responsible citizens through the state's contextualisation of a specific motherhood mandate and the urgent demographic goals. To meet these aims, it is necessary to be attentive to the nongovernmental stories of the two-child policy and the voices of young Chinese women, which have been marginalised by the long-existing patriarchy and power relations that operate in Chinese society. Their

standpoints, the historical, political and social context of the participants, and myself as the researcher, co-construct this study.

Feminist narrative is a compatible methodology for this research, as it allows me to listen to Chinese women's voices and our contextual and co-constructed experiences that emerge from conversational interviews with ten Chinese women residing in New Zealand. Through feminist standpoint theory, narrative approach and thematic analysis we listen to women's voices in the context of the two-child policy and discuss commonalities and differences across their stories.

Literature Review

The end of an era: The one-child policy

The comprehensive two-child policy that allows all Chinese married couples to have two children has been in effect since the beginning of 2016. This marks the end of China's long-lasting controversial one-child policy, which not only restricted countless Chinese families to have only one child, but also led to a number of unintended consequences. These consequences range from the significant male-biased sex ratio, to the specific phenomenon of 'missing women' in China; from the shortage of people at working age, to the pressing concern of ageing population; and from the typical family structure of 4-2-1 (the only child is expected to take care of both parents and four grandparents), to the enormous care deficit in the foreseeable future (Abrahamson, 2016; Attane, 2002; Feng, Gu, & Cai, 2016; Sun, Gordon, & Pacey, 2016). There is no doubt that the one-child policy has profoundly changed many aspects of Chinese society and the life of several generations. The end of the one-child policy seems to be a sign that the Chinese government has begun to withdraw its interference in Chinese families' reproductive decisions. However, will the two-child policy be the solution to these problems?

Gender selection and son preference

There are several factors that contribute to the feudal tradition of son preference in China. From an economic perspective, China used to be an agrarian society where farming and cultivating the land were the primary source of wealth. In these economies, sons are preferred because they have better physical strength and, therefore, a higher capacity of earning financial returns to the family. From the point of view of traditional

ethics, a son can inherit and continue the family line within the household, while a daughter normally leaves her parents and family of origin when she marries into her husband's family (Chan et al., 2002; Hesketh & Zhu, 2006; Zhou, Wang, Zhou, & Hesketh, 2012). This is also the very reason for the pattern in intergenerational support within Chinese families, where sons are more likely to be supported than their female siblings in financial aspects by parents (Chen & Jordan, 2018). Such family-orientated gender stereotyping has strengthened the structure of patriarchy in China over centuries.

When the one-child policy was introduced to control the population in 1980, the issue of son preference became even more complicated and deleterious. Ahn (1994) found that the gender of a child had become a more influential factor after the implementation of the one-child policy. This is demonstrated by the persistence of son preference among some Chinese parents whose first child was a girl but insisted on having another child regardless of the high risk and financial penalty of a subsequent birth. Other problems such as high female infant mortality rate and high female suicide rate in rural areas, along with the increased abandoned girls in orphanages became more common after the introduction of the policy (Chan et al., 2002; Chen, Li, & Meng, 2012; Chu, 2001; Zhu, Lu, & Hesketh, 2009). These phenomena are attributed to the deep-rooted son preference and women's low status in rural areas. In the early years of the 1980s, the availability of diagnostic ultrasound aggravated the situation by shifting the gender selection from postnatal to prenatal (Bulte, Heerink, & Zhang, 2011; Chen et al., 2012; Chu, 2001; Ebenstein, 2008; Goodkind, 1996; Zhu et al., 2009). Despite the laws and regulations prohibiting doctors using ultrasound to detect the sex of a fetus, a number of statistical analyses suggest that the sex ratio (male to female) at birth has been rapidly increasing within urban areas since the mid-1980s: from 110.9 in 1986 (Hull, 1990) and 114.2 in 1992 (Gu & Roy, 1995), to 120 in 2005 (Zhu et al., 2009). Although the access to prenatal diagnosis and abortion services cannot be fully responsible for the change in gender ratio at birth, the one-child policy coupled with the son preference has increased the possibility and frequency of sex-selective abortion, especially in rural areas in China (Chu, 2001; Wang, 2005; Zhou et al., 2012; Zhu et al., 2009).

The imbalanced sex ratio

The male-biased sex ratio has significantly increased since the implementation of the one-child policy in China. A number of studies have identified the causal effect of the policy on the increase in sex ratios. Researchers have found that the one-child policy has caused a significant skewed sex ratio where about 7 extra men per 100 women in the 1991-2005 birth cohorts (Li, Yi, & Zhang, 2011). Similarly, the average male to female ratio increased from 1.11 during 1980-1989 to 1.23 in the period of 1996-2001 (Ding & Hesketh, 2006). Recent findings suggest that the sex ratio has experienced 59-74% increase during the 1990s, and the interaction between the widespread ultrasound technologies and the one-child policy is connected to the gender gap (Bulte et al., 2011).

The most direct result of such skewed gender ratio is a documented shortage of women at marriageable age, which means that there will be an increase of single and unwed men in the future. As Poston and Glover (2005) had predicted, there would be over 23.5 million more men than women among marriageable-age people between 2000 and 2020, which may have destabilising effects in a culture where family is considered as the foundation of society. To prepare for the future bride shortages, some families with sons have adopted abandoned girls from orphanages, not for the traditional concept of a complete family with a son and a daughter, but to raise these girls as domestic help and the 'little-daughter-in-law' (Chen, Ebenstein, Edlund, & Li, 2015). In addition, the increased number of single men is associated with more crime, including kidnapping young female college students and selling them to rural villages to have children (Zhao, 2003) and trafficking women from neighboring countries (Fetterly, 2014). During the campaigns of women's emancipation in the 1950s, trafficking women for coerced marriage was stamped out by the Chinese government, but this business has been rekindled since the 1980s, mainly because a great demand for wives in rural areas of less-developed provinces, where it is difficult to find brides legally due to the high sex ratios and poor socio-economic situations (Zhao, 2003). Researchers also found that between the years from 1988 to 2004, a 1% increase in the gender ratio raised the rates of violent and property crime by 5-6% (Edlund, Li, Yi, & Zhang, 2007) and one-seventh of the increased crime was attributed to male sex ratios (Edlund, Li, Yi, &

Zhang, 2013).

The mystery of ‘missing women’ in China

The growing sex ratio at birth mentioned earlier (Gu & Roy, 1995; Hull, 1990; Zhu et al., 2009) indicates a dramatic gap between the number of men and women over the past three decades, and such high ratios not only exist in China, but in several Asian countries and even worldwide. More specifically, due to the deep-rooted son preference in East Asian cultures, the number of missing women in other countries is also high, but it is even higher in China. According to Sen (1990), there were over 100 million women missing around the world, and in the year of 1990 in China, 70 million women were missing in the estimated female population (564 million) compared to the number if sex ratio was equal (634 million). In a more recent study (Bongaarts & Guilmoto, 2015), the new estimates suggest that there were about 44 million missing women and girls in China, which is less than previous years. However, 44 million is still a mighty number that urges people to wonder, where did these women go and what happened to them? Similarly, the reduction in the number of recorded missing women is also puzzling, given that the one-child policy remained stable at this time.

There are different ways of approaching these questions. From demographic and cultural perspectives, the explanations of China’s ‘missing women’ are excessive female deaths and sex-selective abortion. However, the shortage of women in comparison with men has existed long before the one-child policy and the introduction of ultrasound technologies. Coale and Banister (1994) concluded the reason for the ‘missing girls’ in the censuses between the 1930s and 1980s was early mortality, and therefore they were not reported in the fertility surveys. The excessive rate of female infant mortality was more likely to be attributed to the traditional practice of female infanticide (Aird, 1990; Attané, 2009; Saini, 2002; Wu, Viisainen, & Hemminki, 2006). After the 1980s, it appears that the new technology has enabled sex-selective abortion to become a new form of infanticide (Coale & Banister, 1994; Johansson & Nygren, 1991; Zeng et al., 1993), because prenatal sex selection was more accessible and efficient and without the risk of committing the crime of murder (Zeng et al., 1993). People who

lived in rural areas could either go to city hospitals or the nearest clinic in towns to find out the sex of their children, and then decide to keep or abort them. As for the practice of female infanticide, researchers (Zeng et al., 1993) argued that with the easy access to ultrasound technologies, infanticides were unlikely to continue in rural communities or be the significant reason for high sex ratio at birth, because of the close relationships among neighbors in rural areas made hiding a crime of murder difficult, and compared to sex-selective abortions, infanticide was not a cost-effective option with its high psychological and moral costs for parents.

Recently, a new and less concerning theory emerged: the delayed registration and unreported births of girls in rural areas may account for a larger proportion of ‘missing women’ in China than previously reported (Shi & Kennedy, 2016). Using the street-level bureaucrat theory to re-evaluate the phenomenon from an administrative perspective, researchers have found that many villagers chose not to register their daughters to the official household records (also known as *hukou* in China) so that they could keep having children until they had a son, and then pay the fine of having out-of-plan children later when they went to register their daughters. These unreported female births also explained why there was a significant increase in the number of females over the age of 10 and even 15 in the 2010 census data. From this point of view, some of the ‘missing women’ in China may only be missing in the official records and systems because of their delayed birth registration by their parents so they could continue to try for a boy.

Other unintended consequences of the one-child policy

Apart from the distorting sex ratios and increasing gender gap, the one-child policy has also led to some unintended consequences for Chinese families as well as the wider society. For example, the policy had inevitably increased the value and status of every single child in the family, and as a result, the death of the only child often leads to intense grief for Chinese parents who are no longer fertile and have no other children (Pan, Liu, Li, & Kwok, 2016; Zheng, Lawson, & Head, 2017). Similarly, the generations of singletons also seem to be very concerned about their parents’ happiness

and welfare. Deutsch (2006) have found a remarkable level of filial piety (a virtue of taking care of and respect for one's parents in Confucian) after interviewing 84 senior undergraduates. Single children were found as likely to help and take care of their parents in the future as the ones with siblings, and the singletons also had stronger intentions of living in the same city with their parents and being responsible for their emotional and physical well-being (Deutsch, 2006). However, this positive and optimistic finding only indicates the relationship between singletons and their parents within the family context. In another article, researchers have concluded opposite results in relation to behavioural impacts of the one-child policy on single children's social skills, which found singletons were more self-centered and risk-averse, along with less trusting and competitive in the labour market (Cameron, Erkal, Gangadharan, & Meng, 2013).

There is also some interesting evidence of how Chinese parents change their future plans and expectations based on the gender of their only child. For instance, if both parents are in rural households, a daughter will increase the probability of rural-to-urban migration by 13.7%, whereas for a son, this possibility is 24.3% (Huang, Lin, & Zhang, 2019). This means having a boy in rural families is likely to increase the chance of parents moving to cities for a better living environment and more education opportunities. This is understandable, as education resources in China are not equally balanced or distributed. For example, in big cities like Beijing or Shanghai, there are more than one thousand primary schools and two or three hundred middle schools. However, in villages or small towns, there are only one or two schools that teach both primary and middle school classes. The teachers in city schools are highly educated: they are required to have at least bachelor's degrees and even master's degrees by some renowned middle schools. For schools in rural areas or poor villages, the requirement for their teachers' educational background and qualifications are not as strict as in cities, which means a diploma will usually be enough for the job. In a long-term perspective, since students in China need to take exams to get into the next level of education, a better primary school in the city basically equals to a better junior high school. Attendance at these schools increases the chances of getting into a prominent senior high school, which further strengthens the advantages of attending higher ranked universities. Therefore, the findings from this research (Huang, Lin, & Zhang, 2019)

indicate that parents in rural areas tend to invest more money and energy in raising boys than girls, as they may think spending money on their sons is worthy and rewarding. Traditionally, Chinese parents always expect sons to support their lives when they get old and this may also be one of the fundamental reasons of son preference.

The one-child policy also has an impact on parental gendered expectations of the only child in Chinese families. More specifically, the one-child policy did not fundamentally change the gender stereotypes that connect boys to masculinity and girls to femininity, but extended the expectations for daughters to some degree of manliness as well (Liu, 2006). In other words, girls were supposed to turn out feminine in line with traditional gendered expectations, and they were also required to develop a relative form of masculinity to male standards, especially in the context of education and workplaces. As a result, men are still assessed by their accomplishment or potential, while women are not only judged by their appearance such as body figure or demeanors, but also by their work ability or talent. This means some of the Chinese parents set more requirements of educational and occupational achievement for women in the family and society while the standards for men have remained the same. Why is this happening in the context of the one-child policy? My understanding is that for some people who really wanted a boy but had a girl, and since the system did not allow them to have a second child, they tried to raise the daughter like bringing up a son. To put it differently, they redirected their disappointment and anger about the policy and the system to their girls, and expected them to grow up like boys to some extent.

The empowerment of Chinese women

The most remarkable and also unanticipated consequence of the one-child policy may be the empowerment and liberation over several generations of Chinese women. Many scholars have studied the impact of the policy on boosting educational attainment for girls (Fong, 2002; Huang, Lei, & Sun, 2015, 2016; Lee, 2012; Veeck, Flurry, & Jiang, 2003), including promoting gender equality in education and personal aspirations (Huang et al., 2016; Lee, 2012; Tsui & Rich, 2002); increasing parental support for daughters and filiality for elder parents (Fong, 2002); and encouraging single daughters'

educational and economic development regardless of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Liu, 2017).

However, almost all these articles were talking about women in urban areas and cities, where the one-child policy was strictly enforced, and educational and occupational resources were much more accessible, and socio-economic situations were better than rural areas in China. In fact, even without this one-child policy, women in large cities would still be a privileged population compared to those in small villages and towns. Women and girls in rural households have not benefited from the same resources, so rather than empowered, their disadvantage was increased. There is solid evidence indicating the policy had increased the suicide rate among women in rural areas (Chu, 2001; Glionna, 2008; Hesketh et al., 2015; Hesketh & Zhu, 1997; Zhang, 2010). Despite the 1.5-child policy that allowed rural couples to have another child if their first was a girl, the pressure of having a son was not ameliorated.

To sum up, it is undeniable that the one-child policy did empower millions of young women in China over the past three decades, especially if they were living in cities. Girls were given the same educational opportunities and parental investments as boys, and married women were emancipated from continuous childbearing so that they could participate in the labour market and have new identities other than a mother and wife. These changes and such freedoms, however, did not apply to women in rural areas as they were still subordinated to patriarchal norms and beliefs.

The new context: The two-child policy

Women's reproductive decisions to have a second child

Couple dynamics

According to Qian and Jin (2018), women's fertility autonomy of having a second child or not is associated with their marital power in urban China. More specifically, women

who already have one child and have no intention to have a second one may have less fertility pressure if they have more marital power. The researchers argue that women's relative resources positively affect their marital power, and give urban Chinese women more fertility autonomy. As one of the obvious elements in these resources, gendered income plays an important role in couple dynamics. Researchers have found that the income structure within a family has significant impact on Chinese women's fertility choice, where the reproduction willingness and female income are statistically presented as a U-shaped curve where women's income (despite the gendered wage gap in China) affects two child fertility choices (Liu & Liu, 2018). Women's fertility willingness will first decline as their income increases, then after a certain point, their willingness will rise with the increasing income.

In modern Chinese society, measuring the value of a person in the family often depends on her/his socio-economic value as the most important criteria. In more traditional understandings, the main role for women in the family is to bring up future generations and do housework. In other words, women mostly stay inside the house and are responsible for family affairs, while men work outside and put food on the table. Therefore, in the processes of giving birth and raising children, women give up the economic value that could be created in the workplace and put their energy and time into bringing up children. However, in the universal values of society, most people think that women's value in raising children in the family is lower than their economic value in social production. This indirectly denies the social value of female domestic work, which makes professional women want to create more economic and social values instead of staying at home and doing unpaid familial chores (Liu & Liu, 2018; Qian & Jin, 2018). Unfortunately, after the implementation of the two-child policy, some women may experience various kinds of pressure from their families and eventually have no choice but to leave their work and return home to have a second child. As a result, these women might face a loss of status in the family as they lose their socio-economic value and financial independence.

Other influential factors

Women's age is also an important factor when they consider having a second child. In recent years, with the change in the age structure of the Chinese population, the number of women in childbearing age has been decreasing dramatically (Wang & Wang, 2017). At the same time, with economic and social development, the extension of education years, and the increased proportion of women seeking employment, the age of first marriage and childbearing for Chinese women is also constantly postponed (Qiu et al., 2019). It has been widely reported that the risk of miscarriage and delivery complications in women over 35 years of age is increasing year by year (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2015; de La Rochebrochard & Thonneau, 2002; Nybo Andersen et al., 2000). However, there seems to be a dilemma here that for most parents who want to have a second child, they will have to prepare sufficient economic foundations for raising two children. And because of the disadvantageous position of women in the workplace, it requires them to be 'married to work' for a long time or become a 'workaholic' before they can have a more stable status and economic stability in the company. By that time, although there is a solid foundation to support two children, women are likely beyond their 'biologically optimal' time for childbearing and face greater risks in pregnancy and postpartum recovery (Qiu et al., 2019; Wang & Wang, 2017). A phenomenon that has not been studied in the psychology literature but has already emerged in China is that there are an increasing number of middle-aged women in their late 40s or even 50s having a second child. This has been causing many heated discussions on the Internet (BBC News, 2018; Parkin, 2016; Tatlow & Piao, 2015). Some people think the reason for this action is because these women want to legally have a boy, which is inferred by the observations that parents who want to have another child later in life are the ones that already have a daughter. It is less likely for women with a son in this age group, to consider having another child. We do not know whether the choice to have another child is a result of their own desire, or because they felt pressures from their husbands and relatives, friends and peers, or the traditional patriarchal cultures to produce a boy. Yet these women have been the targets of blame in China, as people tend to think they are irresponsible to themselves, newborn babies, and their first children. They are accused of ignoring all kinds of complications of pregnancy at advanced age, possible adverse influence on infants, and psychological, moral and economic pressures for their

first child. Apart from this son preference theory, people on Chinese social media argue that the decision to have a further child late in life might be because of the suppression of their fertility desires that were previously oppressed under the one-child policy (Zeng & Hesketh, 2016). This group of middle-aged women is exactly the generation that was strictly monitored to have only one child in the 1980s and 1990s. Now with the universal two-child policy officially released, some of them may feel a sense of 'liberation' in their reproductive freedom and want to have children regardless of their age and other disadvantages, such as their own mental and physical well-being and possible burden or trouble for the first child. As mentioned earlier, women above 35 years old face high risk of miscarriage and complications during and after delivery (Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2015; Nybo Andersen et al., 2000). Additionally, for middle-aged women in their late 40s trying to have a second child, their first child should be around the age to have their own children, which means that these women could have a child and a grandchild of the same age. This situation may place many moral and financial burdens on the first-born children in the family, as they need to take care of their own children as well as help their parents with the younger brother/sister. This is because, after China's entry into the market economy reform, there is no supporting mechanism or systems for infants and young children under the age of three (Chen, Wang, Li, & Zhu, 2019; Qiu et al., 2019; Wang & Wang, 2017). Therefore, the care for these children is generally limited to the family. Families with better economic conditions can hire housekeeping, while children in working class families are mainly cared for by the elderly. Due to the influence of the one-child policy, the common family structure in China is dominated by nuclear families and presented as the '4-2-1' model, in which the husband and wife have four elderly parents and one child who need care. However, in the context of the two-child policy, it is transformed into a '4-2-2' family structure. For the dual-employee family in China, taking care of four elderly people and two children is not economically viable. Therefore, if there is no supporting childcare service and system, the vision of having two children within ordinary families will be difficult to achieve (Chen, Wang, Li, & Zhu, 2019; Qiu et al., 2019).

Another factor that has been considered widely is the high economic cost of raising children in China (Chi, Huang, & Zhou, 2018; Qiu et al., 2019; Wang & Wang, 2017). With the development of the social market economy, talented people have also become

a commodity of competition. How to cultivate excellent manpower depends on human and economic capital paid by each family. Some people have calculated that raising a child in China from birth to adult requires an economic contribution of one million Yuan. Based on the current average urban income level, this number almost equals to the net income of a dual-employee family working for ten years (Wang & Wang, 2017). Families that can achieve this level of income are already privileged ones in cities, at least middle class in China's society. Thus, the high cost of raising children combined with the time invested in their growth has discouraged many families' intentions to have a second child.

Online opinions of the two-child policy

On the Internet, people are usually more willing and dare to talk about their feelings and thoughts, and this assumption also applies to the two-child policy. As one of the biggest social media networks, Sina Weibo is an important platform for Chinese people to discuss all types of trending topics, including national policies. After analysing posts on Weibo, Wang and Song (2019) found that people living in economically developed and populous regions are more likely to concern themselves with the two-child policy than those in less developed and populated areas. For example, they pay close attention to the follow-up government incentives in subsidies for the reproduction of a second child, health insurance for the newborn baby, and educational policies and opportunities. One explanation for this regional difference is that people in the richer areas are more likely to be able to support more than one child financially, and people in the populous regions tend to have a popular tradition of having more children (Wang & Song, 2019). Another finding is a gap between people's great attention towards the policy and the declining birth rate, which means that the reality of raising two children in modern Chinese societies has stopped most people from doing so. People on the Internet also express their uncertainties and concerns about follow-up policies in relation to education, welfare, and employment (Lu & Zheng, 2017). For example, will the government implement laws or policies that prohibit employers from firing or discriminating against women who have a second child and will there be any compensation for families that have two children to ease their financial pressure?

Economic resources play an important role in women's reproductive decisions to have a second child. Higher income in the family usually means more marital power in the areas of reproductive freedom, as economic empowerment gives women more leverage and confidence in couple dynamics. This also explains why some women with decent salaries do not want to have a second child and stay at home, because familial duties will not give them economic independence, which holds more social value than traditional domestic work. On the other hand, even with enough financial security to have a second child, women's age becomes another significant factor, as they need to cope with both physical challenges and social judgments of giving birth at advanced age. The two-child policy aims to increase people's fertility desires to boost birth rates and resolve the problem of population aging, but it has not been able to successfully address the reality and hardships in most women's lives. In other words, the high cost of raising a child in urban China has discouraged people's willingness to have a second child.

Chinese women's reproductive freedom with the two-child policy

The medical manifestation of reproductive power

In China, choosing a delivery mode is not always up to pregnant women: to some extent, it is a collectivist decision made by the doctor, mother-in-law, the husband, and pregnant woman herself. This seems to make no sense, but it is a reality of having children in China. When given the option of considering the delivery mode of their wives, however, some husbands tend to evaluate the situation based on the child's benefits as well as the influence of subsequent childbearing, instead of their wife's medical safety. In 2017, a 42-weeks pregnant Chinese woman committed suicide after her family refused to allow her to have a caesarean section, and since the pain was unbearable during natural birth, she jumped to her death from the fifth floor of the hospital, and the baby she was carrying was also killed (Allen, 2017; Chen, 2017; Pasha-Robinson, 2017). This tragedy caused heated online discussions in relation to Chinese women's reproductive rights and freedoms in the context of the new two-child policy, as now they have a 'duty' of producing two children and having a caesarean section for their first birth may be withheld if it affects future pregnancies.

In the era of the one-child policy, most people preferred cesarean section (CS) because it was considered as a safe and standard procedure without the uncertainties and challenges of vaginal birth (VB). In 2010, 16 million babies were born in China, and near half of them were delivered by CS (Hellerstein, Feldman, & Duan, 2014). Couples with no plans to have more than one child tended to think that since they were only allowed to have one child, it was better to deliver this baby through the safest and widely used method, which in China, is often CS. Another reason for this high CS rate was because of the limited availability of labor epidural analgesia (IEA). Although the practice of IEA is not restricted by technology or provider's abilities, it still remains less than 1% in Mainland China (Fan, Gao, & Yang, 2007; Liu et al., 2012). Without effective analgesia treatment, most of the young women could not stand the pain of VB and are likely to request a CS.

However, things are changing in the context of the two-child policy. It appears that more Chinese women prefer VB than CS based on the advice of their husbands, especially for those who want more than one child (Liang et al., 2018). Other studies also revealed a significant decline in CS rate (Gu et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2016; Wang & Hesketh, 2017), which seems to be a step forward in medical development nationally. However, within the reductions in CS rates, we do not know whether women were truly and consistently wanting VB or whether some women were forced or coerced to choose VB because of the pressure from their husbands, mothers-in-law, and future plan of a second child.

Apart from women's reproductive freedom in the delivery mode, there has also been a high demand for providers of multiparous maternity care since the implementation of the universal two-child policy (Cheng & Duan, 2016), where the number of pregnant women in advanced age has been increasing significantly (Liu et al., 2019).

Look into the future

From the perspectives of society and economic development, the two-child policy is

unlikely to change China's current population dilemma in a short time, neither will it have positive influences on the problems of an ageing population and labour supply (Alpermann & Zhan, 2019; Li, Zhou, & Jia, 2019). As for the imbalanced sex ratios, the policy alone will not make a difference as long as the deep-rooted son preference remains intact (Xu & Pak, 2015), because the social norms and power relations in China's patriarchal culture have not been fundamentally changed to improve gender equality.

Although the implementation of the universal two-child policy was to adjust the population structure and solve the ageing problem in the context of family, it also has inevitable consequences. Originally, women were already more disadvantaged in the job competition in a market economy than men (Zhang & Li, 2017; Zhao & Peng, 2016). Now since the two-child policy has been introduced into Chinese society, it not only accentuates the existing problem of gender inequality in the workplace, but also generates a new phenomenon in the human resources market: women who are not married or those who have only one child are less competitive than those who have two children (Cooke, 2017), as the latter group will not need employers to pay for their maternity leave, while women who have not had any child yet may require at least one paid maternity leave or maybe two. Therefore, in the process of recruitment, a company may consider the cost of hiring a new employee, which means that female employees who have two children will not require maternity leave in the future, and the company will not need to bear the extra costs of female workers in the process of giving birth either (Cooke, 2017). Additionally, with the two-child policy, for women who choose to have two children, they will need to leave their jobs for a much longer time than with the one-child policy. As a result, female employees will have to make more efforts to re-adapt to the working environment when they are back to work, and this also positions women in a more precarious and disadvantaged status in the workplace than under the previous policy. Professional women's current status is still under the influence of the one-child policy, for those who already have a child and have no plan to give birth to a second one, their career prospects will not be affected by the two-child policy, as they have been working in the company for a certain amount of time and established their own status and contributions to some degree. Workers like these were exactly the kind of women that China's state feminism wanted them to be in the early 1950s: work like a

man and make equal social values in production on the condition that she has completed her 'reproductive duties' and domestic chores.

The state feminism in China and Chinese feminists

Unlike the grassroots initiated Western feminism, China's feminism began as a state policy. Shortly after the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the government declared that women's participation in industry and society was a crucial part for the new China to improve its economy (Fung, 2014; Hu, 2016), and it was also advocated that women should have the same opportunities to work and earn the same amount of money as men. This was the beginning of China's state feminism, which emphasises the primacy of nation development and promotes the government's agenda, while women's own interests and rights are not relevant (Jiang, 2019; Qi, 2017). More specifically, these initiatives were driven by the national goal of achieving economic improvement rather than the liberation of women, and the policies of enforced equal employment of men and women were mandatory during the Maoist Era (Wu, 2005). As a result, in addition to participating in production like men, women were also expected to do domestic work and complete familial duties, such as housekeeping and childbearing. The reason for this dual burden suffered by Chinese women was because the long-existing inequities and gender stereotypes were not eradicated during the early revolutions in China, as the government failed to provide enough socioeconomic support such as policies or slogans that advocated men should share domestic chores with women, or running nursery schools in every factory. Thus, even though the goal of "equal work and equal pay" was achieved during that time, Chinese women were still suffering from their productive and reproductive roles (Wu, 2005; Zheng, 1997, 2005).

After encouraging women to participate in the economy, the next step of 'liberating' women was to introduce the family planning policies (the one-child policy) where most Chinese families were only allowed to have one child to control the population growth (Hesketh, Zhou, & Wang, 2015; Hesketh & Zhu, 1997; Jiang, 2019), but they could also

have more access to education attainment, career development, or other personal pursuits. A key to successfully implementing the one-child policy was to provide the almost unrestricted access to abortion services for women in both rural and urban areas (Eklund & Purewal, 2017), so that they could abort any out-of-plan children or female fetus that they did not want. The bio-politics of population control in the context of the one-child policy was an example of the state using intervention (the policy) and new technologies (ultrasound for prenatal sex-selective abortions) as political and social power over women's bodies (Eklund & Purewal, 2017). The abortion rights for Chinese women under the one-child policy were mainly driven by population control concerns instead of women's reproductive freedom, and some of the Chinese feminists had rarely considered the malpractice of abortion as a problem in early stage of Chinese women's movement (Eklund & Purewal, 2017) nor did they actively discuss this topic in their writings (Wu, 2005) or interviews (Greenhalgh, 2001).

This lack of criticism of biopower by Chinese feminists is understandable given the political climate in China, where Chinese feminists or women intellectuals were afraid of speaking up about their concerns of the socialist 'liberation' of women during the Mao Era (Wu, 2005). The former movement was for the whole nation's economic growth and development, and the one-child policy was for urgent demographic targets. Talking about negative effects of these two national initiatives would be inappropriate within the context of China at that time, because in a collectivist society like China, the interests of the country always triumph individual needs (Greenhalgh, 2001). And since women's bodies have been subordinated to political agendas, the state has maintained control over women's reproductive choice and freedom. As discussed earlier, a number of scholars would argue that the one-child policy had empowered many young Chinese women in education and family care because they did not have to compete with other siblings for family resources (Fong, 2002; Fung, 2014; Zheng, 2011). This does not change the fact that this policy was a violation of Chinese women's bodies and reproductive rights.

The space for Chinese feminists to speak out on women's lives and gender inequality has been shrinking since Xi Jinping became the president in 2012. According to the World Economic Forum, China was ranked in the 60s on the measures of gender

equality between 2008 and 2012; however, there was an obvious sharp decline in the beginning of 2013, dropping to 100 in 2017 (World Economic Forum, 2017). Chinese feminists' opinions and suggestions are only considered as legal or admissible through institutionalised venues, such as the official conferences held by the government to listen to people's advice on social problems. Moreover, due to China's limitations on free assembly and the search for social stability, nongovernmental organised feminist movements like those in Western countries are strictly forbidden (Cunningham, 2017). The "Feminist Five" was an example of publicly demonstrating unauthorised feminism related statements in China. In March 2015, five young Chinese feminists were arrested for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" as they planned a demonstration against sexual harassment on public transportation in Beijing (Cunningham, 2017; Jiang, 2019; Wu & Dong 2019).

Since 2016, after the one-child policy has been in effect for almost 40 years, the Chinese government and China's mainstream media started to tell Chinese people that it is beneficial for the future of the country and families to have two children in each nuclear family, as this could not only address the problem of ageing population but also alleviate the pressure of elderly care and support within each family. As mentioned earlier, the two-child policy aims to transform the family structure to '4-2-2' in a nuclear family, where two children would share the responsibility of taking care of their parents. Therefore, instead of encouraging women to pursue their educational attainment and career achievement, this new family planning policy emphasises women's familial duties and reproductive roles, indicating that Chinese women should prioritise the task of having two children and taking care of the family, and become an understanding wife and loving mother (Du, 2016). This seems to be a step backwards for Chinese feminism, as some women would have to sacrifice their career development and economic independence to have two children, and return to domestic work.

As the new representation of state feminism, the two-child policy is also a top-down and state-directed method as the one-child policy, and similarly, this policy had not been open for Chinese women and feminist discussions before its implementation (Prevoo, 2019; Qi, 2017). Women's voices and interests were silenced during the processes of discussing the details of the two-child policy, both during and after

implementation of the policy. The mainstream media in China has been selling the advantages and benefits of having a second child, such as how the first-born child will enjoy the company of a younger brother or sister, or how two children will ease the burden of elderly care within each family in the future. In addition, the media has also been simultaneously silencing the reality of women's conflicts in the aspects of career development and health care if they have decided to have two children. According to Prevoo (2019), the two-child policy has affected some Chinese young women's career expectations, as they are likely to find less demanding jobs in the future because they are expected to spend more time with two children. As mentioned before, instead of women's personal fulfillment and development, state feminism serves the country to continue the communist revolution (Cunningham, 2017), and Chinese women's bodies were again the nation's means to implement urgent demographic goals.

Chinese people's reproductive decisions are made within the ideology of good citizenship. The operation of social power over the bodies of citizens is diverse in China, geographically, economically, historically, however, patriarchal traditions are experienced widely. After all, in Chinese culture, wives have the obligation to bear children for their husbands to continue the family bloodlines, because almost all of the children will have the same family name as their fathers. Following the traditions of patriarchy, once women get married, they are expected to have children early and as many as possible, and giving birth to a son is also one of the expectations. The universal two-child policy may be understood as reducing the state's control in Chinese couples' reproductive decisions by giving them the right to have at most two children, but the implementation of that 'right' is not a freedom.

China's new birth planning programme does not fundamentally change the patriarchal culture that regards women as objects of childbearing, but uses the power of the state to suppress couples' reproductive freedom and the power of family patriarchy (Greenhalgh, 2001). As a consequence, women are subordinate to men which is supported through the patriarchal state which has sovereignty over women's reproductive bodies, and continues the ideology of son preference. For example, under the one-child policy, some women had multiple sex-selective abortions just to have a son. For some families who resisted the one-child policy did so until they were successful in having a son.

Looking back at these events, there seems to be a dilemma for the development of feminism in China. If Chinese women were expected to have equal employment and work like men in production, they also suffered from the dual burden of familial chores, which means earning their own money but having to work more. But if, as the two-child policy has advocated, women focus on being the primary caregivers for their husbands and children, they could work less in the production at the cost of losing economic independence, and our reproductive bodies are further commodified. If society and history do repeat themselves in cycles, does this mean when the goal of increasing birth rate and ameliorating population ageing have been achieved, the Chinese government will again encourage women to participate in social production instead of reproduction?

The conflicts between women's independence and their traditional reproductive roles have generated two strands of the so-called made-in-China feminism (C-fem) in contemporary China. According to Wu and Dong (2019), unlike the feminism that presented and regulated by the state legislation and formal institutions like ACWF (All-China Women's Federation), C-fem are the voices and practices made by activists and intellectuals to challenge state policies in relation to women's sexuality and women's freedom and choice regarding marriage and reproductive issues. One thread is entrepreneurial C-fem, which urges women to abandon the traditional role of being a wife and work on performing sexuality and femininity to maximize their personal economic returns in the marriage market. In contrast, the other strand is the non-cooperative C-fem, which encourages women to seek career success and economic self-reliance as a way to sexual autonomy in the gendered society, and it also tries to steer women away from the marriage market by contesting the social norms of heterosexual marriage and singlehood in China (Wu & Dong, 2019).

In short, feminism in China will not be as radical and aggressive as Western feminism in the foreseeable future because of China's unique historical, political, and cultural contexts, but it is developing and happening progressively, and has the trend of localising under the efforts of indigenous Chinese psychologists and feminists (Wu, 2005; Wu & Dong, 2019). This is the conflict between the state feminism and the grassroots initiated Chinese feminism. We have also learned that China's population

policies have proved that when there is a conflict between the development of the nation and women's rights and interests, it is women's lives that are sacrificed to achieve larger economic or political goals (Fung, 2014; Greenhalgh, 2001; Jiang, 2019), and the state power and control over women's reproductive bodies have made them vehicles for the government's agendas (Greenhalgh, 2001). Therefore, the ideology behind the two-child policy, "be a good wife and caring mother in the family", may just start a new round of a vicious circle where the masculine socio-cultural context emphasises the dependency of women on men and strengthens the gendered roles of women mainly performed in the family (Liu, 2006). China's two-child policy may be a step backwards in gender equality and the consequences will only be revealed few years later.

In summary, the two-child policy in China has caused a number of ramifications and repercussions for Chinese women within familial, social, and political contexts. How do women's narratives of the two-child policy enable us to understand the impacts of the policy on our futures? What implications does the policy have on women's social values, reproductive identities, and positions in power relations? And what will happen to young Chinese women like me if the current policy continues? These questions, informed by the above literature have led to the purpose of this study, which is to privilege the voice of Chinese women through listening to their experiences of negotiating the two-child policy and their understandings of how this new family planning programme impacts their educational, occupational, familial, and social perspectives.

Methodology

Standpoint Epistemology

Women's voices and experiences have long been marginalised in psychological research. Feminist psychologists have offered many critiques of androcentrism in psychological methods and epistemology (Eagly, Eaton, Rose, Riger, & McHugh, 2012; Eagly & Riger, 2014). They draw our attention to how traditional research conflates sex and gender, contributing cultural gendered stereotypes as biological difference. For example, women are seen as emotional and nurturing and men as rational and strong. These understandings produced through traditional scientific psychological research impact on the knowledge produced about women, and through these approaches, women's voices are silenced, given gendered hierarchies, stereotypes and the power relations that produce them.

Feminist standpoint epistemology not only allows women's experiences to be heard and legitimised, but also allows the researcher to acknowledge their own standpoint from which the research emerges. For example, I am a Chinese single woman from an urban family, and the two-child policy impacts on me in the context of my standpoint, as described in the introduction. As well as this, my participants tell their stories as they too are embedded within political and gendered hierarchies unique to China, and feminist standpoint epistemology allows me to acknowledge this. Feminist standpoint theory argues that women are the experts and the knowers of their own realities and these understandings are situated within different socio-political contexts (Harding, 2004). In other words, it is the diversity of women's voices and experiences that is valued in feminist standpoint epistemology, which legitimises women's positions and stories through valuing their experiences (Harding, 1995). Through feminist standpoint

epistemology framed research, we can have a better understanding of how social relations impact on the multiple dimensions of women's lives by listening to, hearing and learning from their voices and stories. The knowledge and understandings that they share with us are important for challenging gendered stereotypes, social norms and policies, in this case the transition from the one-child policy to the two-child policy and its impacts on Chinese women.

The experiences and stories of Chinese women living in the context of the two-child policy are important not only to feminist psychologists, but also Chinese women themselves and policy makers. By adopting a feminist standpoint epistemology to explore the narratives of Chinese women who have been or will be affected by the two-child policy, this research aims to increase our understandings of the diverse realities of Chinese women's lives under this policy through their lived experiences and calls for more attention from feminist psychologists to do more research in this area to enable the women's unique voices and experiences to be heard.

A Narrative Approach

Our understandings of the world are produced through an ongoing process of storytelling and story revising. They are contextual and are always associated with structures of power. Narratives give coherence to people's experiences and make sense of them within their contextual surroundings and dominant power structures. This is important to this project as contextually, Chinese women live within a politically unique traditional and state gendered hierarchy, where their reproductive systems have been governed by state policies as a means of economic control.

Narrative provides marginalised groups with opportunities and possibilities to record their experiences and stories and to reflect power imbalances (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). It matters how women relate their everyday experiences and understandings. Our history, culture and social understandings are important and therefore, the context in which Chinese women tell their stories informs the analysis. In accordance with narrative analysis, feminist standpoint theory is compatible as they

both value the understandings that emerge from the various positions that women occupy when they share their experiences and understandings, both in everyday life and within the research context. This epistemological and methodological approach enables marginalised groups, such as the Chinese women in this study, to story their experiences and understandings within the context of imbalanced power relations in China's patriarchal society where women's reproductive systems are controlled through state legislation.

In this study, I recognise that the implementation of the two-child policy may change Chinese women's experiences of educational expectations, family life, and career development. Thus, these experiences are reflected in the stories of how this policy impacts on women's lives and their understandings of being a woman in China. Such narratives give us insights into how Chinese women experience and interpret the impact on their lives of the change from a one-child policy to a two-child policy, and what these changes mean to present and the future generations of Chinese women, both in China and here in New Zealand.

Riessman (2008) suggests that there are several approaches to narrative analysis. In this study, I will be drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) concept of thematic analysis as a method for analysing narratives. This allowed me to consider context, content, power relations, co-construction and attend to not only what has been storied, but also the stories that are absent or contradicted each other. The universal two-child policy has only been in effect since 2016, and so far has not been widely studied. Thematic analysis allows for main themes and subthemes to be generated in the hope that the study will form a basis for further studies on the experiences of Chinese women in this context.

Method

Ethical considerations

The ethics application for this study was first peer reviewed through my supervisors' colleagues and submitted to the Massey Ethics committee as a low risk study, given that

it met the requirements of the institution as being of minimal risk to participants and myself as researcher. The research was designed to be conducted in New Zealand, the participants being international Chinese students as well as Chinese women who were living here as residents. The introduction of the two-child policy has important implications for me in terms of my future, however, I was unsure how other Chinese women might feel amidst the different cultural and political expectations that they have grown up with in China as reflected in the literature review. Although the study is low risk under university guidelines, there are cultural considerations that had to be considered in terms of the positioning of women within Chinese culture as well as the acceptance of Chinese policies as being introduced for the good of society as a whole and therefore they should not be questioned. The Chinese government has presented the new policy as a way to combat problems of an aging population and labour shortage. The dominant story is that Chinese women will receive more happiness and respect in the family and society for being a good wife and a caring mother to two children, and women themselves will feel more confidence in their reproductive identities. Because of this, there is a potential possibility of disapproval from Chinese communities both within New Zealand and in China for Chinese women speaking out against their country's political and economic policies along with the cultural beliefs that they should not be doing so. Even though privacy and anonymity are paramount in any research and all stories have been strictly edited to stop identification, these concerns for participants are undoubtedly present and potentially could impact on the positioning and experiences from which they were willing to share their stories.

Because of these issues and also to find out whether young Chinese women would be willing to talk to me about their private thoughts and feelings as well as their future marriage, career and reproduction plans, I talked to two of my friends as key informants and they agreed to have our conversations recorded. These conversations assured me that I was not alone in my misgivings about the policy and informed the way I conducted the interviews with my participants when the recruitment began. My friends talked freely about how they felt about the policy and how they saw it impacting on their lives, so I felt encouraged to recruit participants and begin the study in earnest.

Recruitment and participants

Further to the two key informants, I recruited eight participants for the study using a snowball sampling technique. Since the Chinese government defines married women of childbearing age as between 20 and 49 years old, the age criteria for participation was set from 25 to 35. As a postgraduate international student, this was the age range most accessible to me through my contacts. Chinese women who fit in this age range and willing to talk about their experiences with the two-child policy were welcomed to participate in the study. Eight Chinese women agreed to be interviewed. They were aged from 25 to 30, and all came from an urban background in China. Seven of them were international postgraduate students studying a variety of disciplines at Massey University, Manawatu Campus. The eighth participant was a Chinese citizen residing in New Zealand.

What I found however, on conducting further interviews with recruited participants whom I did not know, was that they were more reluctant to talk about how they felt in terms of the impact of the two-child policy on their lives as only daughters, hence, I had two rich interviews where the women talked freely and most of the others who were more constrained and hesitant about discussing personal impacts of the two-child policy on their futures and those of Chinese women in general. Because of this, I approached the key informants and asked them if I could include their interviews in the study. They both agreed to this and signed consent and transcript release forms. The participant and key informant interviews have not been identified in the study to further maintain confidentiality for all concerned.

Prior to the interview process, those interested in participating were provided with the Information Sheet in both English (Appendix A) and Chinese (Appendix B). These aimed to give them a full disclosure of the background, purpose, procedures, and implications of this research as well as the women's rights as participants so that they could make an informed decision about whether they would like to take part in the study or not. When they agreed to be interviewed, the Participant Consent Form (Appendix C) was provided to obtain the informed consent. The participants were given the choice of using English or Chinese in the interview, and all of them chose to speak Chinese

because they believed our native language could better express their thoughts and opinions.

For the purpose of transcribing the interviews into written documents, each interview was recorded and stored in a password-protected folder. The original recordings were deleted. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, first into Chinese then into English. All transcripts are securely stored and protected by password. Participants were given both the Chinese and English versions of the transcripts to review, add to or delete any aspects of the interviews that they did not wish to be included. They were provided with the form of Authority For The Release Of Transcripts (Appendix D). Once the transcripts were approved for analysis, the recordings were destroyed.

Conversational interviews

This study sets out to listen to Chinese women's experiences of transitioning from a one-child to a two-child policy and how they story their understandings of the impact of the new policy on their lives. I chose conversational interviews to allow participants the space to talk about their personal experiences and how they felt the policy would impact on their own and other women's education, employment, family, social status and family planning decisions. This approach enabled more flexibility and responsiveness for both the women and myself in co-constructing questions and storylines in the to-and-fro pattern of everyday conversations. In conversational interviews, conversations are established interactively and progressively. In other words, the interview process is based on participants' responses to opening questions, or experiences and stories that are reflected on as the interviews come together. Therefore, each interview created a unique context that allowed me to develop the interviews through the women's own experiences and stories (van Enk, 2009).

I held the interviews at several different locations depending on what was convenient for the participant. The pilot interviews with my key informants were conducted in their homes. Seven women chose the Massey library, Manawatū Campus for their interviews and one participant was interviewed in the public library. Interviews varied from 50

minutes to 65 minutes in duration.

Transcription and translation

All of the interviews were conducted in Chinese and as each interview was first transcribed into Chinese and translated into English, I acknowledge the subjectivity of translation and how words may not easily be translated from one language to another and preserve their meaning. As this is a narrative study, this is compatible with the understanding that meaning is co-constructed. All the participants were given aliases in the final transcripts to ensure their anonymity and any other information that could possibly identify the women was also removed.

Analysis

Feminist standpoint epistemology and a narrative approach informed the analytical method of thematic analysis in this research. My standpoint as a researcher, daughter and granddaughter, and Chinese woman is embedded in this study and I acknowledge the co-production of the narratives, not only through translation, but through the entire analysis as an important part of the research process.

I based my analysis on the six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) as compatible with narrative methodology. After transcribing and translating, I continued to re-read the women's interview transcripts to familiarise myself with them in more depth. I took notes through the translation, transcription and familiarising stages relating to potential meaning as I read. I not only read for narratives, but also for the contexts from which these narratives were produced. For instance, when the participants talked about how son preference would remain intact in the foreseeable future and they could not do anything about it, I thought about this in conjunction China being a patriarchy that would continue having a gendered social hierarchy for many years.

Once I reached a point where there were no new themes emerging, I developed a

thematic map by combining different storylines into potential main themes and their subthemes.

A theme was identified depending on whether it had a relationship with the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, it was important to continue returning to the research question, throughout the process to ensure that the themes reflected Chinese women's subjective experiences and stories in relation to the two-child policy. For example, the empowerment of urban girls in the context of the one-child policy was one of the main themes, and its subthemes included education attainment, sufficient parental economic support, and privileged status in the nuclear family. Finally, a thematic analysis that tells a story about the experiences and lives of Chinese women's position in the context of the two-child policy is presented. Overall, four main themes emerged from the analysis.

I have included a thematic map below to show the four main themes and subthemes generated from the women's narratives.

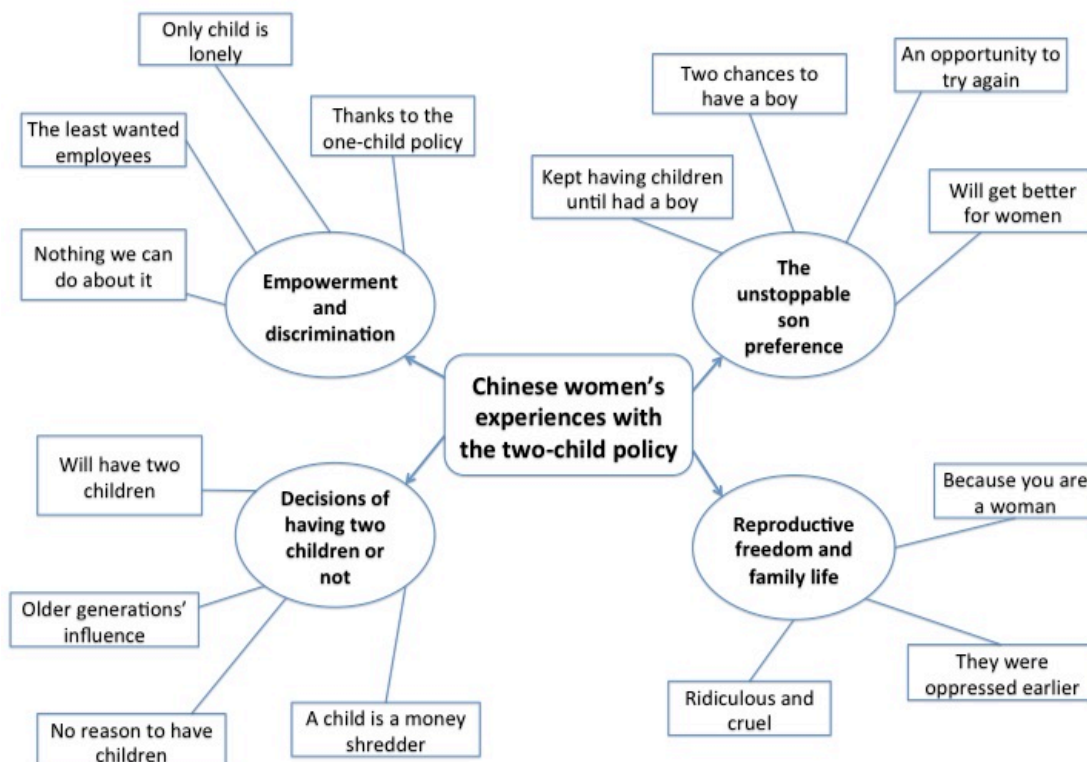


Figure one: The thematic map of Chinese women's experiences with the two-child policy

Analysis and discussion

Throughout the narratives across 10 young Chinese women who were studying or living in New Zealand, they suggested that the two-child policy has significant impact on Chinese women's lives. Four main themes were identified in the participants' narratives that include the re-telling of their personal experiences and their understandings of the implications of this policy for Chinese women. The first main theme is empowerment and discrimination: all participants indicated that discrimination against women in workplaces certainly has aggravated after the policy was implemented, and women who may have been affected the most are the generations that were empowered by the one-child policy. The second theme is the unstoppable son preference: son preference did not disappear during the times of the one-child policy, and it is likely going to become more visible and publicly acceptable under the influence of the two-child policy. The third theme is Chinese women's decisions of having two children: the decisions about having two children or not is associated with a number of factors, including traditional beliefs, pressures from parents, and economic resources. The final main theme is Chinese women's reproductive freedom and family life: the challenges in women's lifestyles under the two-child policy in the context of China's state feminism. The analysis is organised into four sections, in each section, one main theme and its subthemes are analysed and discussed.

Empowerment and discrimination

It is strange to put these two words together: empowerment and discrimination. Throughout the interviews with the participants, I realised that women like us, the only child in the family who have been empowered by the one-child policy in educational attainment, are exactly the ones that are discriminated against in nowadays labour

market because of the two-child policy. I have never had this understanding until I started to analyse and organise the participants' narratives. As the only girl in the family, they all acknowledged that the one-child policy benefits their lives in many ways. Meanwhile, some of them also stated that the new two-child policy would raise gender discrimination in workplaces to another level. Interestingly, what emerged in the narratives of the participants was their position as women of the one-child policy and its effects, having to negotiate the complexities of what it might mean to have two children.

As mentioned above, girls who were empowered by the one child policy have benefited from educational attainment and parental investment, although this is more so in urban settings (Fong, 2002; Liu, 2017), where only daughters would already be the privileged group compared to their rural counterparts. For women in rural areas, the one-child policy actually increased their sufferings by limiting the number of children they could have and reducing the opportunities for them to have a boy, as a result, the suicide rate among these women had climbed after the implementation of the one-child policy (Chu, 2001; Hesketh & Zhu, 1997). However, since all participants in this study come from an urban background, they generally think that the one-child policy did more good than bad in their lives, as most of them talked about the benefits and advantages of being an only girl in their family.

Thanks to the one-child policy, I could...

Despite a great deal of literature discussing the unintended negative consequences of the one-child policy (Abrahamson, 2016; Chen & Jordan, 2018; Chu, 2001; Hesketh et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2017), it is undeniable that this policy also benefits a few generations of only daughters in the family. In the urban areas where the one-child policy was strictly implemented, it is normal that the whole family, including the parents and the grandparents, all care about the only child, emotionally and financially (Fong, 2002; Liu, 2017). This kind of devotion was unlikely to happen in old times when there was more than one child in a family, where absolute fairness of parents' investment was almost impossible among children, and sons usually received more

support from parents than daughters. Thus, when asked how they feel about the one-child policy, almost all (nine out of ten) of the participants think it definitely has had a positive influence on their lives.

***Xiao:** I think the one-child policy is great, because as a girl, you're the beneficiary in this policy. I mean if you have brothers, you may not be able to inherit fortunes from your parents, or you may not have good resources, like financial and educational resources may not be well allocated to you. So I think the one-child policy doesn't have negative impact on me. If you just consider this policy itself, all of the only child (girls) may be the luckiest generation of women in Chinese history ever...*

***Lizzie:** for women in our generation, we're the only children in the family, so all of the love and attention from parents have been given to us. But in the old times, if there was a younger or older brother, the girl would be less favoured.*

Yang talked about what would happen if the one-child policy was not introduced, the parents were likely to favour one of the children due to different reasons or preferences.

***Yang:** my parents only pay attention to me because I'm the only child. If there were several kids in a family, the parents will either like the smallest, or like the first one, the middle ones will be ignored.*

Similarly, living as international students, Hou and Betty both suggested that if the one-child policy did not exist and there was more than one child in the family, it would be impossible for them to study abroad, because the financial resources in the family could not afford the expenses of sending two or more children overseas.

***Hou:** the treatment (for the only girl in the family) is really good. I grew up in the city, and my parents' educational level is relatively high, for their generations of course, they finished their undergraduate study... Anyway, they sent me here to study abroad, which I think I benefit from the one-child policy. If there was another child in my family, I probably couldn't be able to come here or study overseas.*

***Betty:** when I was little, I thought the one-child policy was great, because my parents only love me, and I didn't have to fight with anyone for something. If there weren't the one-child policy, for my family, if I have a younger or older brother, it would be impossible for me to study abroad. Because as a dual-income family, both my parents are just ordinary employees, not rich at all, and you are the only child in the family, if you say that you want to study abroad because it's good for your*

future, then your parents will definitely support you.

In the context of the one-child policy, the only son in the family probably will not feel as privileged or lucky as the only daughter, because boys have been favoured all the time (Chan et al., 2002; Chen & Jordan, 2018; Zhou et al., 2012). Without this policy, parents would still prioritise their sons' personal development, sometimes even at the cost of sacrificing their daughters' equal rights. In some rural areas, when parents only have money for one child to go to school, it is most likely that the boy in the family will get educated, while the girl stays at home to help with farming and chores, and gets married young so parents can have betrothal gifts for the son's wedding and house. From the perspective of a son, nothing changed before and after the one-child policy. However, things are different for daughters. We have seen and heard so many stories and news about families with more than one child, especially in the ones with few elder sisters and one younger brother even after the one-child policy was implemented. Girls in the family with parents who insisted on having a son are the 'unwanted children' (Attané, 2009; Hesketh & Zhu, 1997; Saini, 2002), and they are often ignored and exploited. Stories like this were still happening after the one-child policy, not to mention the times before (Ahn, 1994; Attané, 2002; Chen et al., 2015).

Although most of the participants agreed with the idea that the one-child policy is beneficial for the only girl in the family because it enables women empowerment and advances gender equality, there are exceptions where Fiona and Nicole stated their opinions and experiences.

Fiona: *In terms of the development of women's status, I don't deny that the one-child policy may have sped up the process, but it's definitely not the only reason for the improvement of gender equality or women's empowerment. I think the development of the whole society, the environment, and the awareness in the entire world are all relevant.*

Nicole: *I was born in a Nazi emotionally violent family. My New Zealander therapist kept asking me "aren't you the only child in the family? How could you get mental abuse? Shouldn't your parents spoil you?" But I can tell you clearly that many friends who're also the only children, and they were also born in unfortunate or unhappy families. You can't say poor parenting never happened in families with only child, and you can't say that the only child in the family must be*

taken care of well. The one-child policy isn't a label for happy families and good parenting.

Certainly, the one-child policy is not the sole factor that determines the happiness of the only children's lives, and we should not assume that all only girls in the family have been empowered by this policy. Other factors, such as parents' educational and income level (Tsui & Rich, 2002), regions of hometown (Hu, Roberts, Jeong, & Guo, 2015), and parental expectations (Liu, 2006), are all influential elements in a child's life.

Growing up as an only child is lonely

One of the disadvantages of being the only child is the loneliness when you grow up. Sometimes it is the physical presence of a brother or sister that you need in activities and games, and sometimes it is the emotional support for you to survive the difficult times.

Nicole: I grew up as an only child, my childhood was very lonely, and because of my parents and all the family issues, I always felt I needed...it would be good to have a sibling, at least we could understand each other and grow up together, at least I don't have to face...you know, an only child marries another only child, you need to support four elderly people, this kind of social burden and family structure is actually exhausting and stressful.

The strong emotional bond and close relationships among the members within a Chinese family are usually inseparable, both physically and emotionally. This is why the typical family structure of 4-2-1 (the only child is expected to take care of both parents and four grandparents) became a unique problem in Chinese culture. Before the one-child policy, there were at least two children within each family, and when the parents get too old to work or become ill, these children could share the responsibility and expense to look after their parents. However, the one-child policy places the responsibility on the only child to undertake such burdens alone, which has caused many challenges for the generation of singletons financially and physically (Deutsch, 2006).

Jennifer: I felt lonely when I was growing up, because our parents weren't only

children in their generations, and the support and help from their siblings sometimes really made life easier, and it's nice to have a big family, so it's relatively lonely and sad growing up as an only child, especially when I was little, if I wanted to stay outside and hang out with my classmates...this wasn't allowed when it's getting dark or it's time to eat, you would feel lonely if you liked to play, my peers all felt the same. You don't have a companion when you want to keep playing, so I guess this is the downside of being the only child.

As Jennifer stated, siblings are not only the best companions in childhood, but they also provide help and support when you become adults. Similarly, Yang's narrative also illustrates the loneliness and sometimes helplessness as an only child.

***Yang:** sometimes I think it would be good if I had a sister or brother, so that she/he would take care of me, and we can do things together and help each other, unlike me alone, I have to rely on myself.*

The one-child policy could not guarantee a happy childhood for children in the one child family. As Nicole's narrative has indicated, the happiness for an only child was also affected by parenting style and family atmosphere. However, the loneliness of growing up as a singleton could be the only thing that the one-child policy had never failed in delivering. After all, friends from school were not as close as siblings, thus, getting used to being alone was one of the 'compulsory courses' that every only child must take. Nowadays, reflecting on my own experiences with loneliness in my childhood, I ask myself whether I would give up the exclusive attention and love from my parents for a sibling in my life? I really do not know the answer.

We may be the least wanted employees

When the two-child policy was initially introduced, there were immediate voices about further gender discrimination against women in workplaces caused by this new reform. Unfortunately, this concern has been confirmed multiple times recently (Cooke, 2017; Zhang & Li, 2017; Zhao & Peng, 2016). More and more companies are asking female applicants whether they have plans about having two children in the future. For those employees who already had one child and plan to have a second one, leaving work for several months is also a huge risk. What is even worse is that the two-child policy is

likely to cause discrimination within women. Those who already have two children are preferred more to those with one child, because employers do not need to consider that the former might need more maternity leave or resign from work to take care of a newborn baby (Cooke, 2017).

***Jennifer:** If you are a woman who already had two children, and you want to apply for a job, you'll be more competitive than those who're at your age but unmarried or not having their second child.*

***Hou:** I've heard that many companies, if you're unmarried women or women who have never given birth, the success rate of getting a job is lower than those married women with children, because of marriage and maternity leaves, right? So if you go back to work after getting married and having a child, and then you want a second child, the company will again consider this issue, it's basically back to square one. The employers would think, "Are you going to have a second child? If it is, we might not hire you, because we need to pay your maternity leave, which is a loss for us". So I think this is the biggest negative influence.*

Lizzie offered a solution to this problem, which I think it is an impossible task for most of the young Chinese women who are studying in universities.

***Lizzie:** I've been following a girl on Weibo (a Chinese microblogging website), she works as HR in a company, so she interviews applicants, and she said now with the two-child policy, women better need to ...you know...get pregnant when you're a postgraduate and have the first baby when you graduate. Then this two-child policy, if you want to keep studying to get a doctorate degree, you better have the second child during the PhD period, so when you graduate it's easier for you to get a job, because employers don't want to pay for two consecutive maternity leaves.*

The two-child policy means extra cost for employers to pay for female employees' maternity leave and potential hiring cost for someone to cover the work. For women in China, having a second child not only means taking a risk of changing physical and psychological status, but also representing a chance of losing the job or becoming unvalued at work.

***Xiao:** because when it was in the one-child policy, every woman, no matter what you think, plan or not, employers would all assume that you will have only one kid. ... In this case, when hiring all women, all employers will assume that these women only stay for about 2 or 3 years before the maternity leave, unless you*

already had kids and sent them to kindergarten.

Yang: *in this case, for women's employment, some companies don't want to recruit women, because if you have a baby, the company will have to give you maternity leave. If you then have the second child, this leave time will have to be extended... so the company's interests can't be guaranteed.*

As mentioned before, women who have two children are the most preferred female employees in the workplace, followed with those with one child. In terms of the unmarried and childless women like fresh graduates, it is very likely that these are the least wanted employees among female applicants.

Yang: *Nowadays, people who have a second child mainly have their careers, and their parents can help them with newborns. So, they don't need to think about how I would live if I quit this job. But for young women like us, I can hardly find a job now, so... if I have a second child, I guess I'll lose the job, and the family will depend on my husband's income, which increases the pressure.*

However, Lizzie and Betty suggested that some workplaces might have less discrimination against women because they are owned by the government, which means the benefits such as maternity leaves are paid by the country, and these workplaces often comply with the standard national policies.

Lizzie: *it depends on what type of employer you want to work for...if it's private companies, I think they definitely won't hire women who're unmarried, or married but have no children and want to have a second child, they (employers) definitely want to avoid these kinds of women. But for other workplaces, some of them may be better, like teachers in universities, they could have the first child at a young age, and have the second when their career is stable and safe, and have saved a certain amount of money, so a second child at this time doesn't have much impact on their work.*

Betty: *I think if we go back to China and try to find a job, besides government jobs as they're regulated by the government, so they can't... but some private companies, if you are applying for a job and say that you plan to have two children, I assume they're unlikely to hire you, because the work is busy and they're unhappy even when you have one child, because the maternity leave and the rest after this, and during the pregnancy, the discomfort, so you can't handle a heavy workload, so I think...if you have the idea of having two children, you shouldn't choose private companies.*

Fiona pointed out that the discrimination against women who are not married or have children is the same before and after the two-child policy. That is to say, women are unfavoured regardless of the policy. It is our biological functions, the reproductive ability that made us unwanted in the workplaces.

***Fiona:** if it's like us, unmarried and with no children, the two-child policy doesn't make a difference, because employers will all consider about your marriage and maternity leaves. Women who already have a child and plan to have a second, in terms of finding a job, the two-child policy is probably going to aggravate this situation? I'm not sure, because I think no matter what happens, this possibility always exists, that is, women are all going to have children. In the one-child policy, after you have a child, aren't you going to need to take care of the baby and in what ways? So I think this discrimination (against women at workplaces) may always be there, unlikely to get significantly aggravated by the two-child policy.*

However, Camilla's narrative suggests that the two-child policy certainly has changed women's status in China's labour market, as the employers now have an additional criterion for female applicants.

***Camilla:** (the two-child policy) definitely has an impact, before this, women who're married and have children, employers don't need to pay for your maternity leave again, but after the two-child policy, they will consider whether the new employees will have a second child, which is connected to paid leaves and benefits and others, so employers will have their own considerations, which didn't exist before, in the times of the one-child policy.*

On the other hand, Mei stated that some treatments or benefits that are designed for women to ease the burden of having children might actually be the reasons for the discrimination against women at workplaces. The 'over-protection' for women employees may form their vulnerable status in the workplace culture, as some of women's reproductive functions and other physical uniqueness that are socially judged as weaknesses have caused disruptions in the policies and traditions of the workplace (Finley, 1986; Issacharoff & Rosenblum, 1994). In the context of China's family planning policies, women's reproductive potential has been commodified for the political purpose of the Chinese government, especially since the application of the two-child policy, where women's bodies have been under regulations to achieve

pressing demographic targets (Zhang & Li, 2017).

***Mei:** to be honest, I think the maternity leave is good for women but also has its downsides, because employers don't want you to spend much time on having children, and one maternity leave means a half year of paid leave, longer if you have a cesarean section, so they want you to stay at work as long as they need. What they don't want is that...even when you're back to work after maternity leave, you may need to breastfeed the baby and other stuff, so it's still...you know...really complicated.*

In the context of the two-child policy, the definition in social norms of womanhood has further moved towards motherhood and away from women's occupational success and development in the society. This also makes women internalise the beliefs that the contributions within the family are the most important thing in a woman's life.

There is nothing we can do about it

Despite all the participants talking about the negative impact of the two-child policy on young Chinese women's employment, several of them also expressed their understandings about the discrimination against women in workplaces.

***Camilla:** I think it's understandable, from the company's perspective, it's (the discrimination against women) understandable. But I think it's still unfair treatment, because men and women are different, biologically, because men can't give birth to children, so it's...and women didn't ask for or wanted to have this reproductive function, there's no choice.*

***Betty:** personally, I think it's reasonable for employers to ask me if I want to have two children or not, after all they're protecting their companies' interests. But if they ask me this, I probably won't consider working at this place, because I would also ask the stress level and workload when I apply for the job, if they say I can't have two children, this definitely affects women's decisions about choosing this job. So for me, if I want to find a job, I think I would choose to work as government employees, you know, with all the benefits and guarantees, and they wouldn't give me too much stress.*

The cost for a company to pay for women's maternity leave is another factor that employers would consider when hiring women of reproductive age. As Jennifer's

narrative suggests, women's interests are dispensable in front of companies' needs to survive and their efficiency.

Jennifer: although local governments and companies all want to listen to this national two-child policy, they still need to survive, still need their workforce, so either they hire young people as interns, or those women who already have two children, because maternity leaves and the following rest not only affect women themselves, but also slow down companies' efficiency, so they're quite a burden to employers.

In addition, it seems that women's reproductive functions are the basis of the discrimination against women in the labour market. Mei and Lizzie's narratives suggest that it is the difference in biology between men and women that disadvantages women's place in the workforce. The pathologisation of women's bodies has forced some women to internalise the idea of being inferior to men in social production and blame themselves and female sexuality for gender inequality in the society (Libbon, 2007; Nicolson, 1993).

Mei: yeah...but it's women that are responsible for having children since the very beginning, you can't let men to do it, you can do IVF at most, or find a surrogate mother, but these are different from having a child yourself in terms of the moral standards of mother's definition, and most families still can't accept or afford such things.

Lizzie: I think this is...there is nothing we can do about it, because women were born with their reproductive functions, it's biology, only women can give birth to children. But women themselves can also choose (between career and children), if she really wants to prioritise the work, she can choose to have only one child or no child at all, of course she needs to fight for her husband's approval or the support from her family. Anyway, I think there is no absolute fairness on this matter. In the traditional ideas of men working outside earning money, and developing his career, do you think this is fair for men? Not completely fair, right? So there is space for couples to negotiate yeah, on the one hand, I think it's really unfair for women to be discriminated against at work, but the power of making the final decision of having children or not is still held in your hands.

Apart from defending employers and companies, Hou's narrative justifies the discrimination in a broader context, where China's unique political environment and stable social order were taken into account. More specifically, China's collectivist

culture and political ideology limit women's choices in reproductive freedom because state feminism (Jiang, 2019; Qi, 2017; Zheng, 2005) requires Chinese women to become responsible citizens who prioritise the nation's interests, which in the context of the two-child policy, is addressing ageing population and labour shortage. As a result, women's reproductive choices are actually constrained by the policies through the contextualisation of good citizenship.

***Hou:** well, it's China, you know, it's impossible to achieve real democracy due to its political system. You live in this environment, led by this government, this country gives you safe and peaceful life, at least no wars, right? And this two-child policy also had its pilots in a few cities, so we can't say it's not considered comprehensively, as a national policy, I think it's been considered and researched very thoroughly. It has its pilots, and the information got from these pilots hasn't reflected all the possible outcomes, and now this policy is implemented nationally, if some problems come up, then policy makers may make some changes after receiving the feedback of this policy.*

Will the two-child policy counteract the contributions that the one-child policy had achieved for Chinese young women? Maybe, but it also depends on whether the government will implement relevant policies that provide support for companies and individuals to moderate the negative impact on women's employment. Even under the one-child policy, the long-lasting gender stereotypes and inequality in the workplace position women at disadvantaged situations in China's social hierarchy (Zhang & Li, 2017; Zhao & Peng, 2016). The discrimination against young professional women may aggravate to a new level in the context of the two-child policy, as women are likely to become less valued employees to the company due to twice paid maternity leaves and longer time for taking care of two children (Cooke, 2017). If women become insignificant human resources in the labour market and worth even less economic value, it is likely that more and more Chinese people will prefer to have boys as their offspring, because men could make more economic contributions to the family. This certainly would be one of the reasons for the unstoppable son preference in China.

The unstoppable son preference

Throughout the participants' narratives, one outstanding theme that emerged in their stories is the long-existing son preference in China. Since boys normally are the ones that could inherit and continue the family name within the household (Hesketh & Zhu, 2006; Zhou et al., 2012), they are preferred by most Chinese parents regardless of the changes in the national policy (Ahn, 1994; Wang, 2005; Zhou et al., 2012).

They kept having children until they had a boy

When China was in agricultural economics, son preference was so normal and common that most of the people did not realise this was a problem, because men have advantages in farming. It was not until the 1980s when the government wanted to enforce the one-child policy that the idea of 'it is the same to have a son or a daughter' was proposed. Despite the official conceptualisation by the government, the son preference still exists in some of the areas in China, especially in rural regions and small cities (Wang, 2005; Zhou et al., 2012).

Fiona: *my classmate's home is in rural villages, she has an older sister and a younger brother, and her brother is 7 or 8 years younger than she is. Her parents did want a son, so they kept having children like this until they had a son.*

Lizzie: *they keep having children until they have a son. My roommates in college are from rural areas, and there are at least two or three children in their families, yeah, rural families they want boys, and they also think one child in a family is not...you know, they just think there shouldn't be just one kid in the family, because they've been big families with many children all the time. Anyway, they just want to keep having children.*

Another reason for the son preference may be the belief of descending a family's future generations (Chan et al., 2002; Hesketh & Zhu, 2006; Zhou et al., 2012), because children's family names should be the same as their fathers', so a son means the children he will have are the descendants of the family.

Betty: *I think it's still... in some traditional families, parents like boys more than girls, they think sons will continue the family name, and this is the best way to*

descend future generations. As for daughters, after her wedding, she's basically a member of her husband's family, so she doesn't belong to her original family.

Lizzie: *one of my dad's friends is from rural area, he has a son and a daughter, and the girl is probably my age. Since he grew up in a rural family, he continues the traditions from the family, that is, he'll pay for the money his daughter needs to get married, like dowry stuff, but that's it, no more money for his daughter after she gets married, all the money and property stuff left in the family belong to the son, they're irrelevant to the daughter, as she already becomes another family's person.*

Although the Chinese government actively advocated the idea of 'there is no difference between having a boy or girl', sex discrimination and son preference are still prevalent in the context of the one-child policy. Nicole and Jennifer suggest that there is no way to stop people from having boys, unless their beliefs and values are fundamentally changed. Otherwise, they are obsessed with the idea of having a son even at the cost of failing one's marriage and moral standards.

Nicole: *if a man wants a son, he will have a son even break the boundaries of marriage. One of my friends is the example, because of the one-child policy she is the only child, but her dad still wanted a son, so he cheated and found a mistress, and divorced her mom, left them and had a son with the mistress.*

Jennifer: *in fact, I think for those people who deeply believe and insist on having a son, even with all the slogans saying "having a girl or boy is the same", they were unstoppable from having a boy, because even in the times of the one-child policy, people around us, like classmates from rural families, they still have sisters and brothers, some of their parents were so determined that wouldn't stop until had a son.*

In the context of the one-child policy, instead of saying "I want to have a son not a daughter" or "I like boys more than girls", most people choose to 'silently' express that with action, because it is not politically correct to talk about sons being superior anymore. However, in rural areas, the 1.5-child policy seemed to be the official endorsement for son preference from the government. This regional specific policy allowed rural couples to have another child if their first child was a girl. Despite this 'special treatment' from the government, rural families would still keep having children (daughters) until they successfully had a boy (Shi & Kennedy, 2016). In urban settings, even though the government believed that its power could change Chinese people's

beliefs about the worth of girls and boys, the traditional son preference still remains intact (Chen et al., 2015; Wang, 2005; Zhou et al., 2012). Unlike people from rural areas who are not afraid to admit their preference for sons, residents in cities are more likely to use their actions to express son preference. Even within families, sex discrimination across generations can still exist.

Yang: *you know, my maternal grandma seems to like my mom more. But in my paternal grandfather's family, the youngest uncle is the favorite, and he has a son, can you imagine how the family treats this boy? So...I really hate this gender discrimination thing.*

Mei: *my dad's father, my grandpa, he has two sons, my dad and my uncle. My uncle had a daughter first, and then I was born, that was 1995, when the one-child policy was strictly enforced, but my grandpa said he would give ten thousand Yuan to whoever has a son first. So if I had a young brother, my own brother, I probably wouldn't get much attention in my family.*

Minjia: *why do you think your grandpa said that?*

Mei: *just the traditional ideas that think boys are the real descendants...*

If the senior members of a family have preferences for sons over daughters, it is very likely that this belief or concept will continue to be passed on to next generations. Men growing up in these families tend to normalise sex discrimination and think they are actually superior to women. Women in these families either internalise this belief by trying to give birth to boys in the future or condemn this corrupt tradition by ignoring it.

Now you have two chances to have a boy

Before the two-child policy, if the idea of son preference can only be expressed privately or quietly, the two-child policy might give these people a legitimate opportunity to say, "I want a son!"

Fiona: *At first, the idea of wanting a boy, a son, is under the water, but after this policy, this desire is above the water, that is, 'I'm going to have another child'. If the second child is a boy, then the parents may not be that good to their first daughter, which could cause some bad influence on her.*

Betty: *I think the idea of having another child, a son, is reasonable (in the context*

of the two-child policy), for some traditional families, they desperately wanted to have a son because they need someone to continue the family lineage.

The thing I am most concerned about is the unfair living situations for a girl in a family with a younger brother after the two-child policy was implemented. For people who have son preference, how would they treat their daughter if they have a son in their middle age?

***Mei:** When I was in undergraduate, one of my friends, she has a younger brother. When she wanted to have some classes to improve her English, her mom said the tuition of thousands of RMB was too expensive. But for her brother, they spent a lot of money to send the boy to their best local middle school. Things like these made her sad for a very long time, because her brother had enjoyed more parents' resources than her.*

***Xiao:** you need to think about the reality, the actual situation. Some people don't have much money to study, and there aren't many opportunities for them to study. This is why I'm concerned about whether the older sisters in the two-child policy will have the same, equal opportunities as their younger brothers. Because when children say "I want this opportunity, I want that opportunity", and the parents don't give them these opportunities repeatedly, they won't even ask in the future, because they think they don't deserve an equal opportunity as other kids. So this is a possible sin of the two-child policy. But it can't be said to be the evil of this policy, because this is still a patriarchal attitude, the gender-discriminating way of thinking, the cultural atmosphere, and social norms...this can't be blamed for how many children you have...but it's a possible outcome.*

Mei's story and Xiao's concerns may repeat countless times after the two-child policy was implemented, as the financial and educational resources in a family are always limited. Moreover, the older child is supposed to protect and give in to the younger one in Chinese culture, and the gender of these children doesn't matter, as it is more about their age. But if the first child happens to be a girl and the younger child happens to be a boy, then the life of this older sister will not be very easy.

Finally this is an opportunity for me to try again

There is limited literature about phenomenon that many middle-aged women are actively having their second child (Liu et al., 2019), and this situation has become more

and more common, drawing a lot of public attention. Most of the participants suggest that it is still related to the son preference in China, because all couples regardless of age can have a second child and therefore some of the middle-aged people with one daughter may think this is the time to try for a boy.

***Fiona:** I can imagine that there will be those families where the husbands, even the parents of these men say they want a boy, and with the two-child policy, now they have a perfect and righteous reason to ask the wives to have another child. Such things are definitely going to happen even though there aren't any around me, but the two-child policy will cause situations like this, and it's really unfair for women, because if they're over 30 or even 40 years old, they're at advanced maternal age, even for a second child, there will also be dangers and complications medically. Moreover, some women could face all kinds of pressure, like parents-in-law ask them to have children, have a second child, and something like that, so there will be bad influences and pressures.*

The phenomenon of Chinese middle-aged women actively seeking a second child has caused public outrage and heated discussions on social media (Liu et al., 2019; Parkin, 2016; Tatlow & Piao, 2015). Despite medical knowledge of the risk of extended maternity, the dominance of son preference has seen the increase of women in their 40s or even 50s taking up the opportunity provided by the two-child policy and try to have a boy regardless of the reported medical dangers for older mothers and their children (Nybo-Anderson et al., 2000).

***Jennifer:** I think for people who are at 40s and still want to have a second child, the majority of them are because their first child is a girl, and due the traditional belief of continuing the bloodline, they want their second child to be a boy. On the other hand, if the first child is a boy, and want to have a girl for the second one, these families are likely to be the ones with better financial condition, and want to have both girl and boy in the family. But I think most people belong to the first type, their first child is a girl so they really want to have a second child.*

When the two-child policy was initially introduced, there were immediate voices about the possibilities of the policy leading to more problems of sex discrimination at home, and the status of women might be lower even more. In other words, the family status of a married woman may be dependent on the gender of her second child. This may be the most important factor that contributes to the explanation of middle-aged women taking huge risk to have a second child, as they are feeling obliged to have another try for a son

under the two-child policy if their first child was a girl.

***Xiao:** if you have a daughter under the one-child policy, you can't have a second child. This will cause some...like...mother-in-law looks down on you, colleagues may also gossip about you, and you will not be very comfortable. But under the two-child policy, if you have the second child as a boy, you can...feel a little better psychologically.*

Jennifer and Xiao's narratives are both told through one condition, that is, these older women are still fertile and able to conceive a second child. The more middle-aged women having a second child, the more others will feel necessary to do the same. But how might this two-child policy impact on women, who for some reason are not able to have an additional child? How would the sudden change in family planning policies impact on their lived experiences, when coming under pressures from families and society? Unfortunately, there has not been any literature to answer these questions, but Yang's narrative may provide a disturbing example of how the two-child policy may position women who through the pressure to produce a second child but physically unable do so.

***Yang:** my dad...he...because my mother had uterine fibroids before, and her uterus was removed because of it, so she can't have more kids, but after the two-child policy my dad says "one more baby" "one more baby" all day...my dad is like this.*

The two-child policy has increased the patriarchal power over women's bodies in the context of family, as women renegotiate their reproductive plans about the number of children they have. Since the government has been encouraging Chinese couples to have two children or a second child for those who already have a child under the one-child policy, this could be an excuse for men with a son preference to exert patriarchal power and force the wives to have another child.

***Nicole:** the most extreme scenario is that a woman gave birth to a girl when it was in the one-child policy, and this mother has been discriminated by her husband or his parents or the relatives because of it, so once there is this two-child policy, she wants to have a boy to win her husband's love, or to save their marriage, and this may lead to even worse problem: if she's lucky enough to have a boy, then everything's happy, but what if it's another girl? Right?*

It is undeniable that in some areas in China, people still think it is a woman's obligation and responsibility to give birth to a son for her husband and his family. Unlike the motherhood mandate in its Western form, where women are required to have at least two children and raise them well (Russo, 1976), the mothering mandate requires a son to pass on the bloodline is particular to the Chinese context of patriarchal cultures and political ideology, where the national family planning policies that are regulated by state feminism contribute to the persistence of son preference.

***Nicole:** After this two-child policy, it actually facilitates the feudal belief of son preference, because you'll see many people, if their first child is a son, they won't have the second child. But a lot of people whose first child is a girl, they'll face the pressure from mother-in-law, family, and husband, they think having a second child is compulsory, it's your obligation, because your first child is a daughter.*

However, the two-child policy could also be an aboveboard opportunity for the women whose first child was a daughter and want to have a son to 'improve' her status. It seems that the policy provides Chinese women who have given birth to daughters with a chance to roll the dice again and try for a son.

***Yang:** like my father's family, their thoughts are really patriarchal, if the first child is a girl, it may actually force women to have another child, and then during pregnancy, the family members will treat these women well, with good food and care, because it's unknown whether it's a boy or girl, but if it's a girl again, the mom's status is likely to be even lower than before, even a breakdown in the family. So basically, the two-child policy gives these women a chance, an opportunity to improve their family status or to lower their status...*

Certainly, son preference is one of the explanations for middle-aged women having a second child, another reason for this phenomenon will be discussed in the fourth theme in the context of Chinese women's reproductive right and freedom.

It will get better for women in the future

Despite all the storylines that were discussed in the above subthemes about how the two-child policy may have further accentuated the problem of son preference in Chinese society, two of the participants still pictured this policy as being beneficial in the long

term for Chinese women, as it may help them accomplish the self-actualisation of maternal potentialities and gender equality within the family. After all, in the context of the two-child policy, the priority for women is no longer equal participation in social production and employment as it was in the one-child policy, now is their reproductive responsibility and duty to produce two children for the interests of the state as well as their families.

As mentioned in the previous literature, girls were expected to be feminine in their appearance while masculine in the educational and professional life within their everyday lives under the one-child policy (Liu, 2006), as the gendered parental expectations tended to have more requirements for women than men. Women in urban areas in particular, were expected to be educated and to fight for the same successes as men in work, and to provide traditional feminine roles as beautiful wives and caring mothers at the same time. However, the two-child policy has diminished women's value in the labour market by promoting their reproductive 'destiny' in the family. As a result, some Chinese women understand that this policy has potential to benefit them where their contribution to society as mothers is privileged. For example, Jennifer's narrative indicates that the two-child policy allows women to have two children, and since mothers are expected to devote more time and energy to the family, they will get their reward after the completion of 'reproductive duties' and become stronger and resourceful.

***Jennifer:** in long terms, I think it (the two-child policy) is good for women, because everything's changing. But for the recent 3 to 5 years, it still has negative impact on women's status, because the labor market clearly prefers men to women, so this two-child policy is likely to lower women's society status. But I think it's optimistic in the future, may be after 5 or 10 years later, the influences caused by this policy might not be significant, that is, women's status may be lower but eventually it will go up.*

***Minjia:** why do you think it will go up?*

***Jennifer:** because when two children became adults, and the mother devoted her time to raising the children, then she may have stronger ability, just like I said earlier that women with two children have more advantages than others. So if she could complete her reproductive duties in 5 or 10 years, she could better actualise her abilities, by that time it will be another upgoing phase, I think.*

Yang, however, understands the two-child policy to offer resistance to the control over women's reproduction under the one-child policy. She understands the two-child policy as increasing the value of women's capacity to reproduce, and therefore has the potential to empower women. In this understanding, there is a counter-story: where women's reproductive power and freedom were controlled by state and familial patriarchy by limiting women's reproductive capacity to one child (Greenhalgh, 2001), women have the potential to exchange their reproductive power for better conditions for themselves.

***Yang:** in fact, I think it (women's status) may be improved, because if there is a family...both parents, husband...want a second child, then you'll be well taken care of.*

***Minjia:** Why?*

***Yang:** men can't have babies, only women can.*

However, in terms of whether the two-child policy will aggravate the preference for son or sex discrimination in general, Xiao thinks they are irrelevant. Sexism has been practiced in China long before the one-child or the two-child policy. It is there and will continue to be there regardless of these policies, and is deeply entrenched in Chinese women's everyday lives.

***Xiao:** It's not the two-child policy that leads to sex discrimination more seriously. The gender discrimination is there. It discriminates against you whether there is a two-child policy or not.*

I have discussed how the one-child policy had empowered a few generations of the only daughters in urban settings by promoting education attainment for girls (Huang et al., 2015; Lee, 2012) and parental support for daughters (Fong, 2002), however, Fiona suggests that these ways of empowering girls for gender equality are not enough to change the status quo in China's patriarchal society. Boys should also be educated and expected to respect women. It is women who are responsible for their successes to be the same as men. While gendered social power relations are understood through sameness as equal to men, discrimination against women remains entrenched in women's everyday lives.

***Fiona:** in terms of gender equality, I think it's more about...not only let women get educated and make them realise that they have the same power of speech and equal status as men, but also tell boys the things they should know about on the matter, because gender equality requires efforts from both parties of a family...when boys and girls become parents when they grow up, because we can feel that the generation of our parents have a stronger sense of gender equality than the generation of our grandparents, so as the time goes by, people's awareness about this issue may get better. But after all we're still living in a patriarchal society, so it's impossible to achieve absolute gender equality, at least less unfair treatment to women.*

Although Fiona's idea of teaching boys about gender equality seems to be a way to fight patriarchy, there is also powerlessness in her narrative about the future of gender equality in China, education and generational shifts alone will not change the fundamental nature of patriarchal China. Therefore, the son preference, as one of the demonstrations of patriarchy, is seemingly unstoppable because of its long history within Chinese cultural ideologies. The two-child policy holds some potential for resistance, given those of us who are one-child women may become empowered to control the narrative of our reproduction and influence understandings of gender equality.

Chinese women's decisions about having two children

The majority of the participants suggested that they want to have two children after they get married because they tended to believe China's traditional philosophy of "more children, more happiness" (Shi, 2016), and they understood the one-child family as not 'feeling right'. Another reason for wanting two children was through their own experiences of being the only child, and the idea of a companion sibling being good for children's mental development.

I think I will have two children

I was surprised at the number of participants who saw two children in their futures. These young Chinese women are all highly educated, having international learning

experiences, were all able to acknowledge the limitations of the two-child policy and know the possible consequences and implications for their children in the future, and yet, they still want to do it. As discussed in the literature, the two-child policy has already impacted on women's professional prospects and development (Cooke, 2017), and the problem of son preference may become even worse in the future (Xu & Pak, 2015). Given these foreseeable challenges, the narratives about companion children contradict the existing evidence about the empowerment of women in terms of education and employment opportunities in the context of the one-child policy.

Lizzie: *if I go back to China in the future, I would...either don't have any children, or if I decide to have kid, it really doesn't matter if I have one or two kids. Honestly, what I'm thinking about right now is that if you do want to have children, it's better to have more than one child, like two or three of them, and they can keep each other company, so for me, there is no firm rejection to a second child.*

Betty: *many people including me, we all think it's better to have at least two children, because as the only child, I know the sadness of growing up alone, playing games alone and being alone for the most of the time, so we hope our next generations could have companions. Another reason is if we got sick in the future, there will be more than one child to take care of us, they can share the responsibility, like my grandpa, he has four children, they take turns looking after him. But if my dad's ill, he only has me alone to care for him.*

Betty's narrative justifies her decision to have more than one child through the understanding of the ageing population problem. A second child acts as a safety net for parents when they get old, as Chinese parents always assume that their children will take care of them in the future if they are sick or need help (Deutsch, 2006). Indeed, most Chinese children still practice the 'virtue of filial piety', but from my own experience, multiple children definitely do not necessarily equate to free help and care in senior life. For example, my dad's parents have three sons, and yet they still need to hire an hourly worker to do chores and cook for them. Their three sons, the oldest one thinks caring for his old parents is a waste of his precious retirement time, the youngest son's wife does not want her husband spending money and time looking after his parents, so even though these two sons live in the same city with my grandparents, they rarely take care of them. As for my dad, he lives in a city that takes a two-hour flight to get to my grandparents' city, so basically all he could do is to provide financial help.

Therefore, in my understanding, having two children does not mean having two sources of support when you get old. Perhaps one of the implications of the two-child policy is that a daughter will become educated into the caring role. Perhaps we need to think about how son preference will enable the narrative of the new national policy to justify keeping girls away from education and work successes and return them to families as potential caregivers.

There are other understandings too, of how women resist the two-child policy, at the same time as wanting two children. So while a decision to have two children may appear to justify their compliance to the new law, Fiona's narrative suggests that for some women, this decision exceeds China's family planning policy.

***Fiona:** I think it (the two-child policy) doesn't matter to me, because I could always find ways to have a second child if I want to. I've said that when I was young I did want to have two children, so I was going to have children, this policy has no influence on me, because even if it's not released, fine, after I gave birth to one child, I could find another country to have my second child, right? The child's nationality doesn't have to be Chinese.*

There were also storylines that came through the women's narratives, where women are thinking about two children, by examining how the economic burden would influence their decisions.

***Jennifer:** actually since the selective two-child policy...because I'm a only child, and unmarried, so I felt a little bit lucky that I could have two children¹, because I can feel that most of the people would really like to have two children, so being an only child was kind of an advantage back then. I still think if I have enough energy outside the work to take care of children, I would choose to have a second child.*

***Camilla:** I think it (having a second child or not) depends on our financial condition, if my husband and I are doing fine financially and could afford a second child, and we also have the energy to take care of him/her, I think I probably will have a second child.*

***Yang:** That depends on the financial resources, if we have enough money, and losing my job has no impact on the family, it (having a second child) is acceptable... In fact, the fundamental reason is to look at the family's financial*

¹ The selective two-child policy allows couples who are both the only child in their original families to have two children.

conditions. Economic issues... like those celebrities, they definitely will have second children.

A number of studies have investigated the financial difficulties for Chinese couples to support two children (Chi et al., 2018; Qiu et al., 2019; Wang & Wang, 2017), and as discussed in the literature, economic resources play an essential role in women's reproductive decisions. These storylines suggest that in most Chinese families, the financial resources may be the most important factor that influence women's decisions to have a second child.

As I said in the beginning of this section, I was initially shocked that despite knowing that the deeply cultured desire for son preference has negative effects for girls, and having experienced sex discrimination in their social, work and family relationships, the women in this study expressed they would likely have two children. Although they are aware of the impacts of gender inequity in their lives and the lives of girls, when taking up a position as a two-child mother in their own futures, they did not question the inequities for the future of the young women (our daughters) who will follow.

When older generations get involved

As mentioned earlier, there are no clear or set boundaries in the relationships among family members in China, and as a result, the opinions and interference of parents or parents-in-law sometimes could be really powerful in young couples' decisions to have two children. If a woman's mother-in-law urges her to have a second child, it is likely that the first one is a girl, and the parents of the husband want to have a grandson.

***Lizzie:** my cousin had his second child right before I came here, his mom really wanted a boy, and she hoped that this second child would be a boy. My cousin and his wife must have been...you know...wanting a second child, a boy, and their wish to have a second child was related the idea that they wanted a boy, because the first child is a girl. As for my cousin's mom, she is the only daughter-in-law that gave birth to a son, so she's been having a sense of superiority, and I guess the reason she wanted a grandson is to keep feeling superior and condescending in the family, as she has a son and her son also has a boy.*

***Fiona:** in many cases where parents-in-law, especially mother-in-law will get involved in persuading daughter-in-law to not just have one child, and should have more children something like that, and this may have unnoticeable effect on women's reproductive decisions.*

The findings by Deutsch (2006) suggest that reproductive decisions are contextualised through familial understandings of filial piety, and through parents' experiences of the one-child policy complicates the decision process, where parents understand two children to be an investment in their future health needs.

***Camilla:** you know, people like our mothers' generation, born in 1960s, they just think, well, finally the two-child policy was released, of course you should have a second child, it's like finding a companion for your first kid. Besides, the responsibility and burden of taking care of you when you get old or sick in the future won't just fall on the only child, so having another kid is also like finding a safeguard for future life.*

More specifically, Jennifer provides three reasons about why older people want their children to have a second child, and the first reason is about son preference, or the necessity of having a boy child to maintain a sense of superiority in patriarchal systems and society (Hu, 2016). The second reason has its historical context where most of our parents were constrained to have only one child, and their compliance to the state policy, coupled with the traditional son preference may have resulted in millions of 'missing women' in China (Saini, 2002; Zhou et al., 2012). The final reason indicates that older generations contribute to the economic work of the family by taking care of grandchildren while young men and women work outside, which have interestingly not shifted the contemporary expectations of work (Zhang & Li, 2017) and unique family structure of '4-2-2' (Qiu et al, 2019).

***Jennifer:** people at my mom's age really want our only children to have a second child, they really do! Even after you told them the future pressures of raising two kids, they still want us to do it. They have their reasons. The first one is the traditional belief to have a boy and a girl, one son and one daughter. Second is...people like our parents, most of them don't have the energy to have a second child, so they want us to actualise what they can't, which is to have two children. And the third reason is that they think they could help us with the kids, and they want more grandchildren, more descendants, they're also afraid we won't have children at all, so they encourage us to have a second child.*

The pressure extends to social relationships, where some women experience the pressure through social surveillance to meet the expectations of traditional femininity and the trajectory to be a wife and mother.

***Lizzie:** especially in small cities where I think many women will be pushed to have a second child, it's like you were first urged to find a boyfriend, and then get married and have a baby, but now there is this opportunity that you can have another child, so friends or relatives may push you to have this second child.*

The storylines tell how older generations show their complicity with the family planning policy of a patriarchal state by selling the possible benefits of having multiple children in the future. However, while some of the participants show they resisted how much control the new policy had over their reproduction and yet still favoured having two children, other participants resist the policy through a storyline that, at this time, is a refusal to have children at all.

I have no reason to have children

For some of the young women in this study, having children is just not really a necessary path for them to go through in their lives. DINK (double income no kids) is no longer an unaccepted idea for some Chinese women who locate themselves in a more global westernised understanding of their contemporary lives. Moreover, with the development of material wealth in China's society, some women now have more personal pursuits and aspirations, and sometimes, having children is not one of them. As a form of resistance, taking up a position through non-cooperative C-feminism (Wu & Dong, 2019), women's reproductive autonomy can be achieved through economic self-reliance and career success, and this strand of made-in-China feminism has potential to normalise the social norms of single women and free Chinese women from the traditional expectation of marriage and children.

***Camilla:** As a matter of fact, I think not having children is not a big deal, because it's not certain that DINK families are not happy, they can use the money to have a better life, and no need to spend the energy and money on kids. This may create better life surroundings with higher quality of life.*

Resistance to the traditional narrative through a position in an individualised global standpoint is told through a storyline of consumerism, both bodily and materially. It is a storyline of reproductive refusal.

***Xiao:** there are no other reasons, I just don't like children, and I don't like the whole process of giving birth. I have an aesthetic pursuit, and I don't think I'll be looking good if I'm pregnant, and I like all my clothes now, I can't wear them if I'm pregnant. And there will be stretch marks after pregnancy, because I used to sell products about pregnancy care, yes, I sold these products when I first came here, including products to eliminate stretch marks.*

This standpoint derives from Xiao's experiences with consumerism, where the prevalence and popularity of pregnancy care products verify the physical challenges that 'ruin' women's bodies.

Instead of seeing children as the future generations or a continuation of one's life, children are also understood to be liabilities in the pursuit for success within a storyline of consumerism and positioning as DINK. This may look politically incorrect and selfish to earlier generations who tend to be more traditional than millennials, however, it is also an opportunity for Chinese women to take back control of their bodies from the patriarchal state and family.

***Hou:** why do I need to have children? What're children for? They're liabilities. People who don't want any child just think they don't have the ability to be fully responsible for raising and caring one or two children to adult.*

Within a contemporary context of non-cooperative feminism, and a more socially normalised context of westernised global material wealth, there is also potential to embrace the idea of the 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity to have more than one child.

***Xiao:** well, if there's no limit on the number of children you could have, there may not be so many people that want a second child. It's like giving snacks to children, if you tell them they can only eat two per day, or maybe three or four, they're likely to eat them all. But if you put a big box of snacks in front of the child, and say, from today, you can eat as many as you want, then he/she may eat just one, or maybe the child will not eat it at all, right? When you see something as a reward, people tend*

to take advantage of it, but, for example, if it's your freedom to have as many children as you wish, and I don't care anymore and I won't control...then he might think... emm...this is nothing particular, and I can't take any advantage of that, then he might not want many kids, but now people still have a psychological tendency to take advantage of the two-child policy...

Through this storyline, the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is a commodification of the demand for more than one child. Once families have the freedom to choose, the demand for a second child might diminish. The product may become less valuable. In Xiao's narrative, the two-child policy appears to be the 'limited edition' in China's family planning programme. While more than one child is commonly understood among the participants as an opportunity to extend their family, the potential of reproductive freedom may also enable women to resist patriarchal and state policies as they take up new positions in the changing context of China's uptake of westernised global consumerism, in their everyday lives.

A child is like a money shredder

It is not surprising, given the context of China's participation in global consumerism, that individual economic stability is strongly linked to reproduction. The literature has found that the increased costs of living in cities, in particular housing costs in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai (Lu & Zheng, 2017; Wang and Song, 2019) may exclude some couples from having children at all.

Fiona: *one reason is that the pressure is too overwhelming to provide a life for children in big cities in China, like Beijing, income may not be able to support mortgage, let alone a baby. Another reason is maybe young people find children annoying, and at least do not want kids for now, because they're still very young and a lot of energy is required on all aspects.*

Younger women who are working in their careers are positioned here as using all their energy in making ends meet. The cost of having a child in a highly technical and medicalised health system is also expensive, and some women in China do not have access to the necessary resources as the divide between the wealthy classes and working classes increases.

As the commodification of reproductive services grows so too do the costs of proliferating services to support the family planning policy; from a VIP room in a hospital to professional lactation help with breastfeeding; from maternity matrons to personal postpartum rehabilitation trainers; from baby nutritionist to early childhood teacher (Liu & Liu, 2018).

Xiao: those who have enough money already gave birth to second children, and those who don't want to have a second child are because of the insufficient financial resources. If you are very very rich, for example, like some real estate tycoons' wives, you don't need to work no matter how many children you have, right? You don't have to work even if you only have one baby. But if you are ordinary working class, and if you aren't working, then who will pay the home loan and how to buy baby formula...if you have enough money, you don't need to work, whether you are man or woman.

Chinese women's reproductive freedom and family life

As we have seen so far, reproductive freedom is a complex set of power relationships in China's history. The potential for the new two-child policy, in terms of reproductive freedoms for Chinese women is already understood as a gain. The conditions for women and girls under the one-child policy understandably make such freedom seem as a move in the right direction.

It is ridiculous and cruel

Remembering the human rights stories that happened under the one-child policy is deeply ingrained in our cultural memory, and the violation of human rights contextualised the women's understanding of the effects the one-child policy has had on families.

Fiona: I think the one-child policy is ridiculous, I can understand it was for controlling population growth, but the freedom of having children or not should in our own hands.

Camilla: *I once asked my mom why she didn't have a younger sister or brother for me, and she said people did really want to have a second child at that time, but the one-child policy was so strict, and women's reproductive decisions were also closely monitored. When my mom was in the hospital having me, a woman in the next ward tried to secretly have a second child, she ran to a different city other than her hometown just to have another kid. But people working in the local government or the family planning office found out about this woman, even though she ran to another city, a really remote place try to have this second child, they still managed to find her hidden location and gave her an injection when she was almost due, and the baby died inside her. Such practices were mandatory at that time.*

They were the ones that were oppressed earlier

While son preference appears an unstoppable storyline in our cultural narrative and was previously analysed as a form of gender discrimination leading to an increase in second children, having a second child also appeared as a storyline that supported women's reproductive freedom. More specifically, where middle-aged women's reproductive freedom was strictly and cruelly oppressed by the one-child policy, there is now a choice.

Camilla: *They're the generations who suffered from the family planning policy, the one-child policy. Some of them may have always wanted a second child, but they couldn't under the one-child policy. But now with the two-child policy, they probably think: ok, I'll have another one. Even the age difference with the first child is very huge, they still want to have the second child.*

Mei: *they're the generations that were oppressed by the one-child policy, so they may be obsessed with the idea of having a second child.*

Compared to the one-child policy, Camilla and Nicole understand that the two-child policy has been an improvement in Chinese women's reproductive power.

Camilla: *I think this policy gives women a right, a kind of freedom, so they can decide whether to have a second child or not, and from the perspective of human rights, the two-child policy gives women the power to choose between having no children at all to just one or two kids.*

There has been some research that suggests the loss of a child under the one-child

policy was associated with intense suffering and mental health problems (Pan et al., 2016; Yin et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2015). The one-child policy has meant the investment of care, love, energy and resources for the future of the family is precarious through loss. In this way, Nicole understands the two-child policy as a reproductive freedom that has the potential to secure families' futures.

Nicole: before the two-child policy, there are many families with just one child, and if their only child died because of disease or accident, these parents are going to experience long-term depression and desperation, and you can't revoke or undo an event of loss-of-only-child, or restore your psychological trauma.

You should...because you are a woman

Due to the traditional gendered practices in China, women are expected to sacrifice more for their children and take care of them at home, which feels like an obligation for a woman if she chooses to get married and have kids (Liu, 2006; Prevoo, 2019). Chinese society does not have the same expectations for men, no one will judge a man for being at work making money instead of staying at home taking care of the baby. These gender stereotypes still exist in most of China's diverse cultures (Du, 2016; Zheng, 1997).

Nicole: Chinese society has this invisible prejudice, that is, people assume a woman should choose between her career and her child after her having a baby. If you choose your career, people would say that you're so cruel to your baby, because the baby is so small and needs his/her mother, and you're so cold-blooded to leave him/her behind.

Similar to the western notion of the motherhood mandate, it is deeply embedded in Chinese culture that a woman is supposed to prioritise her family and children, even at the cost of sacrificing her dreams or career aspirations. And it is normal for a boy's parents to expect their daughter-in-law to focus on the family instead of making money or having her own career.

Betty: I'll just give the example of my boyfriend and me. His parents wish I could find a steady job, doesn't need to make a lot of money, as long as the job is steady so that I could focus on home. But my parents want me to find a job that I like and

make more money. After all they've invested so much money for me to study abroad. They don't want me to be ordinary for my life. So there're the different thoughts from two families.

However, Nicole's narrative suggested that the government has failed to provide supplementary support following the two-child policy. Women who were raised to be independent under the one-child policy now have to renegotiate their identities in society and family because of an upsurge in patriarchal authority and the gendered son preference under the new two-child policy. Despite the empowerment of women in education attainment and professional training enabled through the one-child policy (Fong, 2002; Huang et al., 2015; Lee, 2012), Chinese women now are encouraged to leave their careers and return to families for reproductive duties.

***Nicole:** when the two-child policy was implemented, Chinese government didn't have many related supportive policies, although on the surface, it's said the maternity leave stuff is the same for the first or second child, but you know...Chinese women are still disadvantaged in workplaces. I've been having a lot of discussions with my friends, we talked about the two-child policy is actually a reverse oppression on women to return to their families, (the policy) tries to oppress women not to fight for personal career, not to pursue your success in the society, get back to your family and have your second child. This is the whole public environment.*

The two-child policy may have delivered a false impression of regaining reproductive freedom to Chinese women. And in this research, there was support for the narrative gains and complicity to the policy. However, Chinese women's individual reproductive power is still regulated and monitored by the government where using this two-child policy as a form of biopower to control the population. The reason for saying this is because this policy emerged as a solution to the aging population and projected labour shortage, and does not shift state control over women's reproductions. The patriarchal state and family are still in control of Chinese women's reproductive bodies in the work of the state. Additionally, a variety of social pressures and measures that coerce conformity to the gendered roles in family as mothers and wives have impacted on women's economic and education freedoms, limiting their agency. As a result, more and more Chinese women have internalised these gendered social expectations and justified their compliance to the state. All of the participants, and me, are women who

were privileged in our access to education and independent pathways to adulthood. What becomes of our daughters in such a return to patriarchal power in the social hierarchy?

Conclusion

Being an only girl in an urban Chinese family, I have benefited from the support and empowerment for girls while the one-child policy was in force. When the two-child policy was implemented, my experiences of being an only child and the benefits this brought me within a traditional patriarchal society, led me to the research question of this study. I was concerned that Chinese women's reactions, feelings and experiences of this new family planning policy have not been heard nationally or globally, and the experiences and stories on the mainstream media were not representative of the voices of the majority of Chinese women. Therefore, I wanted to research the impacts of the two-child policy on Chinese women's lives and listen to their stories. I wanted to hear how the women perceived the impacts of the policy on their future decisions to have children, on their future educational and employment opportunities and how they felt it might both enable and constrain their lives going forward into the future. My research questions were: How do the women story their experiences with the two-child policy and how will the policy impact on their futures? What implications does the policy have on women's social values, reproductive identities, and positions in power relations? And what will happen to young Chinese women like me if the current policy continues?

I interviewed 10 young Chinese women studying or living in Palmerston North, New Zealand, conversed with and listened to their narratives. The women I talked to were only children who had grown up under the one child policy. How they made sense of and storied their experiences in the context of the two-child policy indicated that, as the existing literature suggested, Chinese women faced both new and recurring challenges of a resurgence of tradition in their lives.

Differences emerged in their stories. Most of them talked about their agreement with the two-child policy, and the acceptance and willingness to have two children in the future.

Their compliance with the state is in accordance with the assumption that motherhood is a necessary and unquestionable stage for women if they get married. I was surprised to find that these highly educated 'only girls' from urban backgrounds would have such responses to and acceptance of the two-child policy. Given the voices on the Internet, I thought most of them would not choose to have a second child after knowing the possible repercussions for women's career and independence. Their compliance in the narratives emerged as a political phenomenon, that most of the women in China are unlikely to speak against the state policies, and they tend to be conservative and cautious to strangers about their speech in terms of political topics. Yet, this did not mean that the women were unaware of the traditional embeddedness of son preference in China and how the policy would impact on their lives, as their storylines revealed. There were also a few women in this study who suggested that they will not have any children at all, and although initially I felt that inclination was not relevant to the two-child policy, that it was because they either did not like children or thought of them as liabilities, as the analysis unfolded, it became clear to me that these were important counternarratives that I could explore further in future research. Taking up these narratives as Chinese women, is noteworthy, given they are expected to take the direction from the state without questioning or considering the impact on individuals.

Throughout our conversations there were consistent storylines of the impacts of the new policies on women for their future education and employment opportunity. The likelihood of another sibling, a boy, meant that limited family resources were more likely to be spent on a son's education and the daughter was more likely to be considered as marrying, staying home and raising a family. For me, as a daughter born under the one-child policy, I think about the opportunities that I have had, that may not be available for many young women in the future. The two-child policy has overtly awakened the traditional boy preference, which was politically suppressed during the one-child policy with public statements that endorsed girls as equal to boys as the voice of 'state' feminism. Yet now under the two-child policy, the state asks women to have two children for the good of the economy and traditional Chinese values that favour women staying home to look after them become more visible. As Chinese women, we now face the pressures to produce children, preferably boys, to raise the status of the family and continue the genealogical bloodlines that runs from father to son. This in

turn puts pressure on women to have children, despite our age or whether we are physically able, or willing, to do so.

This is demonstrated by the increase in women having children outside the age group deemed medically safe in China and the public outcry that has been visible on social media. Although there are storylines that narrate the two-child policy as allowing reproductive freedom, this freedom is an illusion. Women have more reproductive freedom than before, but in reality, this excess amount of freedom is not always controlled by women themselves. It is actually monitored by the government and often judged by social norms and familial expectations. Women's control of their own bodies is still firmly dictated by the state and now with the likelihood of son and daughter siblings, gender equality is further repressed by the heightened visibility of son preference within both the family and employment opportunities that further endorse a woman's status within Chinese patriarchal tradition. Women are being asked to rethink their priorities.

For women born under the one-child policy, their educational and professional aspirations, encouraged and funded by their families, may be compromised. In workplaces, women who are likely to have a second child are not considered as suitable candidates for employment. Again, reproductive bodies, so vital to the state are seen as a deficit and likely to cost the company money in lost work hours and productivity. Although the literature suggests that girls are considered as being equals in professional employment, childbirth lowers their economic viability. Despite this, the women in my research were mainly willing to take up the state position to have a second child, even though they also acknowledged the 'inevitable' traditional boy preference and its detrimental effects. Similar to the position of the state, they talked about having a second child as a personal choice and in terms of self-fulfillment, providing company for their siblings, someone to care for them in their old age and enhancing their happiness through traditional Chinese philosophies.

And yet there were counternarratives of resistance against the state call to reproduce, childlessness as important to self-fulfillment, of personal choice, childbirth as disfiguring bodies, the financial impacts on lifestyles and just not liking children. One

aspect that was silent throughout the interviews of those who would opt to have a second child, however, was the consideration of the future of their own daughters under the policy. Although the women considered the effects on future education, travel opportunities and professional status, when opting for more than one child, there was no discussion on how the policy might impact on their daughters.

The study raised several avenues of future research for me. It feels important to pursue the counternarratives as ways of resisting what seems to be an inevitable slide back to traditional ways of living where women's educational and professional development are being compromised. The concepts of entrepreneurial and non-cooperative C-fem could be explored in more depth in the future. Equally as important, are the stories of those who already have a girl child and feel pressured to produce a boy. The voices of those who are having children outside what the medical profession indicates as 'safe' hold situated knowledges that need to be heard. Important as well, are the voices of the future generations of women that are also missing in these interviews: How do we imagine a future for our daughters?

The journey through the research process has been difficult at times as the complexities of the research emerged. I often felt sad and angry writing up this thesis, sad for Chinese women being marginalised in power relations, products of bio-power, expected to produce more babies to meet the expected productivity of the state. I felt anger at how the new policy had increased gender discrimination in the workplace because of 'reproductive bodies' and how this was affecting those of us lucky enough to be privileged in a one child regulated system as educated boy substitutes as a gold standard for equality. I was angry at my helplessness, my powerlessness and insignificance to make a difference, to truly empower Chinese women and free them from reproductive responsibilities and societal pressures. I am no longer angry and on the completion of this research, there is hope for change. I now have a broader understanding of the complexities of these issues: we *can* work towards changing the narrative and future research is the key to transformation. Finally, I wish more Chinese women could see the findings of this study and that they might think of it as they make decisions about their lives in terms of employment, marriage, and reproduction. If this study could empower even just one Chinese woman's life, my work will be worthwhile.

References

- Abrahamson, P. (2016). End of an era? China's one-child policy and its unintended consequences. *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, 10, 326–338.
- Ahn, N. (1994). Effects of the one-child family policy on second and third births in Hebei, Shaanxi and Shanghai. *Journal of Population Economics*, 7(1), 63-78.
- Aird, J. S. (1990). *Slaughter of the innocents: Coercive birth control in China*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute Press.
- Allen, K. (2017). *Chinese debate medical rights after pregnant woman's suicide*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41172675>
- Alpermann, B., & Zhan, S. (2019). Population planning after the one-child policy: Shifting modes of political steering in China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(117), 348-366. doi:10.1080/10670564.2018.1542218
- Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). *Doing narrative research* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Attané, I. (2002). China's family planning policy: An overview of its past and future. *Studies in Family Planning*, 33(1), 103-113.
- Attané, I. (2009). The determinants of discrimination against daughters in China: Evidence from a provincial-level analysis. *Population Studies* 63(1), 87–102.
- BBC News. (2018). *China birth rate: Mothers, your country needs you!* Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-46558562>
- Bongaarts, J., & Guilmoto, C. Z. (2015). How many more missing women? Excess female mortality and prenatal sex selection, 1970-2050. *Population and*

Development Review, 41(2), 241-269.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper (Eds.), *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology: Vol. 2, Research Designs* (pp.57-71). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bulte, E., Heerink, N., & Zhang, X. (2011). China's one-child policy and 'the mystery of missing women': Ethnic minorities and male-biased sex ratios. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 73(1), 21-39.

Burgess-Limerick, T., & Burgess-Limerick, R. (1998). Conversational interviews and multiple-case research in psychology. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 50(2), 63-70.

Cameron, L., Erkal, N., Gangadharan, L., & Meng, X. (2013). Little emperors: Behavioral impacts of China's one-child policy. *Science*, 339(6122), 953-957.

Cavazos-Rehg, P. A., Krauss, M. J., Spitznagel, E. L., Bommarito, K., Madden, T., Olsen, M. A., ... Bierut, L. J. (2015). Maternal age and risk of labor and delivery complications. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 19, 1202–1211.

Chan, C. L. W., Yip, P. S. F., Ng, E. H. Y., Ho, P. C., Chan, C. H. Y., & Au, J. S. K. (2002). Gender selection in China: Its meanings and implications. *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics*, 19(9), 426-430.

Chen, L. (2017). *Pregnant Chinese woman 'commits suicide' after family refuse to allow her to have a caesarean section*. Retrieved from <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2109804/pregnant-chinese-woman-commits-suicide-after-family-refuse-allow>

Chen, Y., Ebenstein, A., Edlund, L., & Li, H. (2015). Girl adoption in China—A less-known side of son preference. *Population Studies*, 69(2), 161-178.

Chen, J. & Jordan, L. P. (2018). Intergenerational support in one- and multi-child

- families in China: Does child gender still matter? *Research on Aging*, 40(2), 180-204. doi:10.1177/0164027517690883
- Chen, Y., Li, H., & Meng, L. (2012). Prenatal sex selection and missing girls in China. Evidence from the diffusion of diagnostic ultrasound. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 48(1), 36-70.
- Chen, H., Wang, X., Li, Z., & Zhu, Z. (2019). The impact of neighborhood environment on women's willingness to have a second child in China. *The Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision, and Financing*, 56, 1-8.
- Cheng, P. J., & Duan, T. (2016). China's new two-child policy: Maternity care in the new multiparous era. *An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 123(S3), 7-9.
- Chi, Y., Huang, X., & Zhou, Y. (2018). An empirical study on two-child policy in china based on statistical analysis and machine learning. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 196, 430-433.
- Chu, J. (2001). Prenatal sex determination and sex-selective abortion in rural central China. *Population and Development Review*, 27(2), 259-281.
- Coale, A. J., & Banister, J. (1994). Five decades of missing females in China. *Demography*, 31(3), 459-479.
- Cooke, F. L. (2017). The two-child policy in China: A blessing or a curse for the employment of female university graduates? In D. Grimshaw., C. Fagan., G. Hebson & I. Tavora (Eds.), *Making work more equal* (pp. 227-245). Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.
- Cunningham, M, E. (2017). Good girls in revolt: The future of feminism in China. *World Policy Journal*, 33(4), 18-22.
- De La Rochebrochard, E., & Thonneau, P. (2002). Paternal age and maternal age are risk factors for miscarriage; results of a multicentre European study. *Human Reproduction*, 17(6), 1649-1656.

- Deutsch, F. M. (2006). Filial piety, patrilineality, and China's one-child policy. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(3), 366-389.
- Ding, Q. J., & Hesketh, T. (2006). Family size, fertility preferences, and sex ratio in China in the era of the one child family policy: Results from national family planning and reproductive health survey. *BMJ*, 333, 371-373. doi:10.1136/bmj.38775.672662.80
- Du, Y. (2016). *What is the problem represented to be? A problematisation on two child policy in China*. (Master's thesis, Lund University, Lund, Sweden). Retrieved from <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8904627&fileId=8904631>
- Eagly, A. H., Eaton, A., Rose, S., Riger, S., & McHugh, M. (2012). Feminism and psychology: Analysis of a half-century of research. *American Psychologist*, 67, 211-230.
- Eagly, A. H., & Riger, S. (2014). Feminism and psychology. Critiques of methods and epistemology. *American Psychologist*, 69(7), 685-702.
- Ebenstein, A. (2008). The "missing girls" of China and the unintended consequences of the one child policy. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 45(1), 87-115.
- Edlund, L., Li, H., Yi, J., & Zhang, J. (2007). More men, more crime: Evidence from China's one-child policy. *IZA Discussion Paper*, 3214, 1-47.
- Edlund, L., Li, H., Yi, J., & Zhang, J. (2013). Sex ratios and crime: Evidence from China. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 95(5), 1520-1534.
- Eklund, L. & Purewal, N. (2017). The bio-politics of population control and sex-selective abortion in China and India. *Feminism and Psychology*, 27(1), 34-55.
- Fan, Z., Gao, X., & Yang, H. (2007). Popularizing labor analgesia in China. *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*, 98(3), 205-207.
- Feng, W., Gu, B., & Cai, Y. (2016). The end of China's one-child policy. *Studies in Family Planning*, 47(1), 83-86.

- Fetterly, M. (2014). *Sex trafficking and China's one child policy*. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2014/11/sex-trafficking-and-chinas-one-child-policy/>
- Finley, L. M. (1986). Transcending equality theory: A way out of the maternity and the workplace debate. *Columbia Law Review*, 86(6), 1118-1182.
- Fong, V. L. (2002). China's one-child policy and the empowerment of urban daughters. *American Anthropologist*, 104(4), 1098-1109.
- Fung, E. (2014). The rise of women in China and the one child policy. *Journal of Student Scholarship*, 16, 1-6.
- Glionna, J. M. (2008, January 2). A voice for rural women of China. *Los Angeles Times*.
- Goodkind, D. (1996). On substituting sex ratio strategies in East Asia: Does prenatal sex selection reduce postnatal discrimination? *Population and Development Review*, 22(1), 111-125.
- Greenhalgh, S. (2001). Fresh winds in Beijing: Chinese feminists speak out on the one-child policy and women's lives. *Journal of Women and Culture and Society*, 26(3), 847-886.
- Gu, B., & Roy, K. (1995). Sex ratio at birth in China, with reference to other areas in East Asia: What we know. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, 10, 17-42.
- Gu, C., Zhu, X., Ding, Y., Simone, S., Wang, X., Tao, H., & Zhang, Y. (2018). A qualitative study of nulliparous women's decision making on mode of delivery under China's two-child policy. *Midwifery*, 62, 6-13.
- Harding, S. (1995). "Strong objectivity": A response to the new objectivity question. *Synthese*, 104(3), 331-349.
- Harding, S. (2004). Introduction: Standpoint theory as a site of political, philosophical and scientific debate. In S. Harding (Ed). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and political controversies*. New York: Routledge.
- Hellerstein, S., Feldman, S., & Duan, T. (2014). China's 50% caesarean delivery rate: Is

it too high? *BJOG*, 122, 160–165.

Hesketh, T., Zhou, X., & Wang, Y. (2015). The end of the one-child policy: lasting implications for China. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 314 (24), 2619–2620.

Hesketh, T. & Zhu, W. X. (1997). Health in China. The one child family policy: the good, the bad, and the ugly. *British Medical Journal*, 314 (7095), 1685–1687.

Hesketh, T., & Zhu, W. X. (2006). Abnormal sex ratios in human populations: Causes and consequences. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 36, 13271–13275.

Hu, A. (2016). Half the sky, but not yet equal: China's feminist movement. *Harvard International Review*, 37(3), 15-18.

Hu, B. Y., Roberts, S. K., Jeong, S. L., & Guo, H. (2015). Challenges to early childhood education in rural China: Lessons from the Hebei province. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(5), 815-831.

Huang, W., Lei, X., & Sun, A. (2015). The great expectations: Impact of one-child policy on education of girls. *IZA Discussion Paper*, 9301.

Huang, W., Lei, X., & Sun, A. (2016). *When fewer means more: Impact of one-child policy on education of girls*. Retrieved from http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/weihuang/files/ocp_education_201605.pdf

Huang, Z., Lin, L., & Zhang, J. (2019). *Fertility, child gender, and parental migration decision: Evidence from one child policy in China*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331555963_Fertility_Child_Gender_and_Parental_Migration_Decision_Evidence_from_One_Child_Policy_in_China

Hull, T. (1990). Recent trends in sex ratios at birth in China. *Population and Development Review*, 16(1), 70-83.

Issacharoff, S., & Rosenblum, E. (1994). Women and the workplace: Accommodating the demands of pregnancy. *Columbia Law Review*, 94(7), 2154-2221.

- Jiang, J. (2019). Women's rights and gender equality in China: The development and struggle in chains of state feminism. In S. Biddulph & J. Rosenzweig (Eds.), *Handbook on Human Rights in China*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Johansson, S., & Nygren, O. (1991). The missing girls of China: A new demographic account. *Population and Development Review*, 17(1), 35-51.
- Lee, M. (2012). The one-child policy and gender equality in education in China: Evidence from household data. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 33, 41-52.
- Li, H., Yi, J., & Zhang, J. (2011). Estimating the effect of the one-child policy on the sex ratio imbalance in China: Identification based on the difference-in-differences. *Demography*, 48, 1535-1557.
- Li, H., Zhou, T., & Jia, C. (2019). The influence of the universal two-child policy on China's future population and ageing. *Journal of Population Research*, 36, 183-203. doi:10.1007/s12546-019-09228-7
- Liang, H., Fan, Y., Zhang, N., Chongsuvivatwong, V., Wang, Q., Gong, J., & Sriplung, H. (2018). Women's cesarean section preferences and influencing factors in relation to China's two-child policy: a cross-sectional study. *Patient Preference and Adherence*, 12, 2093-2101.
- Libbon, S. E. (2007). Pathologizing the female body: Phallocentrism in western science. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 8(4), 79-92.
- Liu, F. (2006). Boys as only-children and girls as only-children-parental gendered expectations of the only-child in the nuclear Chinese family in present-day China. *Gender and Education*, 18(5), 491-505.
- Liu, Y. (2017). Women rising as half of the sky? An empirical study on women from the one-child generation and their higher education participation in contemporary China. *Higher Education*, 74, 963-978.
- Liu, J., & Liu, T. (2018). Two-child policy, gender income and fertility choice in China. *International Review of Economics and Finance*. doi: 10.1016/j.iref.2018.12.009

- Liu, Y., Qin, Q., Xiao, Y., Li, H., Guang, S., Tao, S., & Hu, Y. (2019). Changes of second-time mothers and their infants under the universal two-child policy in Changsha, China. *Midwifery*, 77, 32–36.
- Liu, H., Zhou, J., Tang, Y., Ma, Y., Xie, C., & Lin, X. (2012). Survey of labor epidural analgesia and patient education for women in southwest China. *Journal of Anesthesia*, 26, 800-801.
- Lu, Y., & Zheng, M. (2017). Web topic analysis of the two-child policy in China. *Procedia Computer Science*, 107, 97-102.
- Nicolson, P. (1993). Deconstructing sexology: Understanding the pathologization of female sexuality. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 11(4), 191-201.
- Nybo-Andersen, A., Wohlfahrt, J., Christens, P., Olsen, J., & Melbye, M. (2000). Maternal age and fetal loss: population based register linkage study. *BMJ*, 320(24), 1708-1712.
- Pan, X., Liu, J., Li, L. W., & Kwok, J. (2016). Posttraumatic growth in aging individuals who have lost their only child in China. *Death Studies*, 40(7), 395-404. doi:10.1080/07481187.2016.1169234
- Parkin, S. (2016). *Not quite going to plan — older mothers and the two-child policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2016/chapter-3-population-and-the-economy-the-ups-and-downs-of-one-and-two/not-quite-going-to-plan-older-mothers-and-the-two-child-policy/>
- Pasha-Robinson, L. (2017). *Pregnant woman in excruciating pain kills herself after being denied a caesarean section*. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/pregnant-woman-suicide-caesarean-section-kill-herself-pain-ma-shaanzi-province-a7933876.html>
- Poston, D. L., & Glover, K. S. (2005). Too many males: Marriage market implications of gender imbalances in China. *Genus*, 61(2), 119-140.

- Prevoo, V. (2019). *The two-child policy and its effect on the career expectations of Chinese female students* (Master thesis, Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands). Retrieved from <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/77224>
- Qi, Y. (2017). A second child? No, thank you! The impact of Chinese family planning policies on fertility decision. *Scripps Senior These*, 926.
- Qian, Y., & Jin, Y. (2018). Women's fertility autonomy in urban China: The role of couple dynamics under the universal two-child policy. *Chinese Sociological Review*, 50(3), 275-309. doi: 10.1080/21620555.2018.1428895
- Qiu, H., Zhang, Q., Zhang, J., Ren, Y., Zhou, X., Li, S., ... Hou, L. (2019). Fertility intentions and influential factors in Dalian urban city---A cross-sectional study based on universal two-child policy in China. *bioRxiv*. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1101/572008>
- Riessman, C.K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Russo, N. F. (1976). The motherhood mandate. *Journal of Social Issues*, 32(3), 143-153.
- Russo, N. F. (1979). Overview: Sex roles, fertility and the motherhood mandate. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 4(1), 7-15.
- Saini, S. (2002). Born to die: The tragedy of being born the 'wrong' gender. *The Humanist* 62(4), 26-27.
- Sen, A. K. (1990). More than 100 million women are missing. *New York Review of Books*, 20, 61-66.
- Shi, Z. (2016). Does the number of children matter to the happiness of their parents? *The Journal of Chinese Sociology*, 3(16), 1-24.
- Shi, Y., & Kennedy, J. J. (2016). Delayed registration and identifying the "missing girls" in China. *The China Quarterly*, 228, 1018-1038.

- Sun, W., Gordon, J., & Pacey, A. (2016). From one to two: The effect of women and the economy on China's one-child policy. *Human Fertility*, 19(1), 1-2.
- Tatlow, D. K., & Piao, V. (2015). *Ending of one-child policy takes Chinese to social media, and some to the bedroom*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/30/world/asia/china-ends-one-child-policy-wei-bo-wechat.html>
- Tsui, M., & Rich, L. (2002). The only child and educational opportunity for girls in urban China. *Gender and Society*, 16(1), 74-92.
- Van Enk, A. A. J. (2009). The shaping effects of the conversational interview. An examination using Bakhtin's theory of genre. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15(7), 1265-1286.
- Veeck, A., Flurry, L. A., & Jiang, N. (2003). Equal dreams: The one child policy and the consumption of education in urban China. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 6(1), 81-94. doi:10.1080/10253860302697
- Wang, W. (2005). Son preference and educational opportunities of children in China—"I wish you were a boy!" *Gender Issues*, 22(2), 3-30.
- Wang, E., & Hesketh, T. (2017). Large reductions in cesarean delivery rates in China: A qualitative study on delivery decision-making in the era of the two-child policy. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 17(405), 1-12.
- Wang, S., & Song, Y. (2019). Chinese online public opinions on the two-child policy. *Online Information Review*. doi:10.1108/OIR-07-2017-0217
- Wang, J., & Wang, N. (2017). Significance and problems of two-child policy. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 95, 528-530.
- Wang, L., Xu, X., Baker, P., Tong, C., Zhang, L., Qi, H., & Zhao, Y. (2016). Patterns and associated factors of caesarean delivery intention among expectant mothers in China: Implications from the implementation of China's new national two-child policy. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 13(686), 1-11.

- World Economic Forum. (2017). *Moving Backwards: Ten Years of Progress on Global Gender Parity Stalls in 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/press/2017/11/ten-years-of-progress-on-global-gender-parity-stalls-in-2017/>
- Wu, Y. (2005). Making sense in Chinese “Feminism”/Women’s studies. In M. Waller & S. Marcos (Ed.). *Dialogue and difference. Feminisms challenge globalization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wu, A. X. & Dong, Y. (2019). What is made-in China feminism(s)? Gender discontent and class friction in post-socialist China. *Critical Asian Studies*, 51(4), 471-492.
- Wu, Z., Viisainen, K., & Hemminki, E. (2006). Determinants of high sex ratio among newborns: A cohort study from rural Anhui province, China. *Reproductive Health Matters* 14(27), 172–180.
- Xu, B., & Pak, M. (2015). Gender ratio under China’s two-child policy. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 119, 289-307.
- Yin, X., Li, Z., Li, J., & Liu, X. (2019). Sibling relationship quality and young children’s mental health in Chinese two-child families. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 47(6), e7457.
- Yin, Q., Shang, Z., Zhou, N., Wu, L., Liu, G., Yu, X.,...Liu, W. (2018). An investigation of physical and mental health consequences among Chinese parents who lost their only child. *BMC Psychiatry*, 18(45). doi: 10.1186/s12888-018-1621-2
- Zeng, Y., & Hesketh, T. (2016). The effects of China's universal two-child policy. *The Lancet*, 388(10054), 1930-1938.
- Zeng, Y., Tu, P., Gu, B., Xu, Y., Li, B., & Li, Y. (1993). Causes and implications of the recent increase in the reported sex ratio at birth in China. *Population and Development Review*, 19(2), 283-302.
- Zhang, J. (2010). Marriage and suicide among Chinese rural young women. *Social*

Forces, 89(1), 311-326.

Zhang, J., & Li, Z. (2017). The dilemma of professional women's fertility in the context of china's comprehensive two – child policy and measures. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 23, 43-45.

Zhao, G. M. (2003). Trafficking of women for marriage in China. *Criminal Justice*, 3(1), 83-102.

Zhao, Q., & Peng, Z. (2016). Economic analysis of the gender discrimination in employment under the background of universal two-child policy. *IEEE*. doi:10.1109/IEIS.2016.7551882

Zheng, W. (1997). Maoism, feminism, and the UN conference on women: Women's studies research in contemporary China. *Journal of Women's History*, 8(4), 126-152.

Zheng, W. (2005). "State feminism"? Gender and socialist state formation in Maoist China. *Feminist Studies*, 31(3), 519-551.

Zheng, Z. (2011). Women's empowerment in reproductive health in China— searching and practice. In K. Zhang (Eds.), *Sexual and Reproductive Health in China* (pp. 37–68). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Zheng, Y., Lawson, T. R., & Head, B. A. (2017). "Our only child has died"--A study of bereaved older Chinese parents. *The Journal of Death and Dying*, 74 (4), 410-425. doi:10.1177/0030222815612285

Zhou, C., Wang, X., Zhou, X., & Hesketh, T. (2012). Son preference and sex-selective abortion in China: Informing policy options. *International Journal of Public Health*, 57, 459-465. doi:10.1007/s00038-011-0267-3

Zhu, W. X., Lu, L., & Hesketh, T. (2009). China's excess males, sex selective abortion, and one child policy: Analysis of data from 2005 national intercensus survey. *BMJ*, 338. doi:10.1136/bmj.b1211

Appendix A

Chinese women's experiences in the context of the two-child policy.

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

My name is Minjia Zhu. I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, and this project is for my Master's thesis. The purpose of this study is to understand what the two-child policy means to Chinese women who are aged from 25 to 35, and how this policy affects their lives in relation to family, workplace, and society.

Project Description and Invitation

The comprehensive two-child policy that allows all Chinese married couples to have two children has been in effect since the beginning of 2016. Many families have already had their second child. As the most relevant population that the two-child policy may have affected, Chinese women are facing challenges and ramifications as a result of the policy in a number of areas, including employment, health care, social status, power dynamics in marriage, and gender roles. I am interested in discussing the impact of this policy on Chinese women's lives and their own understanding of the effects of the policy. I think your voices, experiences, and stories need to be heard so that policy makers can have a more comprehensive understanding about the meaning of the two-child policy for Chinese women, researchers can have a deeper look at the experiences of living under this policy, and Chinese people themselves can have a wider context of the policy to be considered.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

If you are aged from 25 to 35, currently living in New Zealand, and willing to share your stories and understandings of the two-child policy, I sincerely invite you to participate in this study. If

you are interested in participation, please contact me, and I will book a room in the library at a time that suits you best. I aim to recruit 6 participants, so if you know another person who you think might be interested in participating, please feel free to pass on this information sheet. Thank you very much.

Project Procedures

You will be involved in a conversational interview that will last about one hour. You can choose to speak in Chinese or in English. There will be no fixed questions or standard answers, you can answer the questions completely based on your understandings and experiences. You are free to talk about whatever you think is meaningful for you. I will be responsive to your stories and understandings of the policy. The interview will be sound recorded for further transcription. The transcript of your interview will be returned to you in person or electronically, and it may also take about half an hour for you to review your transcript.

Data Management

Your identity will be protected at all times. I will use pseudonyms in transcripts so that your identity will be protected. I will transcribe the recording of your interview and if you choose to talk in Chinese I will also translate it into English. After the transcription and translation, you can review your transcript either in Chinese or in English. Once you approve the transcript, the recordings will be destroyed. During these processes, I will store the records of data securely and use password to protect them. Excerpts from the transcript will be used for this project and any publications that result from the analysis.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study up until the release of the transcript;
- withdraw any statements you made in the interview when you review your transcript;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

If you are not completely sure on anything above or if you have any questions about the project, please feel free to contact me and/or my supervisors:

Minjia Zhu. E-mail: minjia.zhu.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

Supervisor: Dr Leigh Coombes. E-mail: L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz

Co-supervisor: Dr Ann Rogerson. E-mail: A.L.Rogerson@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix B

中国女性在二胎政策环境下的经历

实验信息表

研究人员简介

我叫朱敏佳，目前是心理学专业的一名研究生，这个研究项目是为了我的研究生毕业论文而设计的。这个研究的目的是为了去理解二胎政策对于 25 到 35 岁的中国女性意味着什么，并且试图去分析这个政策是怎样影响她们在家庭，工作，和社会上的生活。

研究项目简介

自 2016 年初以来，允许所有中国已婚夫妇生育两个孩子的全面二胎政策已经生效。许多家庭已经生育了第二个孩子。作为二胎政策最相关的人群，中国女性正在面对这个政策带来的一系列挑战 and 影响，包括就业，医疗保健，社会地位，婚姻权力动态和性别角色。在这个研究中，我想讨论这一政策对中国女性的影响以及她们对政策的理解。我认为你的看法，经验和故事值得被关注，以便政策制定者能够更全面地了解二胎政策对中国女性的含义，研究人员可以更深入地了解这一政策下的生活经历，中国人自己也可以对二胎政策有更广泛的理解背景。

研究被试的招募

如果您的年龄在 25 岁至 35 岁之间，目前居住在新西兰，并愿意分享您对二胎政策的故事和理解，我诚挚地邀请您参加本研究。如果您对参与感兴趣，请与我联系，我会在图书馆预订一个房间。我的目标是招募 6 名参与者，所以如果您认识另一个您认为可能有兴趣参与的人，请随时传递此信息表。非常感谢。

实验步骤

您将参与一个持续约一小时的对话访谈。您可以选择用中文或英文对话。这个采访没有固定的问题或标准答案，您可以根据您的理解和经验回答问题。你可以自由地谈论你认为对你有意义的事情。我将回应您的故事和对政策的理解。采访将被录音以便进行下一步转录。您的采访记录将返还给您审阅，因此可能需要大约半小时的时间来翻阅采访稿。

数据管理

您的身份将全程受到保护。我会在采访稿中使用假名以便保护您的身份。我会转录你的采访录音，如果你选择用中文交谈，我也会把它翻译成英文。转录和翻译后，您可以查看中文或英文的采访稿。一旦您批准了采访记录，录音将被销毁。在这些过程中，我将安全地存储数据并使用密码来保护它们。采访稿摘录将用于此研究项目以及产生的任何出版物。

被试权利

您没有义务接受此邀请。但是如果您决定参加，您有权：

- 拒绝回答任何特定问题;
- 在采访稿返还给您前退出研究;
- 在审阅采访稿时撤回您在访谈中所做的任何陈述;
- 在参与期间随时询问有关该研究的任何问题;
- 在匿名的环境下提供有关信息;
- 在研究完成时，可以访问项目结果摘要。
- 要求在采访过程中随时关闭录音机。

联系方式

如果您对上述任何内容不完全确定，或者您对本研究有任何疑问，请随时与我，和/或我的导师联系：

朱敏佳，邮箱：minjia.zhu.1@uni.massey.ac.nz

导师：Dr Leigh Coombes. E-mail: L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz

副导师：Dr Ann Rogerson. E-mail: A.L.Rogerson@massey.ac.nz

该项目已通过同行评审进行评估，并被判定为低风险。因此，它尚未经过大学人类伦理委员会的审查。本文件中指定的研究人员负责本研究的道德行为。如果您

对本研究的行为有任何疑问，您希望与研究人员以外的其他人提出，请联系
Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C

Chinese Women's experiences in the context of the two-child policy

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time up until I have agreed to the transcript being used.

1. I agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.
[print full name]

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix D

Chinese women's experiences in the context of the two-child policy

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.