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One Child Policy and Women's Challenging Social Situation in China

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the paradox that young women in China find it difficult to search for a husband when there is a surplus of men in the population. The research questions and hypothesis is in concern with how the One Child Policy has a salient impact on the Chinese young women. The methodology involves in-depth interviews among 10 participants and documentary analysis. By observing the experience of the young women, and the only daughters in particular, it demonstrates that young women in China are faced with difficulties in balancing work and caregiving. Using the framework of Confucian caring regime, the current study reveals that Chinese young women are stressed about their future caring responsibilities. Compared to young women with siblings, the only daughters have more challenges due to the lack of public support and high expectations. The framework of the Confucian caring regime is so preliminary that it needs developing. Considering the remarkable outcomes of the One Child Policy in China, it is time for policymakers to rethink and strategize it.

KEYWORDS

The One Child Policy, Chinese women, marital selection, caring regimes

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	- 2 -
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	- 3 -
TABLE OF CONTENTS	- 1 -
INTRODUCTION	- 3 -
1. Motivation.....	- 4 -
2. Aim and Research Question.....	- 5 -
BACKGROUND	- 6 -
1. The Mate-selection Values	- 6 -
2. The Changing Marital Values in China.....	- 7 -
RESEARCH OVERVIEW	- 8 -
1. The One Child Policy in China.....	- 8 -
1.1 Outset of the OCP	- 8 -
1.2 Consequences of the OCP.....	- 10 -
2. The Presence of Sheng-nv.....	- 12 -
THEROTICAL FRAMEWORK.....	- 15 -
1. Care in Welfare States.....	- 15 -
2. Confucian Welfare State	- 17 -
3. Confucian Caring Regime.....	- 18 -
METHODOLOGY	- 21 -
1. Approach	- 21 -
1.1 Qualitative approach	- 21 -
1.2 Comparative approach	- 21 -
2. Collecting Data	- 22 -
2.1 Strategy	- 22 -
2.2 Selecting participants	- 23 -
2.3 Selecting techniques.....	- 24 -
2.4 Selecting site: Shanghai	- 26 -

3. Ethical Consideration.....	- 27 -
4. Reliability and Validity	- 29 -
RESULT	- 30 -
1. Expectations on Future Husbands.....	- 30 -
1.1 Economic condition	- 30 -
1.2 Family background	- 31 -
1.3 Education and personalities	- 31 -
2. The Only Daughters vs. Daughters with Siblings.....	- 33 -
2.1 To be married or not.....	- 33 -
2.2 Upcoming difficulties	- 35 -
2.3 Shift from sons to son-in-laws	- 36 -
3. The Changing Caring Regimes.....	- 38 -
3.1 The caregiving capacity	- 38 -
3.2 The childcare model.....	- 42 -
3.3 The elderly care mode.....	- 46 -
CONCLUSION.....	- 51 -
DISCUSSION.....	- 52 -
APPENDIX.1 -Interview Guide	- 53 -
English version.....	- 53 -
Chinese version.....	- 55 -
APPENDIX.2-Interviewees	- 57 -
REFERENCE.....	- 58 -

INTRODUCTION

It has been over thirty years that China launched the One Child Policy. It has decreased the population of the nation successfully, but one of the major consequences is the large drop in female population. It turns out that the current sex ratio, within the age 15-54 is 108 males to 100 females in China (CIA¹, 2013). When there are more men than women, women may be more selective. The *Imbalanced Sex Ratio Theory* suggests, when the sex ratio is high, where there is a greater supply of males relative to females, women benefit from greater “dyadic power” as they are in higher demand (South and Trent, 1988). In this light, the situation is supposed to make it difficult for young men to find a wife of their own age.

However, a survey shows that 32% of the single women have difficulty in finding partners (Jiayuan, 2012). An investigation on matchmaking agencies in Beijing with about 10, 0000 registered members shows that unmarried women over age 30 are outnumbered by men at 7:3. It has been a heated topic in China that it is challenging for young women to find an ideal husband even when there is a surplus of male bachelors out there in the marriage market (Wang, 2003; Jin, 2006)

Inspired by this intriguing paradox, I decided to set out a study on it, when I realized it is not just a phenomenon appearing in the media, but happening to my friends. I begin with a brief motivation and research objectives. The second part gives the background to mate-selection values and the changing marital choice in China. Thereafter it follows an overview on the One Child Policy and the Sheng-nv phenomenon in China. I then set the Confucian caring regime as the conceptual framework. The fifth part describes the methodology for the study. Findings are presented in the sixth part. It ends up with a discussion and policy implications.

¹ Central Intelligence Agency

1. Motivation

“It's a truth universally acknowledged that a single woman in possession of wallets and wardrobes must be in want of her wedding” (Wang, 2011, para.1). My best friend, Monica, who is a 25-year-old, works as a primary school teacher and is engaging in blind dates every weekend. She told me sadly, “dating is always delighting and exciting for girls, but I do not feel anything sweet but rather nervousness”. Many of my female friends like Monica, who are in their mid-twenties, with good education and a decent job, are involved in blind dates frequently. They are desperately looking for a Mr. Right so that they can get rid of the label of Sheng-nv². Their families and friends are helping them out in matchmaking anxiously. In China, single young women over 30-years-old, and even in their mid to late 20s may find themselves labeled as sheng-nv, translated literally as *leftover women*, referring to urban women in their twenties and thirties, who are highly-educated, highly-earning and highly-independent, yet still single and unlikely to get hitched anytime soon (Wang, 2011; Reid, 2012).

Before blind dating, they collect the information about the young men including education, salary, the location of his apartment, and even the positions of his parents. I got surprised that my friends value economic conditions more than affections or attractions. Being an international student in Sweden, I have been experiencing culture shock as I come from Asia where people's life-styles and values are remarkably different from those in Europe. I have found plenty of differences in thoughts between Europeans and Asians, one of which is the value when choosing a marriage partner. I am confused to see my Chinese friends desire so much of the potential husbands, while European young women tend to date with gentlemen whom they have “chemistry” with. When I think it over, it occurred to me that my friends are mostly the first generation of the only child in China. It made me wonder whether being the only daughter affects their values.

² in Chinese 剩女

Chins has long followed the Confucian tradition which places strong emphasis on the caregiving obligation. The One Child Policy has produced the 4-2-1 family, consisting of 2 sets of grandparents, 1 set of parents, and 1 child. It means increasing numbers of young couples will take on considerable caregiving work (Fowler, Gao and Carlson, 2010). Being the only daughter in the family, I am anticipating more future caring responsibility for myself. I am wondering whether it retails challenges to other young women, and whether the caring mode is making it harder for young women to find an ideal husband. To tease out such questions, I am going to study it.

2. Aim and Research Question

The present paper is to explore this paradox that young women cannot find a husband easily when there is a surplus of men. The overall ambition is to look specifically at the One Child Policy and offer a possible explanation. By examining the experience and feelings of the young women, it illuminates the challenges facing them; being a caregiver in the context of the One Child Policy.

One research question should be proposed before the study:

Do young women have too many expectations in their search of husbands?

If so, the following questions and hypothesis are to be proposed:

Q1: Does the One Child Policy have an impact on their mate-selection values?

H1: The One Child Policy makes an important role in affecting their mate-selection values by which the young single women are experiencing challenges in the context of this policy.

When above would be solved, a deeper question will be explored:

Q2: How does the One Child Policy play an impact on young single women's social situation?

BACKGROUND

1. The Mate-selection Values

A few terminologies are necessary at the beginning. The mate-selection value is the starting point of this study. *Mate-selection* is used to describe an individual's selection of the initial marital partner and romantic relationship towards marriage. When a relationship occurs, consequential consideration is what characteristics are valuable (Li and Yla, 2009). The *mate-selection value* in this study refers to the factors people consider of most importance in their choice of a marriage partner.

A Multitude of scholarship articulates the roots for the fact that women weigh more on the economic benefits than men do in search of marital partners. Males usually compete more intensely for mates than females do (Jones, 1996). According to the Bateman's principle, females invest relatively more energy into producing offspring, which makes females become choosy in searching for the male with good genes to pass onto her offspring (Bateman, 1948; Trivers, 1972). Socio-cultural theories suggest that females' comparative structural powerlessness leads them to hypergamy or marrying-upward in socio-economic status (Adrian, 1990). To achieve upward mobility, women in most societies place greater emphasis on status-related traits in their marriage partners because they have less access to status, power, and economic resources (Li and Kristina, 2008). Men, on the other hand, are in the economic power seat, and thus are free to pursue what are considered as pleasurable, such as a mate's physical attributes (Li and Yla, 2009).

Evolutionists also point out that women are particularly interested in social resources while men are interested in physical attractiveness. Men place values on physical features which signal youth, sexual maturity, and fecundity in order to have more and better offspring. In contrast to female fertility, male fertility remains relatively constant over the life span. But men vary in their ability to provide resources for offspring. Men who are higher in social status have better

accesses to resources, thus, women prioritize social status in mate-selecting to ensure essential social and material resources for their offspring (Li and Kristina, 2008). Yet women also care about the physical attractiveness for the purpose of good genes (Moller and Alatolo, 1999).

2. The Changing Marital Values in China

The marriage decision is strongly influenced by parents' opinions in China (Pimentel, 2000). The “negotiated marriage” is a unique characteristic of Chinese families. In this pattern, the choice of a mate is a cooperated effort of the family. Parental attitudes and agreements are important in marriage decision-making. In such a patriarchal society like China, parents, especially the male superiors, make the decision on the weighty matters for children. A study verifies that only 18.2% of the young people made the marriage decision completely by themselves. Chinese are still likely to comply with parents and together with network members regarding the decision to marry (Zhang and Kline, 2009; Li, 2009).

Women’s mate-selection values have experienced changes over time. In 1950s-1970s, “political background” was the most important and widely-recognized criterion. In 1980s, single women had preference for education and abilities. The intellectuals with high education were favored. In mid-1990s, girls expected to get direct profit from marriage, thus men engaging in private sectors and trading field were thought to be promising (Xu, 2004). In the new millennium, young women's preference is more material and complex, with the development of market economy. Nowadays Chinese women value more fiscal capacity (ibid). Housing and income have gained more value in marriage-seeking. Meanwhile, personality is taken into consideration as well. Young Chinese women are in pursuit of both material and spiritual enjoyment (Zhong, 2003).

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1. The One Child Policy in China

1.1 Outset of the OCP

When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, Chairman Mao considered a large population as an asset to the economic development, addressing that human resources would be China's greatest defense in the predicted “third world war” (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997; Milwertz, 1997). During the first two decades of the People's Republic of China (1949-1969), opinions within the leadership varied from the extremes of population growth being viewed as a great danger on the one hand, and as a positive contribution to the development of the nation on the other. With the improvement in healthcare and the childbearing encouragement from the government, births began to soar in the 1950s. The population rose from 540 million in 1950 to over 850 million by 1970. China had experienced the classic “population explosion” at that time, leading to the demographic crisis (Milwertz, 1997).

In 1979, De Xiaoping, who was acknowledged as the architect of China's ongoing economic miracle, sponsored the economic reform. He was worried about the demographic crisis, addressing in a hardline speech that “unless the birth rate falls rapidly, we will not be able to develop our economy or to raise the living standards of our people” (Chen, 1981; Mosher, 2006, p. 79). The government looked to strict population containment as an essential component to alleviate social, economic, and environmental predicaments (Hesketh and Zhu, 2005; The Latent, 2011). The OCP was introduced in 1979, at the beginning of the economic reform, when the country was home to a quarter of the world’s population (Potts, 2006; The Latent, 2011).

The policy consists of a set of regulations on family planning, including restrictions on family size, late marriage, and the spacing of childbearing. The National Family Planning Bureau sets the overall targets and the family-planning committees at provincial and municipal levels devise

local strategies, specifying rewards for fulfilling and the penalties for not complying (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997).

The policy permits one child per married couple. Nevertheless, there are possibilities for couples to have more than one child. The 55 ethnic minorities, which account for about 8.4% of the total population, are exempt from the one-child requirement. In the countryside, a married couple is allowed to have a second child whose first child is a girl in view of the acknowledgement of traditional preference for boys. In some cases, a second child is permitted only after five years when the first child is a girl; while in some areas this is permitted regardless of the first child's gender. Third and fourth children are still officially permitted in under-populated areas (Hesketh et al., 2005; Milwertz, 1997; NBS³, 2011). Urban families are permitted to have a second child in a series of special circumstances. For instance, by local regulations at Zhejiang province, a married couple is allowed to have a second child:

- 1) If the first child has a defect (which should be specifically defined);
- 2) In the case of remarriage if one partner has no child from the previous marriage;
- 3) If they belong to certain groups of workers such as miners;
- 4) If both partners are themselves from a one-child family (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997; Milwertz, 1997).

There are rewards for those who follow the OCP. The children who are an only children have preferential access to education, employment and health care. In rural areas the family receives a larger allocation of farming plot (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997; Mosher, 2006). According to the regulation in Shanghai, people who followed the OCP are entitled to a one-off subsidy of ¥5000 (\$806) when they have retired. Those who break the rules are not only denied such benefits, but are threatened with heavy fines. According to regulations adopted in 1991 in Beijing, the penalties for having a second child range from ¥5,000-50,000 (\$806-\$8064), and for having a third ¥20,000 - ¥100,000 (\$3226 -\$16130) (Mosher, 2006; SHPFPC⁴, 2003).

³ National Bureau of Statistics of P.R.C.

⁴ Shanghai Municipal Population and Family Planning Commission

1.2 Consequences of the OCP

There is much good about the policy, the most prominent of which is the population control. China, as well as the whole world benefit from it, as natural resources per capita diminishes (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997). Chinese authorities claimed that the OCP had helped prevent 400 million births until 2011 (The Latent, 2011). Owing largely to the effective administrative control, the OCP has succeeded remarkably in keeping fertility low (Milwertz, 1997). By 1984, the fertility rate⁵ was reported to have dropped to 1.94. In 1990s, fertility fell to historic lows- from 1.8 in early 1990s to 1.55 at end of the 1990s. The OCP has been further entrenched and embodied in national law (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997; Greenhalgh, 2008; Winckler, 2002).

However, it has received great attention because of a few side effects. Firstly, it has generated higher SRB⁶. It ranges from 1.06 in 1979, to 1.11 in 1988, to 1.17 in 2001. The SRB was extremely high recently (figure1). In 2011, the SRB was 1.18 and it is estimated to increase in the coming years (Hesketh, Lu and Xing, 2005). Compared with SRB in developed countries such as 1.06 in Sweden and 1.05 in the U.S., and developing countries for instance 1.05 in Thailand and 1.02 in South Africa, the rate in China is contrastively high (CIA, 2013). The reasons for the imbalanced SRB are related to unreported female births, female infanticide and sex selective abortion. The relative contributions of each reason are unknown (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997; Milwertz, 1997). Female infanticide was practiced throughout China both directly by human intervention and indirectly as a result of the malnutrition and sickness which girls suffered due to the unequal distribution of family food and medical attention. Illegal Sex-selective abortion after ultrasonography is considered to account for a large proportion of the decline in female births. China has a long tradition of favoring boys. The extreme imbalance of SRB is linked to the persistence of the Chinese's "son-preference". The strict OCP is imposed by the state; however, abandonment and killing of baby girls and fetus abortions are not subject to state intervention (Eklund, 2011). In some cases, when the second child will be female, pregnancy often "disappears" by means of abortion, allowing the couple to have another child in

⁵ children per women

⁶Sex Ratio at Birth: the ratio of males to females at birth

attempt to have a son. The mother will continue childbearing until a son is born (Croll, 1985; Eklund, 2011; Hesketh et al., 2005; Milwertz, 1997; Potts, 2006).

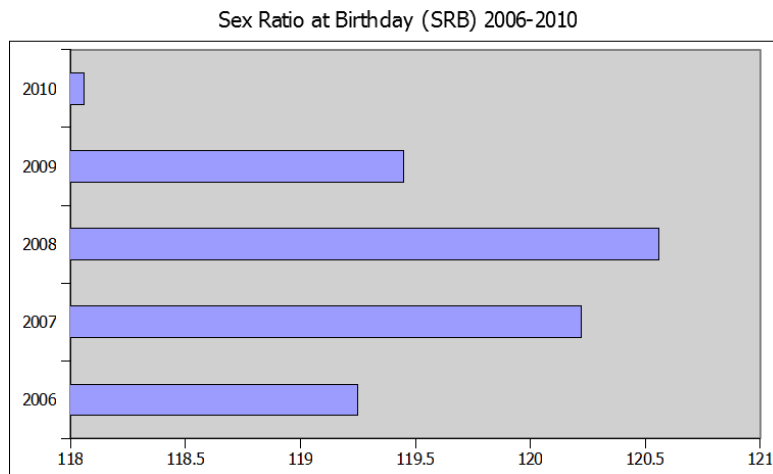


Figure 1 SRB from 2006-2010 (NBS, 2012)

The imbalanced SRB has raised a serious social issue. Each successive birth cohort is smaller, and women tend to marry men who are several years older than themselves (Potts, 2006). It generates the likelihood that millions of men will be unable to find a wife when there are fewer potential brides available than grooms. There are 32 million more marriage-age men than women in China (Kluger, 2013). The scarcity of females has resulted in kidnapping and trafficking of women for marriage and increased numbers of commercial sex workers, with a potential resultant rise in human immunodeficiency, virus infection and other sexually transmitted diseases (Hesketh et al., 2005; Potts, 2006).

Secondly, the rapid decrease in birth rate, combined with the improving life expectancy, has led to an increased proportion of elderly people in China. The percentage of the population over the age of 65 was 5% in 1982 and now stands at 9.1% (the end of 2011). It is expected to rise to 18% by 2025 and 21% by 2050 (NBS, 2012; Hesketh et al., 2005). Owing to the inadequate pension coverage, financial dependence on offspring is still necessary for approximately 70% of elderly people in China (Sun, 2003). As the one-child generation has grown up and ventured into the workplace, they are recognizing that their status as only children, combined with the inadequacy of public pension system, overloads the responsibility for caring for aging grandparents and

parents (Chandler, Levinstein, Dahong and Dan, 2004). Under the OCP, the 4-2-1 family emerges, consisting of two sets of grandparents, one set of parents, and one child. China's pyramid family with multiple generations, in which each larger than the previous generation, has been replaced with the reverse pyramid one. This problem is named the *4-2-1 phenomenon*, meaning that an increasing amount of couples will take on the responsibility to take care of one child and four parents (Fowler, Gao and Carlson, 2010; Settles, Sheng, Zang and Zhao, 2013).

Thirdly, the OCP has profound impacts on Chinese children. They are overprotected by parents and grandparents, which may adversely affect their physical, social, and emotional development (Fowler, Gao and Carlson, 2010). Such an only child is called *the little emperor (Xiao huang di)*⁷, referring to children who are the pride and joy of the family. They are described to be self-centered, self-obsessed, narrow-minded, and incapable of accepting criticism (Chen, 2003; Hesketh and Zhu, 1997). However, a meta-analysis contributed by Falbo and Polit (1987) shows that the only child tends to be more reliant on parents and less independent, however, he is not significantly different in his personality from children raised together with siblings. A few descriptive studies still give straightforward views. When only children grow up, they “become modern, too quickly-glutted with televisions, access to computers, cash to buy brand names” (Clark, 2008, p.90). Their parents and grandparents have experienced famine ages under Mao's disastrous communal agriculture policies and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. The young generation has never experienced the rough years. They never learn how to cope with disappointment and frustrations (Kluger, 2013). Economists predict that as their purchasing power increases, China's “little emperors” will emerge as a driving force of lifestyle and market trends not only in Asia but also worldwide (Chandler et al., 2004; Smith and Wylie, 2004).

2. The Presence of Sheng-nv

Due to the greater demands women have of their potential husbands, more Chinese young women can hardly find themselves a satisfactory mate. It creates a new phenomenon of Sheng-

⁷ in Chinese 小皇帝

nv (literally “leftover woman” in English) which refers to urban women who are over the age of 25, but have not been married. In big cities, single women are estimated to be more common than single men. There are over 500,000 in Beijing and 600,000 in Guangzhou (Chen, 2012; Miao, 2010; Yang, 2011; Xu, 2004).

Literature into Sheng-nv has displayed the gendered society in China. The connotative logic of Sheng-nv is that women should get married by a certain age. If not, they are considered abnormal and “leftover”. In the contrary, the single young men are seldom called “leftover man”, though the term exists, it is still outside of popularity. It indicates that Chinese society is intolerant and disrespectful of diverse individual lifestyle choices of women. The Chinese patriarchal system is still working on discriminating and controlling females (To, 2013; Wang, 2011; Yang, 2011). Some authors attempted to provide deeper explanations to Sheng-nv phenomenon. The difficulty in husband-seeking is attributed to the extremely demanding criteria. Most women are looking for a so called *equal and perfect match*⁸. The higher education and salary a Chinese young women has, the higher expectations she has on an eventual future husband. However, there are not enough single men who are able to meet their satisfaction (Wei, 2010; Xu, 2004; Yang, 2011). Although there are counterparts in other Asian countries as well as in the West, the way people regard and describe this phenomenon is different. Chinese single young women are blamed for being so picky that they fail to get married by “the reasonable age” (Jiutianxuwu, 2012).

It is a paradox that there is a surplus of men population on one hand, but on the other, young women are unable to find a husband easily. The existing literature on “Sheng-nv” is mostly in the form of reports on newspapers and Internet. Despite the attention, little academic buzz is oriented toward policy implication in the context of China’s changing society. This topic still offers a great deal of scope for study. The One Child Policy has attracted attention and many critical consequences have been recognized. Yet, most research is in macro-scales and look on

⁸ in Chinese 门当户对

the one-child issue as a whole. This study will try to offer the possibility to link the One Child Policy and Sheng-nv phenomenon, and try to understand the dynamics between them.

THEROTICAL FRAMEWORK

The OCP has fundamentally altered the family by destroying all former patterns and building up new relationships based on a new set of familial expectations (Fowler, Gao and Carlson, 2012). It creates a dramatic shift in the family structure, and ultimately affects every aspect of family life. It caused great challenges on Chinese young people caring for the family now. Financial, physical and emotional burden of supporting the aging population is quickly falling on China's first only-child generation. It is increasingly difficult for the elderly to meet their daily needs on the small given pensions, as these pensions do not keep up with the rapid inflation (Wang, 2005).

1. Care in Welfare States

Esping-Andersen (1990) inspired the considerable debate over typology of the *welfare state*. His theory emphasizes the relationship between employment and welfare. Three types of welfare states are defined, on the grounding of the de-modification of labour power. It neglected the issue of gender in relation to women's paid work in the labour market and unpaid caring work in the household (Leira and Saraceno, 2002). Social policies must promote the choice for both men and women entitling the full citizenship (Rostgaard, 2003). Care policies, thus, are in need to be assessed according to whether they promote *de-familialization* and *lessen individual's* reliance on family. Care needs cannot be met without provision of some kind of goods or service. The welfare states are expected to be involved in the care studies (Daly and Rake, 2003)

The notions of care regime and social care service regime have been brought forward. *Care regimes* are conceived as a given arrangement of social care policies for children and older people which supports specific interventions, values and norms in regard to the division of unpaid and paid work (Rostgaard, 2003). Consequently, the policy logic of care regime privileges specific principles of entitlements and responsibilities which are expressed as care rights and care obligations. Three new care models are typologised in relation to care inclusion in

the welfare states by the analysis on 7 Western countries-“female caregiver model”, “the dual breadwinner model” and “the family work model” (ibid, pp.27-30).

In a similar way, the *social care service regime* is proposed on the basis of Esping-Andersen's framework. Anttonen and Sipilä (1996) compared 14 European countries in social care arrangements and drew up 4 models of social care service regimes. First of all is the *Scandinavian model* in which the care services have been “going public” and the caring state has been emerged. The second is the *family care model* where the public provisions are limited. The third is the *British mean-tested model*. The fourth is the *subsidiarity model* in which religious and political organizations are major care service providers, whereas the public sector carries the main responsibility for funding.

This paper is *not* meant to rethink or refine the existing typology of welfare regime, nor to draw upon new models. The *care regime* and *social care services regime* serve as useful perspectives to explore the current situation of Chinese young women. In the contemporary climate where the norms on family obligation are changing, it is a salient issue of who should take the responsibility of care and how political engagement frames the normative environment and influences the meaning and composition of different roles (Daly and Rake, 2003). China is not included in the welfare states. Yet, this analytical perspective provides this study with rich insights.

Both percepts overlap with each other to some extent. Considering there is no such fixed platform especially for looking into *care* involved in welfare regimes, I shall borrow some from both terms and refer to it as *caring regime* in the following analysis (mentioned in Sung, 2003).

2. Confucian Welfare State

It has been pointed out that the welfare states regimes categorization has excluded Asian countries. To reconstruct the perception of welfare clusters, the *Confucian welfare system* was pioneered by Jones (1990; 1993). It is characterized as “corporatism without western-style worker participation; subsidiarity without the church; solidarity without equality; laissez-faire without liberalism: an alternative expression for all this might be ‘household economy’ welfare states-run in the style of a would-be-traditional, Confucian, extended family” (Jones, 1990, cited in Gough, 2004, p. 184).

East Asian, Northeast Asian in particular, are mostly Confucian societies where developing social policies are based essentially on Confucian-driven values (White and Goodman, 1998). By looking into three components; the market, social policy and family-household, Gough (2004, p.183) proposes the *Confucianism and developmental states* in northeast Asia. It is “not like Africa and South Asia with vigorous capitalist sectors, or the Latin America which resembles Southern Europe, either”. The prominent feature is that the social policy is subordinated to another policy objective, especially the economic policy. “Social policy is not convinced of as an autonomous sphere of policy concerned to de-commodify and to extend social rights. Rather it is part of an economic and development strategy to secure high growth rates and to transform national development.”

Compared with Western countries, East Asian governments are relatively low spenders on social welfare. The state involvement in providing and financing welfare is not as sufficient. The state plays a role in directing a process of economic development in pursuit of economic growth. The social right to access state-provided or guaranteed welfare is weakly developed. The major role in welfare finance and provision are taken by non-state agencies, employers and families (White and Goodman, 1998). Confucian traditions of diligence, entrepreneurship, and striving for education have led to East Asian countries achieving economic prosperity (Rozman, 1991).

When China was entering into economic reform aiming at establishing a socialist market economy, it was developing its social welfare regime in response to new needs. There is clear trend towards convergence with other East Asian welfare systems (White, 1998; Chau and Yu, 2005). The state is playing a role as the paternal protector of the people's livelihood, while welfare is primarily targeted to vulnerable group of people. With the declines appeal of the socialist ideology, the government resorts to the traditional Confucian ideals and virtues to meet social needs. The Confucian ideal of "xiaokang society" (well-off society in Chinese) has been addressed in the National Congress of the Communist Party in 2002, and was thought as the blueprint for economic and social development. People are discouraged to rely on the government. The enforcement of the filial obligations in the care of older adults emphasizes the traditional family values of inter-generational support. Confucianism has been described as "fine national tradition" by many Chinese political leaders and it has been an essential part of China's new social morality (Leung, 2005, p.67; White and Goodman, 1998). Although the East Asian societies such as China, Singapore, Korea and Japan "are not homogenous in the sense of political, social and economic systems and levels of development, they share a common cultural heritage in Confucianism," which is a key part of social values as a whole (Walker and Wong, 2005, pp.7-9).

This supplementary welfare model is usually used to examine and assess the nation's welfare regime as a whole. It is obviously too broad to be applied into this paper since it shall *not* dwell much on the Chinese welfare paradigm as a whole. *Confucian welfare state* provides a basis for understanding and conceptualizing the social welfare in China. Combined with the previous part of *caring regime*, it contributes to a theoretical framework for this paper.

3. Confucian Caring Regime

The various western models of care regimes concluded by scholars are not relevant to the Asian countries. The classification of caring regimes does not refer to the cultural ideas behind the social actions and policy arrangements (Sung, 2003). The Confucian welfare regimes stated above shows the significance of social values and norms underlying the welfare system. The

Confucian values provide an important account of social policy provision (Sung, 2003; Walker and Wong, 2005).

By combining the above two theoretical frameworks, it leads to the term of *Confucian caring regime*. It is *not* the main concern in this paper to study the case of the Confucian caring regime focusing on China. However, it can be assumed that Confucianism has affected Chinese society in general, which may encompass the caregiving. The responsibilities for some forms of care blur the boundaries between public and private (Daly and Rake, 2003). The family as a provider of care and the state's role in supporting are both critical (Gough, 2004; Sung, 2003).

Confucius prescribed an ideal society with mutual trust and harmony among people. It is a commonwealth made up of members who treat each other with love, respect and dignity. “The world becomes a commonwealth...people not only love their own parents and care for their own children, but also others. The aged are able to enjoy their old age; the youth are able to be fully employed; the juniors respect their elder; widows, orphans and handicapped are well cared for” (Chung and Haynes, 1993, p.39). It is considered similar to the some western values such as altruism and social integration (Chau and Yu, 2005). The characteristics of Confucianism are “the group before the individual, conflict avoidance, loyalty, dutifulness, lack of complacency” (Goodman and Peng, 1996, p.195).

Confucian ethics rejects the division between the private and the public spheres. The family relation is the most essential since it is not only the foundation but also the basic model for other relations. Other social and political relations are extended from the family relation. It defines *five social relations*⁹ being father and son, husband and wife, the older and the younger, friend and friend, and sovereign and minister (Chung and Haynes, 1993, p.40). The defined five social roles serve as predictable social norms with ascribed obligations and reciprocity. Obligation and

⁹ in Chinese 五伦

shame are crucial aspects of role performance and may be sources of dysfunction (Chung and Haynes, 1993; Pang, 2011).

Filial piety is the key theme in Confucian norms. “Respect for seniors and paternal benevolence” are important notions (Chung Haynes, 1993, p.40). It is related to the obedience of children to the parents in the family. The relationship between son and parent comes first, before that between husband and wife in the Confucian family. The family is patriarchal where the male dominance remains strong. Women in the family may have no authority, while men have authority of control over all family members. After the father dies, the eldest son becomes head of the family instead of the mother (Jodan, 2004; Sung, 2003). In Confucian society, the families and individuals carry major responsibility for the care of children and the elderly. Women are playing the role as main caregivers. Care in the private domain mostly takes place in the households in which the caring work is gendered (Pang, 2011). In Confucian tradition, women are subordinate to their husbands and to the family-in-law. Married women have more interaction with their family-in-law than with their own families (Sung, 2003).

Gough (2004, p.184) pointed out the Confucianism social policy is underpinning the “male-bread-winner model”. However, Sung (2004) argued there are differences between the Confucian family and the western breadwinner model. Western families tend to focus on interaction only between the husband and wife in household, whereas the Confucian family should be understood through analyzing the underlying norms and virtues.

There may well be a model of *Confucian caring regime* prevailing in East Asian countries, but it is *not* the focus of this paper. This unsophisticated framework will be employed to look at the Chinese caring mode in the face of OCP and to test if it is affecting young women's life experience.

METHODOLOGY

1. Approach

1.1 Qualitative approach

Two major perspectives have dominated the social science studies. One, *positivism*, traces origins to great social theorists such as Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim. The second is *phenomenology*, stemming most prominently from Max Weber (Bogdan and Tylor, 1975). The positivists search for causes of social phenomena through quantitative methods which allow them to statistically prove relationships between operationally defined variables. Whilst, the phenomenologists seek for understanding through qualitative methods (ibid.). The qualitative research emphasizes in-depth knowledge and refinement and elaboration of images and concepts (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011). The qualitative method is appropriate for giving voice, interpreting culturally or historically significant phenomena. It mandates close attention to details in the effort to construct new understandings of phenomena. Compared to quantitative research, qualitative methods can offer more hidden meanings, non-obvious features, multiple interpretations, implied connotations and unheard voices (ibid). This study looks at women's attitudes, perceptions and experience resulting from the OCP. It requires in-depth understanding of personal opinions and values. Therefore, the qualitative method is employed.

1.2 Comparative approach

The comparative approach to the study of society has a long tradition. Since the 19th century, philosophers, anthropologists, and sociologists have used comparisons to achieve various objectives (Hantrais, 1995). The use of a comparative method was relatively more implicit in the social sciences than in the natural science, though, it became more widespread in political science and sociology (Ghorra, 1998). Qualitative-oriented comparative research is interested in how different conditions or causes fit together in one setting and contrasts that with the one in another setting. Comparativists analyze the observable entity as an interpretable combination of parts (Ragin, 1989). In this paper, the comparative approach is appropriate to address the research questions. It will attempt to study on participants comparatively on the basis of being

the only child or not. 10 participants are divided into two groups, 7 of which are the only children. The sample might be too small. However, the statistical criteria are less important in the comparative method. It means explanations which result from comparative methods are not conceived in probabilistic terms (ibid).

2. Collecting Data

2.1 Strategy

Qualitative findings may be presented alone or in combination with quantitative data (Patton, 2002). In order to strengthen the reliability and validity, the triangulation serves as a good strategy. The triangulation involves “between the method” and “within the method”. The latter incorporates the use of two qualitative approaches to enhance the plausibility (Miller and Fredericks, 1994). In this study, two methods of data collecting will be employed to yield more reliable data.

2.1.1 Interview

The qualitative interviewing offers rich and detailed answers (Bryman, 2004). Interviews with open-ended questions and probes yield in-depth responses about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledges (Patton, 2002). I chose the in-depth interviews to inquire about participants' feelings. The nature of the in-depth interviewing is the building of relationship and exploration of ideas with the individuals being studied. By having long conversations with participants, I can understand the interviewees more with “depth, detail, vividness and nuance” (Cargan, 2007, p.112).

So as to get detailed answers, the semi-structured interviews are chosen. The questions are mostly open-ended which tend to lead the interviewees to recall their experience and to imagine future life. It sometimes allowed me to put in some additional questions when needed. The interview outline is attached in the appendix.

2.1.2 Document analysis

Document analysis includes written materials and other documents from organizational, clinical or program records, official publication and report, studying experts, quotations, etc. (Patton, 2002). A review on the relevant policies and statistics data is helpful to understand women's personal experiences in respect of the caring responsibilities. The materials include policy texts in legislative regulations and statistical administrative records from official websites, for instance the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and local Bureau of Statistics. Given that the primary uses of the records are for administrative purposes, the research is based on secondary analysis of data (Hakim, 1987). Combined with the primary data acquired by interviews, the data will be rich in content. In many cases, not only the government, but also the scientists sponsored by the government attempt to cloud and uncover the results for the sake of public interests (Galnoor, 1975; Vermeir and Margocsy, 2012). Taking this into consideration, the observed data from International databases and organizations are referred to as well.

2.2 Selecting participants

In order to receive detailed and complete information through interviews, the participants should be “purposive rather than random” (Cargan, 2007, p.112). 10 single young women are chosen as participants. The selection requirements are including: 1) unmarried females 2) native residents in Shanghai or have been settled in Shanghai for at least 8 years.

Single ladies are selected as target participants for the reason that they tend to be more willing to come out with their expectations upon the prospective husbands than married women. Voices from married women may be contributing equally, but their mate-selection values are likely affected by the real marriage life. Waynforth and Dunbar (1995, p.755) found the contradictions of reality and ideal:

“The vagaries of real life and the local availability of preferred mates will often force mate-seekers to compromise on their ideals. Actual marriage partners, by contrast, represent the choices made after compromises and may thus tell us little about mate preferences.”

Nevertheless, it would be fruitful to make a comparison study of those two groups and to see how the contrast would be between reality and ideal.

Knowing and learning as much as possible about the interviewees is one of the general principles to prepare for interviews (Bingham and Moore, 1959). I was born and brought up in Shanghai, which facilitated a good network. The ages of 10 women range from 24 to 26¹⁰. All of them have received higher education. 2 participants have a Dazhuan degree¹¹; 6 participants have a bachelor degree; and 2 are current master students. 7 women are from a single-child family and 3 have siblings. All were given the same interview outline and interviewed individually. The OCP has been carried out since 1980 in most cities in China; therefore most young people now are from a one-child-family. In some cases, people can be exempt, which makes it possible to find young ladies with siblings.

2.3 Selecting techniques

The data is collected over the internet phone or chatting program. At first, I got in touch with the participants by means of email and QQ¹² to give brief introductions and ask for the good hour for the interviewees, and then to fix up the time to conduct interviews via Skype or Voipraider.¹³ The telephone technique is chosen for “reaching a geographically diverse population” (Cargan, 2007, p.113). It is far cheaper and quicker than real in-person interview, saving a great deal of time and money on traveling (Bryman, 2004; Frey and Oishi, 1995). It is not a good option for me to go back home to conduct face-to-face interviews due to the high cost of the travel fare.

The telephone interview creates a friendly atmosphere for this study. When the interview is to deal with matters which are confidential or embarrassing, “having others present or within

¹⁰ The interview was conducted in spring 2012.

¹¹ Dazhuan (in Chinese 大专) refers to 3-year college education that offers part of a university degree, or credits that may be transferred to a university. A normal undergraduate education takes 4 years in China.

¹² QQ is an Internet-based instant messaging (IM) platform. It supports comprehensive basic online communication functions, including text messaging, video and voice chat as well as online (offline) file transmission. (www.tencent.com)

¹³ Skype and Voipraider are communication services over Internet.

earshot may result in the interviewee's withholding facts” (Bingham and Moore, 1959, p.65). It is somewhat sensitive for Chinese people to talk about social policies. Moreover, Chinese are not used to talking about marriage-related topics with people they are not familiar with. But interestingly, participants were found intrigued by my topic and show more enthusiasm than expected, probably because of the remoteness of telephone interviewing that made them feel secure and ready to tell more. The respondents are sometimes affected by physical presence and visual characteristics of the interviewer, thus they may reply in a manner perceived to be pleasing to the interviewee or to be desirable within the social and political climate at the time (Bryman, 2004; Frey and Oishi, 1995). Via a telephone, our facial expressions could not be seen, which helped to acquire truer answers.

The length of the telephone interview is the least restrictive consideration. Over a longer interview time, interviewers can go further into establishing trust and thus be in a better position to ask sensitive questions (Frey and Oishi, 1995). Given that most participants go to work on weekdays, I made appointments for calling after working hours or at weekends. As Frey and Oishi suggest (1995); the telephone interviews of up to 50 minutes in length can be successful. The respondents in my case, however, had many questions to ask me before entering into the designed questions, which took much time. I had to answer them patiently for the sake of establishing trust and a friendly relationship. Eventually, each interview lasted about 120-150 minutes, longer than normal length.

Recording the interviews with tapes is usually suggested (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). The conversations for this study are so personal and sensitive that the participants did not want to get them recorded. Some participants told me that they would feel upset if the conversation was recorded electronically. Thus, I relied on the traditional “paper and pencil” method to record the responses. One of the problems associated with this method is human error on the part of interviewers. The interviewers may overlook a question or ask questions in the wrong order (Frey and Oishi, 1995). When recording the answers by handwriting, I had to occasionally ask them to stop in case some words were missing, which accounted for considerable amounts of time in the interviews.

2.4 Selecting site: Shanghai

Shanghai is selected as a focus site for this study. It is the most developed city enjoying greatest prosperity among Chinese big cities. The city was originally selected for purposes of accessibility to interviewees. It would be difficult to find acquaintances contributing to this study in any other place. The Shanghai dialect is different from Mandarin Chinese; hence, I am able to build a close relationship with people more quickly with the advantage of local dialect.

Secondly, the municipal government of Shanghai has strengthened population management by carrying out the OCP (SHPFPC¹⁴, 2003). Compared with the exemption policy in other cities in China, the one in Shanghai is stricter. A married couple is allowed to give birth to two children providing they meet one of following conditions:

- 1) Both the husband and wife are single child;
- 2) The first child is identified as disabled due to non-hereditary reasons by medical identification agencies of disabled children at municipal, district or county levels, and there is little possibility that the child will grow up to be an individual with normal working ability;
- 3) One party of the couple is identified by proper agencies as disabled due to non-hereditary reasons, which affects work and makes him/her unable to take care of himself or herself in daily life;
- 4) One party of the couple is a handicapped soldier of degree 2, class B or above;
- 5) One party of the couple has been working in the fishing industry as a fisherman on the sea for over five consecutive years;
- 6) One party of the couple holds the municipality's rural household registration¹⁵ and either party is a single child;
- 7) The wife holds the municipality's rural household registration and has no brothers but sisters who each have only one child, and the husband lives in the wife's home to support the elderly (SHPFPC, 2003).

¹⁴ Shanghai Population and Family Planning Commission

¹⁵ 农村户籍 in Chinese

Due to the tough policy, the one-child family has been prevailing in Shanghai (SSB¹⁶, 2010). It is estimated that there will be over 80% elderly couples in Shanghai who have only one child after 2013 (Wang, 2013). Therefore, Shanghai is a good site for this study.

3. Ethical Consideration

Two dimensions of ethics are delineated by Guillemin and Gillam (2004). The first is *procedural ethics* which require confidentiality, right to privacy and protecting human subjects from harm. The second is *situational ethics* dealing with the unpredictable, subtle moments that come up during the study.

The in-depth interviews sometimes involve personal material. The researchers should provide anonymity by separating the identity of individuals from the information they give. One procedure for ensuring anonymity is not to acquire names and other means of identifying participants (Frankfort and Nachmias, 1996). All the participants are Chinese originally, so, they were advised to pick English names for the recording. For some who did not want to pick an English name, one was chosen for them. The records of interviews will be kept safe and not be revealed, as researchers have a strict moral and professional obligation to keep the promise of confidentiality (ibid).

The principle of informed consent is one of important ethics (Bryman, 2004). I had explained as clearly as possible what the research is about and how it will be presented to make sure participants were provided with enough information to decide whether to participate or not (see appendix.1). Some have asked for the introduction part of the paper before participating, and some requested to read the complete work when it is finished.

¹⁶ Shanghai Statistics Bureau

The procedural ethics also involves the language used in the research. It is suggested to be understandable and free of jargon, but will nonetheless assure that the researchers are competent and experienced (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Some academic terms can hardly be articulated in dialect, thus, I had to explain in Mandarin Chinese but in a colloquial and informal way rather than putting them directly. In some cases, the participants asked why the questions sound more like casual “chatting” than scientific investigation. I answered that I was trying to use simple language, and then described the questions once again in a formal way to demonstrate the professionalism.

Situational ethics pertain to the ethical obligations a researcher has towards a participant in terms of interacting with him/her in a humane, non-exploitative way while at the same time being mindful of one's role as a researcher (ibid). During the interviews, situations such as relationship problems were encountered from some participants. Some had tendency to continuously keep talking sadly about their bitter experiences. Some could not help complaining of stress from work and families. I did not interrupt them but gave an ear. At that moment, I worked as more than a researcher. Flick advised the social science researcher to “consider the participant role and think from their perspectives” (2006, p.43). I tried to understand and to comfort them with cheerful words. “A substantial amount of empathic ability is essential for successful interviewing” (Bingham and Moore, 1959, p.65). I practiced the ability of empathy to see as they see, and feel as they do. All in all, I kept it in mind that the stories told by the interviewees are private affairs and anything negative I have heard from the conversation would be concealed.

I have heard different views and ideas through the interviews. It presented a dilemma when they asked for my stance. I had to pretend to approve tacitly of them in order to keep the easy and non-threatening atmosphere to reconcile the interview. As Bingham and Moore put it, “everyone has prejudices whether he realizes this or not” (1959, p.65). After all, there is no ground for me to judge or criticize any point of my participants. I should do nothing but to be truly open-minded and receptive to their answers.

4. Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity are important criteria in establishing and assessing the quality of research (Bryman, 2004; Roberts, Priest and Traynor, 2006). The reliability addresses whether the similar results could be obtained if the study was repeated under a similar methodology (Golafshani, 2003; Payne, 2004). The timing of conducting the interviews is important. The participants are unmarried young women. They will probably have different perceptions when they get married in the future. Even they would somehow change their minds and give different answers if they got interviewed once again. Social actions and social life are not stable. It is hard to freeze a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it exactly replicable (Bryman, 2004; Roberts and Priest, 2005).

The validity concerns the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings (Bryman, 2004). “The data obtained through interviews may be affected by the class and background of the respondents” (2007, p.119). One of weaknesses of this study is the small sampling of the participants. The participants are likely to be homogeneous to some extent. Nonetheless, I have made the participants as diverse in background and personality as possible to maximize the generalizability of the research findings.

Different approaches usually help to eliminate serious inconsistencies, improving the validity and reliability of research (Golafshani, 2003; Roberts and Priest, 2005). The triangulation within the method yields the qualitative data both first and second hand. More methods applied to this study would make the research more reliable, such as quantitative approaches.

RESULT

1. Expectations on Future Husbands

The starting point of the study is the paradox that Chinese young women find it difficult to get a satisfactory husband when there is a surplus of men. Chinese single ladies are criticized to hold out with too excessive expectations in search of a good husband (To, 2013; Wang, 2011; Yang, 2011). This part will reveal factors they take into consideration.

1.1 Economic condition

Beyond all questions, the economic conditions of men are always prioritized. It conforms to the socioeconomic mate-selection theory that women value the economic resource of their marital partners (Adrian, 1990; Li and Kristina, 2008). It is the case with Chinese young women.

"The income is the most basic criteria. He should have more salary than I do." (Joyce, 25-year-old)

In some cases, they will "reduce the demand" to some extent.

"He should have a high enough salary, if not, at least he should be promising [as to have higher salary] in the near future to support our new family." (Sunny, 24-year-old)

What's more, purchasing a new apartment before marriage is conceived as necessary to young women, which makes their mate-selection value demanding. All the interviewees expect their future husband to buy an apartment for the new home.

"A new private apartment is definitely necessary. I hope he is able to buy it on his own, or with the help of his parents." (Wang, 25-year-old)

"If a man cannot afford a new apartment, it will be out of the question." (Joyce, 25-year-old)

When questioned if they will share the cost of the housing, all the participants answered reluctantly that they may help a little, but still expect men and their parents to pay off the cost. The ability to purchase a home before marriage is an important economic ranking tool for them

to choose a marital partner. Considering that the average house price in Shanghai has been soaring up recent years, which arrived at ¥26440/m² (\$4320) in August 2012, it seems obviously too high for young men (Fangjia, 2013). It has recently been found in big cities of China, to be a tradition of needing to buy housing prior to marriage, especially in Shanghai, which requires single men to have more financial ability (Kennedy, 2010). This new trend has aroused much attention by mass media, yet no such academic research has found explaining this. This study is not meant to cast light upon this interesting tradition, but is striving to give some preliminary explanations in relation to the OCP.

1.2 Family background

Chinese traditions make people strongly attached to their family. The details of men's family background are inevitably as important to single young women.

"Having a better family background, of course, is important. I wouldn't expect he is from a billionaire family. He should at least however have a similar family background as me." (Sue, 24-year-old)

In addition, they have expectations of their potential parents-in-law.

"They should be nice and easy-going. I don't want troublesome problems happening between me and his parents." (Wang, 25-year-old)

"I will consider if they [future parents-in-law] are in good physical condition or not". (Joyce, 25-year-old)

"The economic condition of his parents is important, and a nice mother-in-law is rather more important!" (Wendy, 25-year-old)

1.3 Education and personalities

Except for the above criteria, more factors are found, involving education, personal characteristics and so on.

"I hope my husband is well-educated...he should be smart. My child should not have a father who is unable to help him/her with schoolwork." (Daisy, 25-year-old)

"He is to be mature enough to take care of me physically and spiritually. He should love me greatly, and regard me just as his younger little sister." (Joyce, 25-year-old)

"He must be caring and considerate. I will lose my parents' care if I move away from home. He has to ensure me of the same I get from my parents." (Sunny, 24-year-old)

All the interviewees, with siblings or not, prefer men with the personality traits of *filial piety*. When I asked them to list the criteria of choosing a spouse, the *filial* is ranked the highest or the second-highest. The filial piety in Confucian thought is defined as respect for one's own parents and ancestors (Chan, 1963; Chung Haynes, 1993; Jordan, 2004). The interviewees think that a filial young man would love his own parents sincerely, thus, he would treat his wife and her parents in the same way. Leaving aside whether this assumption is valid, young women are observed to have obsession on this thought.

"I am very filial and caring to my parents, so, he should be filial, too." (Molly, 25-year-old)

In further questioning, it was found that "filial" means more than a personal trait to them, but also the willingness to take care of both parents.

"Filial piety is very important. He should be caring for his parents when he is single. After being married me, he should have filial piety to my parents, respecting and caring for my parents." (Wang, 25-year-old)

They are searching for a man not only as is a lover, but also a caregiver to them and their families. It is pointed out by some sociologists and psychologists that women tend to be more interested in social resources because of their lower access to status, power and economic resources (Li and Kristina, 2008). Chinese young women do not desire to benefit directly from the marriage. Rather, they desire husbands to give support physically, psychologically and financially to them and as well as their families. They tend to have complex expectations when looking for a husband. This finding can answer the first question proposed. It will further explore whether being the only daughter will have an impact on those single women' attitude toward marriage in the following section.

2. The Only Daughters vs. Daughters with Siblings

It is hypothesized that the One Child Policy has made an impact on the young women with regard to mate-selection values in that the OCP have plunged them in a challenging situations nowadays. The traditional Chinese caring system has been experiencing changes under the OCP. All of a sudden, the daughters find themselves in the face of demanding situations.

2.1 To be married or not

When it comes to marriage, it has been taken for granted that young women are willing to get married when they feel like doing it. But it is not the case with Chinese young women. I was invited to my cousin's wedding last autumn. What she said in the dressing room impressed me.

"I have been longing to marry these recent years, not just for myself, but rather for my parents. They are aged over sixty, and in poor physical condition. You can't imagine how helpless I was when my dad fell sick. I couldn't carry him downstairs, or even help him by hand...I had to comfort my mum who was anxious and crying aside while I took care of my Dad. During those days, I had to rush home, to the hospital and workplace every day, which made me exhausted...I recognized that I need a husband really bad to support me and my parents." (Sherry, 30-year-old)

My cousin did not participate in this study because she has been married already, but her words throw a critical question: are they trying to get married desperately more for their parents? What if they had siblings? The answers are surprising.

"If my parent did not urge me to find a husband, I wouldn't be anxious at present. I would be thinking about marriage when I feel like it." (Sue, 24-year-old)

"Without regarding to my parents expectation, I would like to be a celibatarian!" (Sunny, 24-year-old)

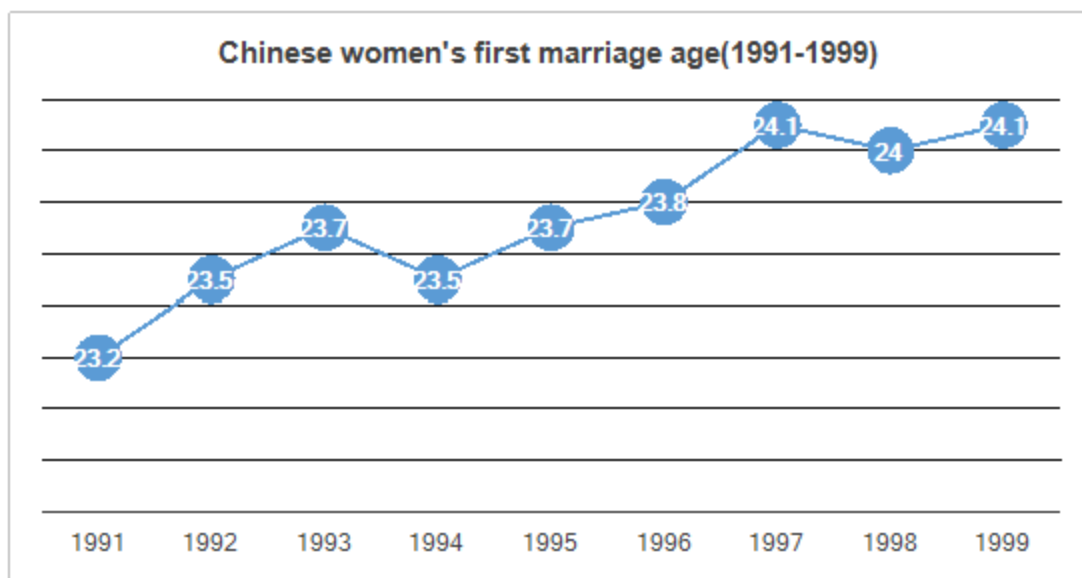


Figure 2 The first marriage age of Chinese women (NBS, 2001)

Most young women told me that their parents think they are at the age of marriage and are hurrying them up to find a husband. The first marriage age of Chinese women has been rising (figure 3). Given that the participants in this study are at ages 24-26, it is understandable that their parents are anxious. Being the only child, the young women have to put it on the agenda to comfort their parents.

"To tell the truth, I don't care when I get married or if I do. But I have to get married before 30. It would be kind of showing respect and love to my parents." (Molly, 25-year-old)

"If I had siblings, I would not think about marriage at all." (Jackie, 25-year-old)

To young women with siblings, marriage is still important. Though, they don't have a sense of pressure by parents or peers that much.

"My parents didn't ask me to get married soon. I know they are concerned about me. But anyway, I will think about it by myself." (Li, 26-year-old, has a younger brother)

"My sister has been married and given birth to a baby, so, I think it is the time for me to get married right now." (Monica, 25-year-old, has a elder sister)

"Actually my parents do not care when I will get married, I will make the decision on my own." (Wendy, 25-year-old, has two younger brothers)

In general, getting married is of importance to Chinese young women to a large extent. However the women with siblings have more autonomy and less pressure from parents. It raises the question why the single women being the only daughter think differently toward marriage. The answer will be explored in the next section.

2.2 Upcoming difficulties

The only daughters are noticeably aware of the foreseeable difficulties in caregiving.

"I've heard much about it. It seems to be a social problem that the only child will have a heavy burden of caring for their old parents, no matter if it's a daughter or a son. The medical insurance system, you know, is rather poor in China. I am afraid I will be in economic pressure if my parents get seriously ill."(Jackie, 24-year-old)

Before the outset of the OCP, Chinese families were used to having many children. All the children, sons in particular, had to share the responsibility to take care of their elderly parents. In families with several children, responsibility for nursing care and household for elderly parents fell hardest on those children whom the parents live with, while the other children usually make contributions. In some cases, care was shared by all children by moving their parents from one house to another (Croll, 1985; Friedmann, 1985). However, at present, the only daughter has to bear the responsibility on her own, which has brought them much pressure.

"I will of course have more pressure when they get older. I know quite well the fact that the severe situation is not just facing me. I believe that thousands of girls in my generation have to be confronted with that."(Molly, 25-year-old)

In contrast, for those who have siblings in the families, the problem seems less troublesome.

"I would say I might think less about it than other girls who are the only child, yet my younger brother is too young to take care of our parents now. If I am in a harsh economic condition in future, I will certainly count on my brother to support our parents. He should do that."(Li, 26-year-old, have a younger brother)

"Having a sister will help more or less. Compared with family with only one child, I may feel a little bit less stressed out in caring parents."(Monica, 25-year-old, have an elder sister)

In Chinese families, children serve as the primary care providers for their aged parents. Therefore, the number of the children may affect the life quality of the parents in their old age (Zhai and Gao, 2010). This study does not go deeper to see if old people with more children would live a better life. It only discloses that young women as the only child have more concerns about caring for their parents. Being aware of the current or upcoming difficulties, the single women will tend to pin their hope on marriage, counting on the future husband to help with it.

2.3 Shift from sons to son-in-laws

It is found that brother-less daughters are enjoying the advantages produced by OCP, because the grooms are expected to provide marital supplies for the new marriage according to the Chinese tradition. To get a bride, a young man and his parents have to try to save money by the time the son is ready to marry, while a daughter's parents can invest all their savings in their daughters' education (Fong, 2002). However, this is not quite true in reality. The couple with only one daughter are worried about having nothing to count on if their child is not able or willing to provide care for them in the future (Zhai and Gao, 2010). In turn, the grown-up daughters in marriage age are upset about the future. Sons were considered to continue the family line in traditional Chinese families. They supported the older generation and attended to the ancestral shrines (Croll, 1985). Now the only daughters have to take over the caring responsibility borne by the sons in the Chinese family, which worries them at times.

"My parents are in their fifties, not old now, though. They can take care of themselves now. But sometimes I would think that I could not take care of my parents well when they get older. I am quite busy at work. Being a woman with a profession, I have to make more effort in the workplace. I can hardly spare time to care and company my parents...things would be better if I was a man instead of a vulnerable woman." (Wang, 25-year-old)

I did not ask them whether their parents prefer girls or boys partly due to the difficulty in getting honest answers, and partly because of privacy concerns. Nevertheless, it is revealed that sons are considered to be carers if there are alternatives in the family. Monica has one older sister, she thinks about having a husband to share the caring though. It implies that sons are still considered caregivers in the family.

"My Mom was sick and in the hospital two years ago. My sister and I had to go to take care of her almost every day. Despite that I have a sister to take turns; it yet was still not enough. If I had a husband, he could help more or less."(Monica, 25-year-old, has an elder sister)

To Li, who has a twenty-year-old younger brother, the caring responsibility seems like less.

"My parents will live with my younger brother more frequently when we both are married. After all, he is the only son who is supposed to take the major responsibility."(Li, 26-year-old, has one younger brother)

Wendy who has siblings is not worrying about the future.

"My parents treat me and my younger brother the same in the family. My father had his second son with a second wife. Anyway, my brother and half-brother are young and still need looking after now...When my parents, as well as my father's second wife are getting old, I know for sure they may rely on my brothers rather than me."(Wendy, 24-year-old, has one brother and one half-brother)

Compared to the only daughters, young women with brothers are worried less, for sons are always expected to share the majority of the caring responsibilities. People with only one daughter may worry more about elderly care, because once married, the daughter usually moves away to join her husband's family (Zhai and Gao, 2010). In turn, the only daughters will have to bear the responsibility which was supposed to be taken by sons and shared by more children before.

Being faced with the dilemma, thus, the only daughter counts on the future husband. As was noted earlier, my cousin, Sherry, wanted to find a guy who is able to help to take care of her parents. The participants in the present study are discovered to have the same expectations.

"Perhaps I will need my husband to help in taking care of my parents in the coming years when my parents get old. My parents will treat him as their son. In return, I will certainly take care of his parents." (Sue, 24-year-old)

The OCP has brought the young women to the tough position where they are coping with forthcoming caring work. Being the only daughter may impact their marital values in that they have to endeavor to shift the burden to their husband.

3. The Changing Caring Regimes

This part will analyze how the OCP will plunge single young women into challenging situations in relation to Confucian caring society. Three aspects will be looked upon; which are caregiving capacity, child care and elderly care to manifest the difficulties and dilemmas the only daughters are going through. The *caring* hereinafter exclusively refers to taking care of parents and children psychologically and physically, including giving daily care by oneself or paying for nurses.

3.1 The caregiving capacity

3.1.1 Capability and willingness

The ability and willingness to be a caregiver is necessary in providing care. In the Confucian society, family works as a place where people are educated and cultivated with fundamental knowledge. However, the children under OCP are considered a “spoilt generation” because of the lavish care from parents and grandparents (Short, et al., 2001; Zhai and Gao, 2010). “They [the only child] have no social skills. They expect instant gratification. They're attended to hand and foot by adults so protective that if the child as much as stumbles, the whole family will curse the ground” (Clay et. al., 2004, pp.138-150).

In Confucianism, women are thought to be fitting for domestic life and to do the major housework (Chuang and Haynes, 1993; Pang-White, 2011). They were regulated to obey four virtues which are morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent work. The diligent work requires women to do housework and arrange the household tidily and neatly (Rodney, 2005). While, women nowadays do not follow these norms any more. The only daughters have received much care from the family and have little chance to pick up practical housing skills. They are

unwilling and unable to take care of themselves when they move away from parents, let alone to attend to husbands' families. Therefore they expect much care from their future husbands. One of the interviewees mentioned that she wants to have a husband who treats her like the way an elder brother does. A question occurred to me whether other single girls would think in the same way. Then I tried to add this question in the subsequent interviews. It turned out that most of them strongly agreed on it.

*"Definitely, I want to have a husband who is concerned about me and cares about me like a younger sister. My parents are taking care of me perfectly, so he is expected to do the same."
(Wang, 25-year-old)*

"My parents are always taking care of me pretty well. I never do housework at home. I will have to lose their care if I get married and live away from them." (Sunny, 24-year-old)

They don't have any intention to play the role of caregiver as traditional women do in a Confucian family. Instead, they are looking forward to relying on future husbands to take care of them. However, young men are mostly only sons in the family, too. They are as "spoilt" as those only daughters. Some are clear about the contradiction.

"I know it is extremely hard to find such a guy..." (Joyce, 25-year-old)

Despite this, they still keep this less realistic hope. Meanwhile, they have an alternative which is to have a domestic housekeeper.

"He [the future husband] is not necessarily good at keeping a house, but he has to learn to do it. At the very least, he should have the willingness to learn it since I know nothing about it...Considering that we will be busy at work, I think we had better have a domestic worker instead". (Molly, 25-year-old)

"It is common that young people today know little about housework...I expect him to learn it together with me, and then we share the domestic work. But the easiest way is to have a housekeeper to deal with it." (Jackie, 25-year-old)

Comparatively, girls with siblings have been discovered to know more about doing domestic work, and show more willingness to take on it.

*"I do not see any problem in doing daily domestic work such as cleaning and cooking. My sister and I always help with the housework at home...I haven't thought about this associated with marriage."
(Monica, 25-year-old)*

The other girl, Li, who has a younger brother, gave a similar answer. But Wendy, with two younger brothers, confessed that she has never done housework at all, as her mother is doing it for the family. She has a similar expectation to have domestic workers just as the only daughters do.

1 out of 7 only daughters and 2 of the 3 non-only-daughters in this study are able to do housework. The only daughters are more likely to have less knowledge of caring for the home than ones with siblings. Being the only daughters make them less prepared to be caregivers in the household. It has not been a prominent problem until they are arriving at marriage age. Now, they have a hard time fulfilling the caregiving duty.

Not all the girls with siblings are in good command of housework, though. There is the possibility that Chinese young people, regardless of being the only-child or not, get over-protected by the families so that they are not as good at housework as their mothers and grandmothers. When getting married and moving away from parents, they lose care from their parents. Instead of learning house-keeping, the young women choose an easier way to compensate for the "loss". They prefer the young men who are able to offer caring. This study does not look at their older generations such as their parents and grandparents to see the difference in housework capacity. A comparative study might be helpful to explore the current phenomenon. Further quantitative study may well contribute more to this inquiry.

3.1.2 More pressure as a professional woman

In the Confucian welfare which is defined as household welfare, the male's role in a family is underpinned. The social policies are partial to men and thus female employment is discouraged (Gough, 2004). This makes Chinese women have troubles in the labor market.

"Being a woman with a profession, I have to make more effort in the workplace. I can hardly spare time to care and company my parents." (Wang, 25-year-old)

For the only-daughters with an occupation, it is hard for them to spare time caring for parents. This is the outcome of the economic reforms that have happened in China over two decades. The rapid modernization and economic prosperity brought more women into the labour market, which has consequently intensified their strains via the dual demands of paid work and provision of care to family members. After the economic revolution in 1979, China has seen an increase of women participating in the labour market (Li, 2009; Liu, 2010). It empowered women with income to invest on their families. Furthermore, it triggered considerable policy importance. Regulations are carried out to encourage more female engagement (Liu et al., 2010). As the National Constitution¹⁷ provides,

[Chapter Two, Article 48] Women in the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life, in political, economic, cultural, social and family life. The state protects the rights and interests of women, applies the principle of equal pay for equal work to men and women alike and trains and selects cadres from among women (GOC¹⁸, 2004).

It coincides with the law on the *Protection of Rights and Interests of Women*¹⁹,

[Chapter IV, Article 21] The state shall guarantee that women enjoy the equal right, with men, to work (GOC, 2005).

Despite the legislative regulations on the equal opportunities for Chinese women, young women still feel themselves vulnerable in the labor market. Sunny told me her difficulties,

"When I was hunting for a job, I felt strongly disadvantaged as a single woman. Employers prefer men sometimes over female employees who will have to be devoted to family after getting married." (Sunny, 25-year-old, the only daughter).

¹⁷ Implemented in 1982, amended in 2004

¹⁸ Government of China

¹⁹ Implemented in 1992, amended in 2005.

The discrimination and disadvantages over Chinese working women has been argued in respect of occupational sex segregation and income gap (Liu et al., 2010). There is still inequality in the labour market. The average annual income of Chinese women in urban areas is 69% of that of men (Wang, 2011; Hausmann, 2011). In developed countries, the ratio is mostly much higher. In 2006, the average hourly earnings of women's as percentage of male is 93% in Belgium and 84% in Sweden (Carley, 2008). An investigation on college graduates in Shanxi province indicates that 60% of female students have experienced gender discrimination in job-hunting. The unemployment rate of female graduates is 12% higher than male graduates (ACWF, 2011).

Chinese young women encounter the frustrating situation in which they have to deal with the work and the future pressure from the family care. The OCP deprived the only daughters of the traditional practical skill and reduce them unwillingly to be care-providers. When they are grown up, faced up with housing and caring obligations in the family, they find much pressure. The social policies and regulations promote women's engagement in the job market, albeit, women are discouraged to some extent, which is challenging all young women.

3.2 The childcare model

3.2.1 Family-supporting childcare

The Confucian family is different from the western family in which it is rich in traditional cultural background. Chinese parents are accustomed to receiving support from family and relatives when they do not manage (Mori et al., 2012; Sung, 2003). The Confucian thoughts promote the integrated society where people care and support each other. The small family carries the major responsibility to take care of children, while the extended family and the social network are encouraged to be involved in supporting childcare. In essential, the childcare is provided privately. Recent decades have witnessed increasing numbers of public service providing daily nursery care, offering young parents more alternatives (Chau and Yu, 2005; Mori et. al., 2011).

Those who have siblings are inclined to follow the traditional way of childcare, and also think about other alternatives. They are ready to carry it on their own, or by their parents, and are adaptable to more available external assistance.

"I want to attend to the baby by myself. If I have to turn to anyone else, I would say, it must be my mum. She is the best one to do that." (Li, 25-year-old)

"I will try to take care of them by myself, or together with my husband. If we are not able to deal with it, I will get a part-time baby-sitter then...My parents are getting older. I want them to enjoy the retired time. I don't want to bother them much. I think the same of his parents [future parents-in-law]." (Monica, 25-year-old)

The other girl, Wendy, gave a slightly different answer in that she wants either her mother or a babysitter to look after her children. The non-only-children have divergent opinions, which might be due to different personal experiences and preferences. Their expectations are in accordance with the traditional Confucian caring norm that family is supporting the main childcare. Yet with the development of market economy, private baby sitters are gaining popularity, which facilitates help for young parents.

The only daughters think in the same way that family will be the main caregiver for children. However, they are not content to take care of children by themselves. They take it for granted that kids' grandparents will be daily caregivers.

"Certainly the grandparents will take care of our kids, at least in the first few years." (Sue, 24-year-old)

It is found that they have many concerns on the childbearing. As already mentioned, Daisy is looking for a guy with high educational background, for she wants her children to receive a good family education. Moreover, some women expect future husbands to have "good parents" which means somewhat good personalities in that they are regarded as main caregivers.

"His parents will look after my baby and we will contact each other inevitably quite often. It is important that they are nice and easy-going." (Wang, 25-year-old)

"Being considerate is important, otherwise, they [future parents-in-law] will have a bad impact on my children." (Jackie, 25-year-old)

Being the only child, they have received much care from parents and grandparents. This center-based caring mode will pass on to their children. When opting for the future husbands, they would think about the benefits their future children can obtain. Because of the 4-2-1 hierarchy family produced by OCP, the child will be given extremely excessive concerns and cares. The childcare mode fostering "little emperor" will be kept. Hence, single young women have much expectation of future husbands and as well as their families in order to make sure their cherished kids will grow up in good conditions and circumstances.

Interestingly, instead of relying on their own parents to help with childcare, they prefer to involve parents-in-law in child caring. Most girls hope that the husband's parents will take on more caring work than their own parents will do.

"His parents should be healthy enough to take care of my kids; otherwise my parents have to do too much." (Joyce, 25-year-old)

One of the explanations could be out of selfishness. Being the only child to their parents, they are affectionate to parents so that they will relieve caring work upon them.

"My own parents are getting older, so I prefer my parents-in-law bearing more child-caring work." (Wang, 25-year-old)

The other explanation could be the impact of the traditional caring mode. The traditional Chinese family is patriarchal and a child is raised in the family of his father's side (Jordan, 2006). Even though with the industrialization and modernization, such traditions are not followed seriously by people dwelling in big cities any more, they still however consider it as acceptable. This inherent traditional patriarchal caring mode seems to favor the women nowadays, so they want to stick to it.

"My parents will for sure share some work, yet, the grandparents from the father's side are always supposed to take on a bit more." (Joyce, 25-year-old)

They take the parents-in-law's physical condition and personal traits into consideration, which is not only pertaining to the children's care, but also to the elderly care which will be discussed in the following parts.

3.2.2 Less public support to childcare

Chinese parents get limited public resources for childcare nursery. The pre-school is an important component in the education system in China. After the economic reform, three types of kindergartens have occurred, which are public, private and collective-owned. The enrollment rate of pre-school was 41% in 1997 and 62% in 2011. Despite the significant increase, it has not gained popularity yet due to the institutional resource scarcity and high tuition fee (Tan, 2006; MOE²⁰, 2012). An investigation indicates that the average monthly cost on kindergarten in Zhuhai²¹ is ¥978 (\$159) in a public one and ¥1194 (\$194) in a private one. In 2007, the monthly income per capita was ¥1607(\$261) in that city (BSZ²², 2008a; 2008b). It implies that the pre-school education accounts for a considerable portion of the family income. Though the current data is not available, it is assumed that the cost will elevate in the future (Tan, 2006).

The policy plays a diminished role in supporting young parents. As regulated in the law, females can have no less than 98 days leave after childbirth (GOC, 2012). With the short parental leave, young parents have to find more ways of taking care their children. Public financial support is quite rare. In Shanghai, there is a public subsidy that provides parents with ¥50 (\$8) from both employers monthly and ¥80 (\$13) for parents with disabled children (ECS²³, 2011). This allowance was started in 1985. It has not been amended to match the growing inflation. The amount of subsidy was sufficient before, but is far from enough today. There is no other effective policy for subsidizing young parents.

²⁰ Ministry of Education of P.R.C.

²¹ A city on the southern coast in China

²² Bureau of Statistics of Zhuhai

²³ Education Committee of Shanghai

By and large, the traditional Confucian childcare model promoting family support is still working in China. Confucian ethics rejects the division between the private and the public spheres (Chung and Haynes, 1993; Pang, 2011; Jordan, 2006). The necessity to have parents to take on daily care for children is a result of the lack of social support. The family is playing the main role in raising children in early age, and the daily childcare given by grandparents is considered necessary. The OCP has reinforced this trend to some extent in that the only daughters tend to pursue more benefit to future children from marriage. Thus, the only daughters have more desires and demanding criteria for future husbands as the childcare mode is expected to be getting more center-based. As presented in the previous part, the only-daughters count on parents-in-law to take on the childcare and take their physical condition also into account. This consideration is not only out of childcare concerns, but the elderly care also.

3.3 The elderly care mode

3.3.1 More costly elderly care

China's ongoing demographic transition to an accelerated aging society has greatly enhanced the eldercare burdens on young people. Today, China's only children are becoming the sole caregivers for their parents and possibly even for their grandparents (Chou and Zhao, 1996). This part will present deeper insights into young women who are aware of heavy eldercare burdens.

It has already been demonstrated that the daughters with siblings may rely on sisters and brothers to share the future caring work. Thus, they will have more caretakers in the family. In traditional Chinese families, the sons and daughters-in-law played an important role in undertaking the caregiving. But Chinese women are confronted with serious demands for care, not only to their elderly parents but also parents-in-law (Liu et al., 2008).

So far, the situation has not been bad to young women when their parents will have a pension. Most urban residents have the comprehensive pension covering the basic living cost. In 2012, the average monthly pension per capita was ¥1721 (\$279) (Xinhua, 2013).

"I don't worry about my parents now; they have enough pensions to live on..." (Jackie, 25-year-old)

The daughters do not worry at the moment, but have to take the future risk into consideration.

"But if they get older and sick, it will cost much to me and my husband." (Jackie, 25-year-old)

True, this won't be a problem facing young people until their parents are getting old in a couple of years. But still, the young women in marriage age have to think about it.

"I don't know how to cook, so I hope he [future husband] would not mind if we eat out. But as for my parents and his parents, he [future husband] should afford home nurses cooking for our parents, and possibly doing other domestic work for them." (Molly, 25-year-old)

It shows that Chinese significantly stick to the home-based elderly care pattern. Elderly homes have not been accepted widely yet. Decades ago, only those without any adult children or grandchildren were eligible for government aid. Public nursing homes or convalescent homes were hardly accessible to those who have children. While the eldercare concern has been raised since the population aging recently, private nursing homes have been established. In 2011, there were 631 nursing homes in Shanghai, 335 of which are private ones (Friedmann, 1985; SCAB²⁴, 2012). In spite of the increasing presence of the elderly nursing homes, including public and private, which provides alternatives to the only-child family, people are still used to following the home-based caring norm.

"I have thought about the elderly homes. I won't send my parents there and they don't want to go there, either." (Jackie, 25-year-old)

"The elderly home sounds like a place for homeless old people...or those with irresponsible children." (Sue, 24-year-old)

Having a domestic elderly nurse is the favorable alternative to the only daughters. None of the interviewees accept the idea of nursing homes, and they think their parents dislike it as well. All the interviewees assume that having an elderly nurse will be a considerable financial burden on them in the future. Given that this study is on the single young women without experience in paying for elderly care, they have no idea how expensive it will be, yet they suppose it will be expensive. According to the survey from Shanghai Domestic Service Association (2013), in the

²⁴ Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau

last quarter of 2012, the full-time elderly domestic worker cost ranges from ¥2000 to ¥3000 (\$324 to \$486) per month. In that year, the average salary in Shanghai was ¥4692 (\$760) (SSB, 2013).

Because of the traditional preference and the small policy engagement, young children will have a hard time affording the elderly care. In Confucian society, sons are considered to continue the family line and attend to the older generation (Croll, 1985). For the family with only one daughter, the burden will drop on the daughter. Compared to a family with more children who can share the cost, the only daughters will experience challenging situations. It can also explain the reason a single woman expects her future husband and his family to be affluent enough.

3.3.2 The relations between parents-in-law and daughter-in-law

It is Chinese custom that married women do not live with their own parents anymore. She is supposed to move into the house of their family-in-law, and assist in taking care of the parents of their spouses (Jordan, 2006; Bulte et al., 2011). The tradition dictates the daughters-in-law to be subordinate to the parents-in-law (Jordan, 2006; Sung, 2003). However, the only daughters are used to living together with their own parents who spoil them, so that they won't want to live with the parents-in-law after getting married. Sue talked about her future life;

"We will go to both our parents after work and at weekend...our new apartment will be not far from them..."

It reveals that her expectation is to live separately from her parents and parents-in-law. This is a popular thought to single women now. An array of news, reports, and research have touched on this issue, showing that single women consider buying new apartments as conditions for marriage, which requires high economic capacity of young men and their families. Some affirm that this is the Chinese tradition, though, the root of which is unfound. Some believe that buying a new apartment demonstrates the man's financial stability and predicted ability to support family (Fong, 2002, Kennedy, 2010).

Whilst this study infers that it may result from the OCP which produced millions of only daughters who are nervous about the relationship with the parents-in-law. Section 1.3 and 3.2 has demonstrated that young women want to have “good parents-in-law” to avoid troubles. When talking about the relationship with future parents-in-law, especially mothers-in-law, they show apparent nervousness and reluctance to live with them together.

"It is rough to get along with even my own parents sometimes. It must be more stressful to live with two old people I have never known before." (Joyce, 25-year-old)

"I would not accept [living with parents-in-law]. I'm afraid there will be tension between me and the mother-in-law. I would rather to live with my own parents, but not with the parents-in-law." (Jackie, 25-year-old)

It might be because they are used to the doting care from parents, which makes it hard to move away from parents.

"I am not used to living with 'strangers'. Even, staying in a shared dorm in a hostel made me uncomfortable. I expect him to buy a flat that is close to my parents' place. We could drop by easily." (Sunny, 24-year-old)

Due to the tradition that married daughters do not live with their own parents anymore, the separating housing nearby becomes a pleasing alternative to them. It has been an accepted preference to all the young women. Accordingly, it requires that the young men be rich enough to buy the housing.

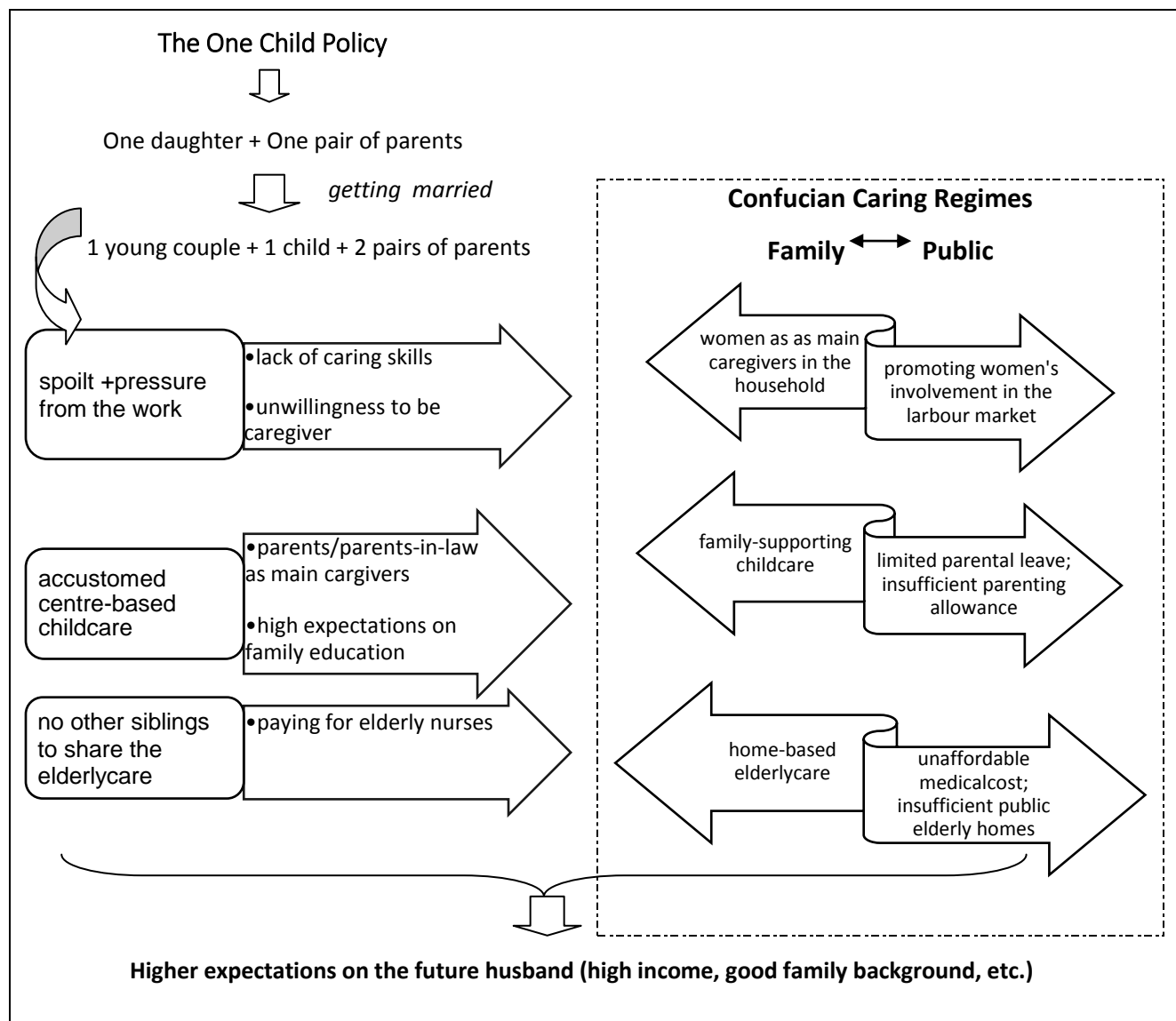
On the contrary, young women with siblings do not perceive it as a must. Though, influenced by the people around, they appreciate if the husband could afford a separate flat.

"Living together is alright, with parents from either side. It will be convenient to take care of them. But, you know, it is hard to get along with the mother-in-law. It would be better if he [future husband] can afford an apartment near the parents' places." (Li, 26-year-old, has a younger brother)

"I do not mind where I live after getting married. It will make my parents happier if I am married to a man with a flat. It seems like a mainstream thought that a man cannot marry a women without a flat." (Monica, 25-year-old, has an elder sister)

The interviews illustrate that young women are no longer willing to fulfill the traditional role as a daughter-in-law who must live with the husband's family, taking care of the families. They consider buying the care from home-based nurses instead. Further, they are upset about getting along with the parents-in-law, in particular, the mother-in-law. The strategy comes out to be desperately seeking their own housing to avoid discomfort and conflicts.

Figure3: the challenging situation to young women produced by the One Child Policy



CONCLUSION

Starting from an interesting puzzle, this study points out that young Chinese women have such high-demanding marital values; they feel it is hard to find a satisfactory husband. The inquiry followed reveals that the only daughters are encountering more foreseeable difficulties in balancing between work and the caregiving. Raised in the way which is named center-based, they are no longer instructed with practical skills and loyalty towards family-in-law. It makes them rely on the parents-in-law to provide the main childcare. They weigh heavily the family background and the physical conditions of parents-in-law to ensure better benefits and to avoid heavy cost on care in the near future. The reluctance to live with future parents-in-law could be one of the explanations to the new trend in paying desperately for a new house for the to-be-married couples.

Using the framework of Confucian caring regime, the current study unfolds that Chinese young women are stressed about future caring work. Compared to young women with siblings, the only daughters have more challenges due to the lack of public support and high expectations. The configuration of care featuring Confucian thought dedicates family and women to share the majority of the caring work. Being the only daughters, young women can hardly fulfill the traditional roles. As a result, they hope that future husbands are able to share the burden with them. Illustrated in *figure 3*, the OCP has produced only one daughter in some families. In the coming years, they have to deal with one child and two sets of elderly people (including parents-in-law). What they are expecting and experiencing are contradictory to the Confucian caring regimes. The social policies are inhibiting public support and rather underlining the family and individuals role in caregiving. Therefore, young women are seeking for the compromising alternative that is buying private services, which leads to high financial stress. Without siblings, they have a more severe situation in supporting their parents and become more desperate in looking for a marital partner.

DISCUSSION

This paper points to the main challenges of young single women. The selection of participants for the study is gender-biased. Having discussed this in the methodology part, I could have other possibilities to go deeper into this issue by assessing the young generation of both genders, or focusing on the family level. On the basis of findings, it indicates that one of the reasons for “Sheng-nv” is excessive expectations. I intended to add more about this analysis, but it is not the main ambition for this work. It will be fruitful with more quantitative studies delving into this phenomenon. The theoretical approach employed in this study to assess the outcome of OCP is useful. It highlights the caring resources both in the private and public realms, together with the underlying cultural implication. Rather than sketching the Chinese welfare system embedded in Confucian society, I just drew on this concept as an analytical entry. The framework of Confucian caring regime is so preliminary that it needs developing and studying.

The soaring world attention to the OCP in China has brought much concerns and critiques in relation to human rights of reproduction. It causes great pains to the families and restricts people’s freedom to choose their family size (Fowler, Gao and Carlson, 2010; Jowett, 1991; Potts, 2006). In this study, attention goes especially to the individual experience with respect to social welfare. The policy implication is for the policymakers to re-arrange the social care in the current climate where the care is no longer provided by family members alone. This policy is not intended to be a long term measure, and several options are being considered for the near future. One possibility in progress is that one child is replaced by two children (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997; Meulenberg, 2004). Recognizing a series of adverse outcomes, it is necessary to rethink and strategize this family planning policy.

APPENDIX.1 -Interview Guide

English version

Hello! My name is Yipei Zhu. I am studying in the master program in Sociology at Lund, Sweden. Now I am doing my master thesis on the One Child Policy and the single young women's situation in China. As you have been told by email/QQ a few days ago, I'd like to talk to you about your feelings, experience, opinions toward current experience, future marriage life in relation to the One Child Policy.

The information that you provide will be very important in helping me understanding the impact of the One Child Policy on the Chinese young single women. Your answers will be kept in the strictest confidence, and your name will not appear on the interview form or paper. Your responses will be used in this study only and will not be identified with you or members of your family in any way. I'd like to begin by asking you some general question about you. May I interview you? Do you have any questions?

1.1 Are you looking for a marital partner or going for a blind date quite often?

1.2 Could you describe the ideal gentleman you are looking for?

1.3. When you are in search of a future husband, what traits do you value the most? (personality/education/ income/position/family/etc.); why do you weigh those values more than others?

2.1 Are your parents anxious about your marriage?

2.2 Are you longing to have a husband now? Tell me more of your current worries and experience.

2.3 If you were not the only child in your family, would you think differently toward marriage or romantic dating?

3.1 (For the only children) Being the only child in the family, have you thought about future responsibilities in taking care of your elderly parents?

3.2 (For participants with siblings) Do you have any anxieties about caring for parents in the future? Will your siblings share the responsibility with you?

3.3 What are the difficulties you have thought of so far?

4.1 Do you know how to take care of the elderly and the children? Have you learned housework before?

4.2 Do you expect your future husband to be capable of doing housework?

4.3 If you are not good at it, what strategy will you take?

5.1 When your parents get older or sick, how will you manage?

5.2 What is your strategy to cope with it?

(Trying to spare time looking after them on your own; sending them to a nursery home; or paying for a domestic nurse?)

6.1 What is your preferred way of housing when you get married? Will you live with the future parents-in-law?

6.2 Why/why not?

7.1 Have you thought about the way you would attend to a child in its early stages?

7.2 Who do you think will offer the majority of caregiving to the kids?

8. Do you think you will find it difficult in taking care of parents and a child in the future?

Thank you for your participation!

Chinese version

您好！我叫朱轶培，现在瑞典隆德大学攻读社会学硕士学位。我的毕业论文是关于计划生育政策与女性社会处境。我们已经通过电子邮件或者 QQ 联系过了，今天，我想通过详细的访谈，了解您的经历和想法。您所提供的信息对我的论文议题相当重要。

您的访谈内容我一定会密封保存，绝不泄露他人，也不会用在他处。访谈记录将使用化名以保护您的隐私。请问您有什么问题吗？可以进行访谈吗？

1.1 请问您现在是不是急于找对象？有没有常常去相亲？

1.2 您理想伴侣是怎么样的男士？能否描述一下？

1.3 在择偶过程中，您最看重的条件是什么？为什么？能否具体说说您的择偶标准？（性格、受教育程度、收入、工作职位、家庭背景，等等）

2.1 您的父母有没有替你着急？

2.2 您自己想尽快结束单身吗？谈谈您的个人想法和体会

2.3 如果您不是独生子女，会不会想法有所不同？

3.1 (独生子女)您有没有想过今后照顾父母的压力？

3.2 (非独生子女) 您有没有想过今后照顾父母的压力？您的兄弟姐妹是否会帮忙承担？作为非独生子，是不是会压力较小？

3.3 谈谈您目前所经历的困惑或不安。

4.1 您会不会家务？能否胜任照料老人、照顾孩子？

4.2 您对未来丈夫有没有家务能力的要求？是否期待他能帮助照料家人？

4.3 如果您不擅长家务，婚后将如何持家？

5.1 您有没有想过，您的父母年事渐高，可能需要照顾？

5.2 您是否会亲力亲为照料他们？或者将他们安置在养老院？或者请家庭保姆？谈谈您的选择和看法。

6.1 婚后您将选择何种居住形式？和丈夫单独居住，还是与公婆同住？

6.2 出于何种原因和考虑，选择这样的居住方式？

7.1 如果婚后有了孩子，您有没有想过带孩子的问题？

7.2 在孩子出生头几年，你将如何带孩子？

8. 对于未来可能的压力，您是否感受过困惑？谈谈您更深的体会和看法。

非常感谢您的配合！

APPENDIX.2-Interviewees

Interviewee	Year of Birth	Education	Occupation	Condition
Daisy	1987	Junior College in marketing	sales	single, living with parents
Jackie	1987	Bachelor in Sociology	teacher	get married in spring 2013
Joyce	1987	Junior College in Law	court clerk	single, living with parents
Li	1986	Bachelor in German Literatures	employee in a foreign company	get married in August 2013
Molly	1987	Master in International Relations	current student	single, living in a students' accommodation
Monica	1987	Bachelor in Mechanical Engineering	teacher	single, living with parents
Sue	1988	Bachelor in Political Science, Tongji University	civil servant	in a relationship, living alone
Sunny	1988	Master in Political Science	current student	in a relationship, living in a students' accommodation
Wang	1987	Bachelor in Law	policewomen	get married in December 2012
Wendy	1988	Bachelor in Sociology	analyst in a estate agency	in a relationship, living with mother and younger brother

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