

**Negotiating work life and family life:
young mothers in contemporary China**

Yi Zhang

PhD

University of York

Women's Studies

August 2017

Abstract

There has been growing interest among both academics and the public in the issue of work-family balance. The emergence of this issue is related to married women's employment rates and the greater diversity of families and workplaces in the 21st century. In this thesis, I explore young Chinese women's views on and experiences of balancing working life and family life in northern China. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with 34 young mothers conducted in Jilin Province, I focus on three main questions: 1) How do young-generation women manage childcare, paid work and filial obligation on a daily basis in China? 2) What are young-generation women's attitudes to and practices of domestic labour and filial piety in China? 3) What factors facilitate or hinder a balance between working life and family life? My data is analysed in three chapters, focusing on: the domestic division of labour in China: meanings and practices; daily journeys while coordinating work, care and education; practising and displaying *xiao* – young mothers' negotiations of obligations to elders. I argue that, despite past Maoist rhetoric on gender equality, women retain the primary responsibility for housework, childcare and filial obligation, which reveals the persistent gender inequality within families, although adaptation and greater gender equality was reflected in some cases. By bringing Western and Chinese concepts into dialogue with each other, this study contributes to the understanding of the continuing family changes and distinctive context of work and family in China.

The list of contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Abstract | 2 |
| The list of figures | 7 |
| The list of tables | 8 |
| Acknowledgement | 9 |
| Author's declaration | 11 |
| | |
| Introduction | 12 |
| Motivation for this research | 12 |
| Research on work-family issues in China | 13 |
| Thesis structure | 17 |
| | |
| Chapter One | |
| Women, employment and family in the West | 19 |
| Introduction | 19 |
| Drivers of women's participation in the labour market | 20 |
| Explanations for women's employment choices and work life balance in the West | 28 |
| Preference theory and gendered moral rationalities | 28 |
| Welfare-state policies | 31 |
| Conceptual debates about combining work and family life | 39 |
| | |
| Chapter Two | |
| Women and Family in China | 45 |
| The pre - 1949 period | 45 |
| The Mao era 1949–1976 | 50 |
| The <i>danwei</i> : women's work and family life | 54 |
| Economic reform period | 57 |
| Social policy and welfare in contemporary China | 62 |
| Women in the workforce | 62 |
| One-child policy and population aging | 64 |
| Childcare networks in China | 68 |
| Conclusion | 70 |

Chapter Three

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Conducting research in northern China | 72 |
| Research method | 74 |
| Recruiting participants | 78 |
| Conducting interviews | 86 |
| Ethics and power | 91 |
| The necessity of positioning | 96 |
| ‘Insider’ and ‘Outsider’ | 96 |
| The doing of gender in the research process | 99 |
| Data Processing and Writing | 100 |
| Conclusion | 103 |

Chapter Four

| | |
|---|------------|
| The domestic division of labour in China: meanings and practices | 105 |
| Introduction | 105 |
| Researching the domestic division of labour | 108 |
| Time use survey | 109 |
| Theoretical perspectives on the household division of labour | 112 |
| Attitudes to housework and practices around it | 118 |
| The symbolic meaning of gender | 121 |
| The variety of work done by wives | 125 |
| Childcare | 131 |
| Outsourcing: how technology and grandparents influence the division of domestic labour | 133 |
| Technology | 134 |
| Grandparents | 138 |
| Doing gender: Negotiation on domestic work | 141 |
| Conclusion | 145 |

Chapter Five

| | |
|--|------------|
| Daily journeys: coordinating work, care and education | 147 |
| Introduction | 147 |
| Intergenerational obligations | 148 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Coordination: An Analytical Framework | 151 |
| Case Studies | 156 |
| Two traditional cases | 157 |
| Case study 1: Huihui | 157 |
| Case study 2: Lili | 163 |
| Summary | 169 |
| Three non-traditional cases | 170 |
| Case study 3: Feifei | 170 |
| Case study 4: Yueyue | 176 |
| Case study 5: Xiuxiu | 181 |
| Discussion | 186 |
| Conclusion | 192 |

Chapter Six

Practising and displaying *Xiao* -

Young mothers' negotiations of obligations to elders 194

Introduction 194

The practice of filial piety 200

Mianzi and filial piety 210

 Institutional care as a challenge for *mianzi* 213

Displaying *xiao* 220

Concluding discussion 225

Chapter seven

Concluding discussion 229

Introduction 229

Self-reflection 229

Gender relations and family practices in China: change and continuity 231

Factors facilitate or hinder balance between work life and family life 235

 Grandparents- a double edged sword 235

 Long working hours and employed-favoured flexible arrangements act
 as a hindrance to work-family balance 238

 Welfare and policy 239

Limitations, suggestions for future research and contributions 240

| | |
|---|------------|
| Appendices | |
| Appendix I Interview schedule | 244 |
| Appendix II Consent form for participants | 246 |
| Appendix III Consent form for participants (Chinese version) | 248 |
| Appendix IV Information sheet for participants | 249 |
| Appendix V Information sheet for participants (Chinese version) | 252 |
| Bibliography | 255 |

The list of figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1. Location of Jilin Province in China | 73 |
| Figure 2. Location of fieldwork cities in Jilin Province | 74 |
| Figure 3. Links between researcher, the intermediary and the participant | 82 |
| Figure 4. The daily journey made by Huihui's family to and from home, nursery and workplace | 159 |
| Figure 5. Huihui's weekend journey | 161 |
| Figure 6. The daily journey made by Lili's family to and from home, nursery and workplace | 164 |
| Figure 7. Lili's weekend journey | 168 |
| Figure 8. The daily journey made by Feifei's family to and from home, primary school and workplace | 173 |
| Figure 9. Feifei's weekend journey | 175 |
| Figure 10. The daily journey made by Yueyue's family to and from home, nursery, secondary school and workplace | 178 |
| Figure 11. Yueyue's weekend journey | 180 |
| Figure 12. The daily journey made by Xiuxiu's family to and from home, middle school and workplace | 183 |
| Figure 13. Xiuxiu's weekend journey | 185 |

The list of tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 1. Participant characteristics | 85 |
| Table 2. Household living arrangement (34 families) | 120 |
| Table 3. Distribution of housework chores (34 families) | 121 |
| Table 4. Persons providing informal and formal support with daily coordination points | 153 |
| Table 5. Family characteristics of respondents | 156 |
| Table 6. Huihui's daily time arrangements | 160 |
| Table 7. Lili's daily time arrangements | 167 |
| Table 8. Feifei's daily time arrangements | 174 |
| Table 9. Yueyue's daily time arrangements | 179 |
| Table 10. Xiuxiu's daily time arrangements | 184 |
| Table 11. Individual circumstances and care for elders | 202 |

Acknowledgement

Undertaking this PhD has been a truly life-changing experience for me and it would not have been possible to do without the support and guidance that I received from many people.

First of all, I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Professor Stevi Jackson, for her patience, motivation and immense knowledge. Her guidance and constructive feedback helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. Without her support and encouragement, it would not be possible for me to complete my thesis, to present in conferences, to publish my first research article, to successfully complete various internships and part-time jobs, and to survive in these four years.

I would like to express my gratitude to my second supervisor, Professor Christine Skinner for being an understanding and inspiring supervisor. Her invaluable suggestions and advice enabled me to gain a wider perspective of my subject. I am grateful for her continuous support for my PhD study and my life. I would also thank Professor Sue Scott for the questions she raised and the suggestions she made at my TAP meetings.

I gratefully acknowledge the Universities' China Committee in London (UCCL) for fieldwork grant for this study.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all my research participants who generously shared their time and experience. Without their corporation, I could not have collected such good data. My gratitude is also extended to all staff members in CWS, who have contributed so much to provide such a friendly and comfortable environment to study. I deliver my regards to all my friends, who

gave me the moral support during my study in York.

Finally, but by no means least, I would also like to say a heartfelt thank you to my parents for loving me unconditionally, always believing in me and encouraging me to follow my dreams. Thank you for showing me the importance of being emotionally and spiritually strong and for being the special and wonderful people that you are. And my family members and friends, for helping in whatever way they could during this challenging period. Thank you to a special friend, for everything in the hundreds of days. I am only where I am today because of all of you.

Author's declaration

This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

I certify that all the research and writing presented in this thesis are original and my own. Over the course of PhD I have used parts of my research in an article published on The Journal of Chinese Sociology and papers given at academic conferences.

A version of Chapter Six, 'Practising and displaying Xiao – Young mothers' negotiations of obligations to elders' was published under the title of 'Practising and displaying xiao – young mothers' negotiations of obligations to elders' on The Journal of Chinese Sociology, 3(1), p.27.

A version of Chapter Three, 'Conducting research in northern China', has been given at the 'Researching in Asia: concepts, values and practices' conference at University of York, under the title 'The benefits and pitfalls of using *guanxi* to recruit participants in China', March 2015.

A version of Chapter Two, 'Work and family in China', has been given at the 'PhD Workshop on Europe and East Asia' at the University of Bristol, under the title 'How to balance work life and family life: the effect of work-family conflict on young generation women in contemporary China', April 2015.

A version of Chapter Five, 'Daily journeys: Coordinating work, care and education', has been used at the '6th WAGNet PhD Workshop' at the Confucius Institute for Scotland in Edinburgh, under the title 'Women's daily journeys: coordinating work, care and education', September 2015.

Introduction

Motivation for this research

When I come to think about my motivations for this research, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when or where my journey begins. The challenges of combining paid work with care responsibilities are only too familiar to me, as I have seen my mother, who is a doctor as well as a widely recognised ‘*xian qi liang mu*’ (an understanding wife and loving mother), combining work and family throughout her life course. I was taken care of by my mother until I went to the *danwei* kindergarten at three years old, which was different from the normal arrangement in China during the 1990s, whereby children were looked after by their grandparents. My mother explained that she took unpaid leave from work to care for me, and at the same time prepared for and passed her medical examinations. Ten years later, she made another decision about her working arrangements, leaving a famous local hospital where she worked as an associate chief physician to become a researcher at the Centre for Disease Control in order to avoid night shifts, so that she could take care of her child and family. Although my mother prioritised family to some extent in her life, she refused to be a housewife, because she said that she wanted to be an independent person and fulfil her potential in a career. As far as I remember, my mother did not mention anything about balancing work and life, although she was actually practising it in various ways and always took the main responsibility for housework and childcare even though she was a working mother. My mother’s experiences drove me to think about the work-family issue in China and to start questioning the gendered division of labour.

If it was my mother’s experience that inspired me to look into the issue of work-family balance, it was my friends’ stories that embarked me upon my PhD project about young generation women’s experiences, views and beliefs about

combining work and family. While I was studying for my master's degree in Manchester in 2013, my best friend, Han, who worked as a journalist in Shenyang (a provincial city in Northern China), got married and had a baby. Then she started telling me that it was getting harder and harder for her to leave work on time and that she always took work home with her; her mother-in-law was complaining that she did not do the laundry for her husband and had forgotten to send her a message on Mother's Day; she had to cope with all kinds of issues emerging from living with her parents-in-law and the grandparenting; her husband was not willing to share the childcare and housework responsibilities as he had promised at the wedding. The pressure from all sides seems to have made her feel harried and torn. Han's story made me realise the challenges and complexities of balancing work and family for young working mothers in China. There are some similarities between my mother's and Han's experiences, such as the gendered division of labour and the difficulties of managing care for newborns, but their stories also revealed differences.

The young generation is facing a context of marketisation of the economy, changing care provisions and a trend towards work intensification across occupational groups. The ways in which families and the nature of work have been changing, as well as developments in the government's and workplaces' impacts and limitations on work-family balance have been noted in China. As I read the literature on work-family balance in China, I noticed a lack of empirical studies on young-generation women's experiences and views of managing paid work and care responsibilities, and this is another factor that motivated my research.

Research on work-family issues in China

The emergence of the issue of balancing work and family is related to married women's employment rate and the greater diversity of families and workplaces in

the 21st century. A focus on the intersection of paid work and family care has led to research on work-family issues across many different disciplines, including: sociology, family studies, gender studies and management (Eby et al., 2005). Six central topics were identified by Bianchi and Milkie (2010, p. 705) in their review work and family research during the first decade of the 21st century: (a) gender, time, and the division of labour in the home; (b) paid work: too much or too little; (c) maternal employment and child outcomes; (d) work-family conflict; (e) work, family, stress, and health; and (f) work-family policy. Research on these topics has generally focused on North America and European countries. However, globalisation has made work-family issues more and more important, not only in developed countries but also in developing nations, as the challenges of combining paid work and care responsibilities for women and men may arise throughout the global economy (Ling and Powell, 2001). Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport (2006) suggested that it is common for people to encounter difficulties in combining paid work with other parts of life, despite the unique and inherent strengths and weaknesses in each country. In addition, although there is evidence that the cultural and social context influences the nature of work-family conflict, relatively little attention has been paid to Eastern countries, in which more collectivist orientations, a strong Confucian ideology and different policy rationalities are held among both the public and policy makers. Similarly, Poelmans (2001) pointed out the lack of empirical studies on work-family conflict in countries with a high female employment rate, and in which the family is promoted as an institution. Hence, a multi-cultural and country-specific perspective is called for in examining work-family issues.

In response to the call for international perspectives in work-family studies, and given the rapid social changes occurring in China, the need to balance paid work and care responsibilities has attracted attention from researchers. Studies on combining work and family in China have been generally focused on investigating the impact of work-family conflict on various outcome variables,

such as psychological well-being, life satisfaction and job satisfaction, as well as turnover intentions. For example, drawing on data from married and employed individuals in urban Shanghai, Lai (1995) examined the relationship between work and family stress and psychological well-being. It was reported that women tend to experience more family demands than men and that their mental-health status was similarly associated with both work stress and family stress, whilst men were more vulnerable to work stress than family stress. A more recent study on work and family demands and life stress found that work demands tend to have a lesser impact on life stress than family demands (Choi, 2008). Apart from mental-health status, work-family conflict has also been related to life satisfaction and job satisfaction. Chinese managers stated that work-to-family conflict was negatively associated with life satisfaction for both husbands and wives and that cultural views play a significant role in how people view their work and family roles (Zhang, Foley and Yang, 2013). Moreover, in a study of 121 Chinese hotel sales managers, Zhao, Qu and Ghiselli (2011) found that both work interfering with family and family interfering with work negatively influenced an individual's affective reaction to the job. According to Lu et al.'s (2017) research on physicians in Guangdong Province in China, work-family conflict was positively associated with turnover intention. In addition to the statistical analysis, Ling and Powell (2001) developed a conceptual model of work-family conflict in contemporary China, focusing on the influence of different work and family contexts between USA and China. Accordingly, Xiao and Cooke (2012) investigated the institutional and cultural contexts of work-family conflict and solutions in China, which were found to be significantly different from those in developed economies.

While the current work-family research has contributed to knowledge about the outcomes of work-family conflict and the structural and cultural factors that influence the conciliation of work and family in China, most research in this area has adopted a quantitative approach and very little is known about the narratives

of work and life experiences or the attitudes to and practices of related issues, such as domestic labour and filial obligation. In addition, the existing literature generally focuses on employees in big cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong Province, while little attention has been paid to northern China or second-tier cities. Lastly, the young generation, who were born during the dynamic development of a growing economy and grew up under the one-child policy, have started to enter into marriage and the labour market. Given the fact that these young people's work expectations and views about gender roles and family responsibilities tend to be different from those of older generations, the division of domestic labour within families and the practice of filial obligation, which are two important aspects of work-family balance, may also be undergoing changes in contemporary China. However, these aspects have not been explored in existing studies in detail.

Having reviewed the pre-existing academic knowledge and research findings on work-family studies and the research gaps, I developed the following research questions:

- How do young-generation women manage childcare, paid work and filial obligation on a daily basis in China?
- What are young-generation women's attitudes to and practices of domestic labour and filial piety in China?
- What factors facilitate or hinder a balance between work life and family life?

I am aiming to explore work and family perceptions among the population of young-generation women in northern China, with an emphasis on their daily practices of coordinating employment and care work and their attitudes to and practices of domestic labour and filial piety. As Holliday (2007) has suggested, qualitative research is deeply integrated with everyday life, it enables researchers to look into topics in connection with perceptions, daily life and work situations.

As such, I have adopted a qualitative approach to investigating young women's experiences, views and beliefs towards balancing work and family in this study.

Thesis structure

In the following chapter, Chapter One, I explore the main themes and arguments that emerged as I examined the combination of paid work and family responsibilities from Western perspectives. Then, in Chapter Two, I turn to providing a history of Chinese society, with an emphasis on the changing welfare system and social policy in China and I discuss how these factors influence Chinese women's lives and work-family experiences.

Chapter Three describes and explains the methodology deployed in this study. I begin by introducing my research location and discussing details of the research method I have adopted and why this method is the most appropriate for this study. I also present some of the key issues that arose during my experience of interviewing in northern China, including recruiting participants, conducting interviews, ethical considerations and the power balance between interviewer and interviewee. This chapter concludes by reflecting on the ways in which I processed my data and wrote up my research findings.

The analysis in Chapter Four centres on the meanings and practices of domestic labour in China. By drawing on a gender perspective, especially the variety of work done by women (Delphy and Leonard, 1992), I argue that women's involvement in domestic labour is not simply a matter of what women do in families, but is far more about the meanings of their practices and attitudes towards the gendered division of domestic labour.

In Chapter Five, I examine young women's experiences and strategies for coordinating paid-work commitments, childcare responsibilities and filial

obligation by focusing on the daily journeys that all family members make during a typical working day and at the weekend. By employing the ‘coordination points’ framework (Skinner, 2003), I look at contrasting examples of the daily journeys made in five families and provide detailed information about what time the journeys take place and how these journeys are coordinated, thus contributing to an understanding of the complexity of activities in which families are engaged around organising their work and care responsibilities.

In Chapter Six, I explore young Chinese women’s attitudes to and practices of filial piety. I applied the concepts of ‘family practices’ and ‘displaying family’ to the Chinese context through the link between *xiao*¹ and *mianzi*². I analyse the participants’ narratives to explain how and why filial obligations to their ageing parents matter to them. I first outline how filial obligation is practised through a wide range of activities, before arguing that being filial is not enough: displaying *xiao* is critical to their own and the elders’ face and establishing themselves as good, filial daughters and daughters-in-law.

In the final chapter, I start with a self-reflection on the process of my PhD, then I summarise the changes and continuities in gender relations and family practices in China as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder a balance between work life and family life, followed by an acknowledgement of research limitations and suggestions for future research.

¹ *Xiao* refers to ‘filial piety’

² *Mianzi* refers to ‘face’

Chapter One Women, employment and family in the West

Introduction

Work and family have long been viewed as two important domains of life for most adults (Gutek, Searle and Klepa, 1991). People are always combining various parts of their lives – including paid and unpaid work, childcare obligations and other responsibilities – in one way or another. Radical changes in the West in the nature of workforces and families, such as an increasing number of dual-career couples and working mothers with young children, have prompted a large volume of research related to work-family issues (Drobnič and Guillén Rodríguez, 2011). Achieving a successful work-life balance is considered essential for an individual's psychological well-being, satisfaction and overall sense of harmony between work and family roles (Clark, 2000). As research on managing paid work and domestic life has generally been done in Western countries, it is necessary to perform a review of the context and argument in relation to work-family balance from the Western perspective. This chapter will focus on explanations of the social changes in the West regarding work and family life and will set out the evidence and theories regarding the debates around finding a balance between the two. It should be noted that most of the literature focuses on how women manage to balance work and family life, rather than on how men might manage it. It is therefore a highly gendered subject, despite its apparently gender-neutral language of 'family'. For example, Morgan (2011) suggests that the question of juggling work and family obligations continues to be identified with women. Research has shown that women report more interference from work in their family lives than men; hence, it is harder for women to achieve a balance between working life and family life than men (McKie and Callan, 2012). According to the identity theory proposed by

Schlenker (1987), women and men have been socialised into different family-related self-images. On the one hand, women, and especially mothers, still take the main responsibility for unpaid work in contemporary society. On the other hand, women are increasingly assumed to be active in paid work. The combination of these two spheres means that women are more likely to confront work-family conflict than men.

In much of the literature and debate around women, employment and the family, women's participation in the labour market has been considered the main factor contributing to the issue of work/family articulation (Morgan, 2011). Therefore, I first provide a historical review of the drivers of women's participation in the labour market, then move on to explore explanations underpinning women's work choices in the West, as well as national welfare policies. I also draw attention to conceptual debates about combining work and family life, examining the terminology and perspectives used in the West to discuss the ways in which people combine working life and family life.

Drivers of women's participation in the labour market

One of the most important developments of family life in the West in the past two hundred years is the separation of home from work and this has led to divisions between the specialised roles of male breadwinner and female caregiver. The increasing employment of women, particularly mothers, outside the home is the main factor that brings to the issue of work-family articulation (Morgan, 2011). Currently, across the OECD countries, 59.5 percent of women are in employment (OECD, 2016). Hence, it is necessary to broadly explore the drivers of women's increased labour-market participation before discussing the explanations underpinning women's work choices in the West.

In pre-industrial Europe, the family in most cases worked together as a unit and

most family members were involved in the productive process. This meant that the majority of economic activities took place within homes, producing goods not only for families' own consumption, but also for sale and trade in the local market. As society became industrialised, the development of industrial capitalism and a more urbanised culture led to the idea of 'separate spheres' of work and home (Morgan, 2011). Families no longer worked together as units; instead, waged labour outside the home became more common and families used this income to buy goods rather than producing them at home, as they had done in pre-industrial times. This separation between work and home led to a highly gendered division of labour – 'men dominant in (and seen as more suited for) the public sphere of employment (and other aspects of civil society, such as politics), whereas women were responsible for the domestic or private sphere' (Crompton, 2006, p. 2). This came with the development of the 'male breadwinner model', in which men worked outside the home as wage earners while women specialised in the unpaid labour of caring and domestic work. Within this model, the issue of work-family articulation was perceived as relatively unproblematic, because it was straightforwardly achieved by the male breadwinner, who moved regularly between work and home (Morgan, 2011). In other words, the articulation between family and work was resolved by excluding women (although they would never be totally excluded) from market work and by gendered role specialisation, in which women cared for others and men did paid work.

In Western societies, the emergence of the male breadwinner model was not just a phenomenon associated with the transition to an industrial society, but was a far more complex issue that varied by class and region. It was originally a middle-class phenomenon and became common among the working class after the Second World War (Stacey, 1996). A pure male breadwinner model, in which women were entirely excluded from the labour market and undertook the caring tasks, firmly subordinated to their husbands for social welfare entitlements, has not been achieved in any country (Lewis, 1992).

When it came to the 20th century, women were increasingly participating in paid employment, as a response to the labour shortage during the First and Second World Wars. In the absence of men, women in the UK and USA were a reserve army of labour to be called upon when the economy needed them. During the 1940s, women accounted for 33 percent of civilian workers in the USA and 39 percent of civilian workers in the UK (Walsh and Wrigley, 2001). They helped to run the civilian and military economy, moving into previously male-dominated occupations, such as transport, policing and farm work (Walsh and Wrigley, 2001). Although women started to leave the workforce after the end of the war, their participation rates still remained higher than pre-war levels. Women's contributions to national economies were recognised and highlighted during the Second World War, and this is considered to have had a long-term impact on women's roles in the workforce.

During the interwar period, a 'marriage bar' was introduced in some occupations in the UK, such as clerical work and teaching in local authorities. The first formal marriage bar was introduced by the Post Office in 1876 in the UK. As educated women entered the service, there was concern that continuity of employment would be compromised by motherhood (Murphy, 2014). The marriage bar was one of the most important prohibitions impacting upon married women's employment during the early 1990s. It prohibited married women from working in selected occupations and required them to resign when they got married (unless granted a waiver). The introduction of the marriage bar was partly a response to economic depression and high male unemployment. During the depression, married female employees were considered to be taking jobs from unemployed men. With the rise of the male breadwinner model, it was widely accepted that men should work outside and earn money to support the family. Although the marriage bar was gradually relaxed from 1944 and abolished for the Home Civil Service in 1946 and for the Foreign Service in 1973,

the view that women would not be able to give their full attention to paid work because of their commitments to family responsibilities still prevailed, resulting in the exclusion of women from many industries and trades (Sisterhood and After Research Team, 2013).

During the second half of the 20th century, the development of the economy also contributed to the increase in women's employment (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). Specifically, women's employment in the service sector was an economic necessity during the process of de-industrialisation and the shift to a service-sector economy. The term 'de-industrialisation' refers to the reduction of industrial activity or capacity within a region or economy. This trend has been a universal feature of economic growth in advanced economies, and was particularly evident in the USA and Europe. The de-industrialisation phenomenon was considered to be a result of the rising productivity growth rate in the service sector, technological advancement and the growth in trade between developed and developing countries (Rowthorn and Ramaswamy, 1997). It was also a consequence of shifting patterns in the geography of production. Many companies moved their manufacturing operations to developing nations, to save the labour cost. Clark (1967) predicted that a systematic shift in demand from manufactured goods to services would occur at a certain point as an economy became more advanced³. The shift in employment from manufacturing and agriculture to service sectors was one of the most important features of de-industrialisation, and accounted for the growing demand for female workers. Changes in labour demand have been significant drivers of expanding female labour-force participation (Pissarides et al., 2003). According to the country-level data for the early 1980s for 18 OECD countries, one-third of female workers were employed in service sectors (Th évenon, 2013). The emergence of new production activities, such as the marketisation of care work, considerably

³ The rising importance of the service sector started in China during the 21st century, with a reduced focus on manufacturing and attempts to restructure towards a service-based economy.

increased women's job opportunities. Women have been commonly and widely employed in a variety of caring jobs in recent years (Crompton, 2006).

Technological advancement was also a large part of the story behind women's increasing employment. When it came to the de-industrialisation era, the men who used to be employed in highly paid skilled jobs (e.g. shipbuilding, mining and steel) lost their jobs, as technological innovation reduced the demand for manual labour in these industries. As a result, the previously skilled workers had to turn to low-wage sectors and their wages were no longer sufficient to support their families. In response to the decline in men's earnings, women entered the paid labour force in order to make economic contributions to support their families.

During the 20th century, the campaigns of 'first-wave' feminism largely focused on women's lack of civil rights (Crompton, 2006). By the 1920s, women were gradually acquiring political and civil rights in an increasing number of countries. Differently from 'first-wave' feminism's emphasis on civil equalities, from the 1960s onward, 'second-wave' feminism strove to obtain equality for women in the labour market. The majority of formal barriers to women's participation in the labour force had been removed in Europe, the USA and the Antipodes by the 1970s (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). However, legal protection for pregnant women still remained an issue. Feminists had long struggled for women's right to retain either their jobs or a reasonable degree of economic security while pregnant. Social responsibility for women's health during childbearing was first recognised through the 1911 National Insurance Act, in which a small maternity allowance was given to a limited group of wage-earning industrial workers (Allen, 2005). With women's increasing participation in industry during the Second World War, more nursery schools emerged to facilitate women's combination of work and childcare, but these provisions were temporary and the concept of formal maternity leave still remained off the agenda. Although the

‘marriage bar’ was gradually removed between the 1940s and the late 1960s, many women continued to be dismissed upon becoming pregnant until the late 1970s. The provision of maternity leave was introduced in many European countries in the 1970s. The first maternity-leave legislation was introduced through the Employment Protection Act 1975 in the UK. However, it only gave rights to those who already had a considerable period of labour-force participation (Burgess et al., 2008). Statutory maternity leave for all women was not introduced until the 1999 Employment Relations Act in the UK (Sisterhood and After Research Team, 2013).

Moreover, changes in women’s employment behaviour were also associated with changing family formations (Crompton, 2006). By the late 20th century, marriage was often being delayed to more mature ages, accompanied by delayed parenthood and lower fertility rates (Frejka, 2008). The increasing instability in interpersonal relationships and changes in women’s attitudes towards careers led to a new female work pattern, in which women remained employed until reaching retirement age, rather than withdrawing from the labour force upon marriage or motherhood (Gornick and Meyers, 2003).

Overall, the sectoral shifts and structural changes in production and employment, as well as changes in family patterns, are key factors in the dynamics of women’s labour-force participation. The male breadwinner model has declined to some extent, as more women have been drawn into the labour market (Lewis, 2001). The model is historically considered to have been a short-lived product of particular social circumstances (Jackson, 2015). It has been modified to different degrees and in various ways in particular countries (Lewis, 1992). For example, in strong male-breadwinner states, such as the UK and Ireland, services that facilitated women’s labour-force participation were absent or very limited. In comparison, Sweden was considered a weak male-breadwinner state, in which taxation policies, day-care and parental leave have been provided to encourage

women into the labour market since the 1960s. While such diversity remained, both at the nation-state level and more locally, Lewis (2001) argued that a shift from the ‘male breadwinner model’ to the ‘one and a half breadwinner model’ occurred in some developed countries during the late 20th century.

Within the one and a half breadwinner model, the most common form was that female part-time caregivers scaled back their working hours, so that they could combine primary responsibility for family care with employment in a part-time job. Across OECD countries, in 2015 the average female part-time employment rate was 25.9 percent. The Netherlands and Switzerland were two countries with the highest rates, at 60.7 and 45 percent respectively (OECD, 2015). By contrast, only 9.5 percent of men in work were working part-time; thus, part-time work was considered a female phenomenon (OECD, 2015). This model represented a modification of the male breadwinner model, rather than a transformation, as it neither addressed the lack of women’s full financial autonomy nor was it associated with substantial changes in gender relations (Crompton, 1999). Women’s participation in part-time jobs was not simply a means of reconciling work and family, but they were paying the price of doing so by taking relatively low-paid, part-time jobs (Gregory and Connolly, 2008). Moreover, Lewis (2001) pointed out that there were considerable inconsistencies between labour-market policies pushing towards participation and the care policies that facilitated full participation. For example, the rise of the one and a half breadwinner model in the Netherlands during the late 1990s and early 2000s was an outcome of the rise in the number of married women in paid labour and the absence of childcare facilities (Visser, 2002).

In addition to the one and a half breadwinner model, Fraser (2014) proposed three alternative models that might follow the demise of the male breadwinner model: *the universal breadwinner model*, *the caregiver parity model* and *the universal caregiver model*. The universal breadwinner model aims to achieve

gender equality by promoting women's employment. It assumes that all adults have the capacity to support themselves and their families through the market, regardless of gender. Hence, the breadwinner role was to be universalised, which meant that women could also be citizen workers. In this model, employment-enabling services, such as day-care and elder care, are essential, as they free women from care responsibilities and enable them to take paid work on terms comparable to men (Fraser, 2014). An opposing caregiver parity perspective rejects the mainstream equation of citizen with wage-earner, instead calling for a new concept of citizenship that stresses women's caregiving responsibilities. The caregiver parity model would enable people to combine part-time employment with part-time care or to support themselves without entering the market by providing a care allowance or income. Fraser (2014) argued that both models were extremely ambitious, as a variety of new programmes and policies would be necessary to support such arrangements. These models also tended to neglect the persistence of the unequal gender division of unpaid work (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012). Thus, Fraser (2014) proposed the universal caregiver model, which promotes gender equity by effectively eliminating the gendered opposition between breadwinning and caregiving. A similar approach was taken by Crompton (1999) in terms of discussing breadwinning and caregiving divisions. Starting from the male-breadwinner/female-carer model, Crompton (1999) explored a range of possible earning and care alternatives, including *dual earner/female part-time carer*, *dual earner/state carer*, *dual earner/marketised carer* and *dual earner/dual carer*. This approach emphasised the variations in earner/carers arrangements, which are linked with both gender equality and general material inequalities.

Although these models hold different assumptions regarding the gendered division of labour, they serve as useful tools for comparing the current resolution of 'employment' and 'care' across the industrialised welfare states. Women's increasing involvement in paid employment not only attracted the attention of

scholars, but also contributed to public pressure to consider the issue of work-life balance at both national and international levels. With the rise in women's employment and increasing concerns about combining working life and family life, several frameworks have been proposed to understand women's work choices in Western countries.

Explanations for women's employment choices and work-life balance in the West

From a theoretical perspective, several models have been proposed to explain women's employment choices. Myrdal and Klein's (1968) model viewed the roles associated with paid and unpaid work as separate spheres that had no influence on each other. This is also called a segmentation model, and it offers a theoretical framework without empirical support (Guest, 2002). The balance model proposed by Glover (2002) is a commonly used framework to analyse work-life balance. It proposes that women take economic decisions relating to employment mobility on the basis of a perceived need to maintain a balance between paid work and unpaid work. In order to maintain a work-life balance, predictability and routine are crucial. Women make an assessment of risk, which has the potential to undermine this predictability, and they will not move from outside the labour market into paid work or from part-time to full-time work if they decide that the risk is too great, because it may be too risky for women to move into a world that has uncontrollable outcomes. Therefore, the balance model could be an explanation for women's high levels of part-time working, otherwise known as the one and a half breadwinner model (Lewis, 2001).

Preference theory and gendered moral rationalities

Recently, one very controversial framework was proposed to examine women's choices between market work and family work, termed 'preference theory'. This

framework was put forward by Hakim (1996, 2000, 2003), and displayed parallels with individualisation theory. It emphasised an individual's preferences and choices when discussing women's labour-market behaviours and outcomes. Hakim (2000) argued that, at the turn of the century, women in Western countries had genuine choices about how they wished to live. On the basis of women's work-life preferences, they were classified into three groups: home centred, work centred and adaptive. Specifically, about 20 percent of women were seen as home centred and gave priority to their families throughout life; they were likely to either withdraw from the labour force or work intermittently when they had children. The work-centred category also made up around 20 percent of women; they gave priority to their careers and many of them remained unmarried or childless. Adaptive women were generally the largest group, accounting for approximately 60 percent of women, and gave no fixed priority to either employment or family, but rather shifted their preferences over their work-family cycles.

This theory has attracted much criticism for its emphasis on preferences and choices. It oversimplifies the ways in which choice is socially constructed and located, and ignores the influence of structural constraints (Ginn et al., 1996; Breugel, 1996; Crompton, 2006; McRae, 2003). According to Crompton (2006), the International Social Survey Programme data suggests that women's attitudes and behaviours towards employment are shaped by a variety of structural factors, rather than the practice of preference alone. As Irwin (2005) argued, structure is not simply a set of opportunities and constraints, but is essential in shaping the contexts of social actions, determining when and why choices are meaningful. Therefore, a more precise way of contextualising individuals' choices and negotiations around employment and family arrangements should be considered (Duncan et al., 2003; Irwin, 2005). Moreover, Jackson (2015) argued that preference theory cannot properly explain cross-variations in the ways in which women combine working life and family life.

Around the same time as Hakim was developing preference theory, Duncan and Edwards (1999) conducted an extensive and intensive research study exploring how cultural norms and social settings influenced lone mothers' employment choices. They argued that lone mothers' work choices were socially negotiated around their understandings of 'good motherhood', and that what constituted good motherhood varied within particular cultural and neighbourhood settings. In other words, individuals took other people's perceptions and desires into account when negotiating work-life choices within a relatively fluid moral framework, rather than behaving as a particular type of person with fixed preferences that were maintained throughout their lives (Duncan et al., 2003).

Duncan and Edwards (1999) proposed the concept of 'gendered moral rationalities' to illustrate the understandings that lone mothers held about their identity as mothers, particularly about their responsibilities towards their children. Duncan and Edwards' research was based on lone mothers, but the concept and related framework could also be applied to mothers in general, as lone mothers are indeed mothers. The idea of gendered moral rationalities suggests that mothers' combination of paid work and family responsibilities, especially childcare responsibilities, cannot just be explained by individual preference or economic rationality, but is closely related to their social and cultural understanding of what is best and morally right for themselves as mothers and workers. Mothering came first before paid work in the moral framework when they were determining what was 'best to do' for their children as a lone mother.

The issue of gender equality in the labour market has also been considered in relation to women's employment choices. While significant improvements have been seen in women's labour-market positioning over the past thirty years, women continue to compete in the workforce on an unequal basis with men, which has resulted in unequal labour-market outcomes, such as women's

concentration in low-paid sectors; women's under-representation in senior positions and obstacles to adequate education and training (European Commission, 2010). Workplace and social institutions have historically been organised around the male breadwinner model, which has failed to keep pace with labour-market trends. For instance, women's engagement in paid labour has not significantly altered the division of domestic labour and childcare responsibilities within families. Women continue to take the primary responsibility for care work and household chores, even in countries with a high female employment rate, such as Canada and Denmark.

Similarly, Christiansen et al. (2016) examined how individual preferences and policies have shaped women's decisions to work outside the household. They found that individual demographics, attitudes towards gender roles and government policies all play essential roles in deciding women's choices in terms of employment. They suggest that: 'even after accounting for personal choice, policies matter' (Christiansen et al., 2016, p.32). Policies are important in removing some of the structural barriers to female employment.

Welfare-state policies

Social policies have an important impact on women's experiences of balancing work and family. Despite growing concerns about balancing working life and family life, large differences remain in the scope and nature of working life policies across countries. The welfare state is a set of ideas about women, family and society, rather than just a set of services (Wilson, 2002). A number of policy instruments are considered relevant to how families combine work and home life, such as childcare facilities, parental leave arrangements, the availability of part-time work opportunities and other flexible working arrangements. Childcare services are particularly vital.

Empirical evidence suggests that the development of formal childcare services increases both female working hours and the number of female workers (Adema and Whiteford, 2007). Indeed, when couples decide whether both partners will stay in part-time or full-time employment, childcare policies have been found to be important determinants (Den Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes, 2007). Vuri (2016) also found that in countries where extensive childcare facilities are provided, such as Denmark and Sweden, women tend to have higher labour-force participation rates. While men have increasingly participated in childcare activities at home in some Western countries, this still remains a gendered activity; therefore, formal childcare provision is directly associated with supporting the entry and re-entry of women into paid work (Masselot and di Torella, 2010). Similarly, Hegewisch and Gornick (2011) pointed out that women are more likely to participate in paid labour, as well as staying in employment following childbirth and holding better jobs, when good-quality and affordable childcare is available. While childcare systems vary across countries, in most European countries, public day-care services are provided for children between the age of three and the mandatory school age (around five to seven years of age). Preschool childcare services have been universal and standard, with an average enrolment rate of over 80 percent in both the OECD countries and European Union countries (Vuri, 2016). However, the enrolment rate of children under three years of age in formal care is only around 40 percent in most European countries, which is mainly a result of the insufficient availability of under-three childcare facilities. It should be noted that the availability of formal childcare facilities is not the only factor that influences women's choices; the price and quality of childcare facilities, the availability of alternative informal care arrangements and cultural norms regarding motherhood also play roles (Den Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes, 2007).

In addition to childcare facilities, leave policies are also considered to be important in easing the combination of paid work and care for children. In most

European countries, leave provisions were developed at the beginning of the last century, aimed at protecting mothers' health, rather than out of any social concern to encourage women's employment or to facilitate the balance between work and family. Today, there are different types of leave across the OECD nations, including maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave and short-term leave to care for sick children. Considerable differences have been found in respect of the length of leave, the flexibility for taking leave and the level of wage replacement available during leave (Fagan and Hebson, 2006).

Maternity leave generally only applies to mothers, except in some cases where it can be transferred to other carers under certain circumstances. Among the 40 countries reviewed in the 12th International Review of Leave and Policies and Related Research 2016, 33 have a statutory and designated maternity leave (Koslowski, Blum and Moss, 2016). This statutory maternity leave is usually to be taken just before, during and immediately after childbirth, with an emphasis on protecting the health of mothers and new-borns. The average length of post-natal leave is 3.9 months, with the longest period of leave (12 months) found in the UK. In EU and OECD countries, maternity leave has been widespread for many years. In recent years, paternity leave and parental leave have also been taken into account and developed by governments and policy makers in many countries.

Just as for maternity leave, paternity leave is also gender specific, allowing fathers to take a short period of leave after the birth of a child. According to the report on fathers' leave and its use in OECD countries published in March 2016, about two-thirds of OECD countries grant paid paternity leave (Adema, Clarke and Theveon, 2016). The most common period of leave is one or two weeks, which is the case in about half of OECD countries. The most generous paternity leave is up to 20 working days in Portugal, whilst it is only two days in Italy and Belgium (Adema, Clarke and Theveon, 2016). The difficulties encountered when

encouraging men to take paternal leave have been discussed by a number of scholars. According to the US Department of Labour statistics in 2000, only around three percent of all male employees took leave for paternity reasons; this low take-up was considered to relate to the societal stereotype that men are primarily breadwinners and are less attached to their children than mothers (Halverson, 2003). A survey undertaken by My Family Care and the Women's Business Council in the UK also showed a similar trend – only 1 in 100 men were applying for the Shared Parental Leave that was introduced in April 2015 (Kemp, 2016). Shared Parental Leave was designed to encourage new dads to take a greater share of childcare and new mums to return to their paid work earlier if they wanted to. It should be noted there is a difference between shared parental leave and paternity leave. Specifically, shared parental leave is designed to give parents more flexibility in how to share childcare responsibilities during the first year following birth. They could take periods of leave to care for the child, and/or take leave at the same time as each other. By contrast, paternity leave is usually to be taken by the father straight after the birth of a child and, in most cases, it can only be taken in a single block of either one or two weeks. Three main reasons were found to contribute to men's reluctance to take leave, including financial unworkability, a lack of awareness and women's refusal to share their maternity leave (Kemp, 2016).

In contrast with maternity leave and paternity leave, parental leave applies equally to mothers and fathers, and is designed as an addition to maternity/paternity leave to allow parents to take care of an infant or young child. According to the Parental Leave Directive 2010/18/EU, all EU member states must provide at least four months of parental leave per parent, but flexibility requirements were not specified in this directive. It suggested that flexibility should be given to mothers to decide when they want to take the leave, rather than taking it all in one block soon after the period of compulsory maternity leave (Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011). Moreover, in order to encourage fathers to

use parental leave, various measures have been introduced in different countries (Koslowski, Blum and Moss, 2016). For example, in Sweden, a ‘gender equality bonus’ was introduced to provide an economic incentive for families to share parental leave more equally; Germany offered an extra two months of leave if fathers take at least two months. Maternity, paternity and parental leaves are only one form of work-family policy and their impacts will interact with other forms, particularly working time options.

Working time options, such as the availability of part-time work opportunities, flexible working schedules and alternative working locations, are also significant determinants in terms of the division of paid and unpaid work. Compared with childcare facilities and leave provisions, employers have been much more actively involved in developing flexible working arrangements, while governments in some countries have tried to promote flexible work opportunities. Part-time work is one of the most prevalent alternative working arrangements, and offers flexibility for workers with family responsibilities. In all developed nations, women have a higher part-time employment rate than men; the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are the two countries with the highest female part-time employment rate across the European Union. While part-time work offers flexibility, it typically receives a lower salary and fewer benefits, which might exacerbate inequalities in wage and employment opportunities (Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach, 2001).

In addition to part-time work opportunities, flexible working practices have been widely practised in Northern European countries, such as Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK (Den Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes, 2007). Specifically, either provisions for shorter working hours and/or maximum working hours legislation for parents of young children have been introduced in most European countries (Gornick and Meyers, 2003). For example, in Sweden, working parents with young children are allowed to reduce their working hours by 25 percent

while retaining the right to return to work full time (Parental Leave Act, 1995). Alternative working locations allow employees to work away from the main office, including working at home or in satellite offices. This might be a solution to a range of problems, but also raises new problems, such as the demarcation of work and family within domestic space (Morgan, 2011).

According to The Flexible Working Regulations 2014, all employees in the UK who have more than 26 weeks' continuous employment have the right to ask for flexible working, which was previously reserved only for employees with parental or caring responsibility. The legislation was part of wider changes designed to provide more flexibility in terms of working patterns (Adam, 2014). Eligible employees can request changes in working time, working hours or working location. However, the right to request flexible working does not mean that it will be automatically approved. Employers are only asked to consider the request in a 'reasonable manner'. This raises the question: in whose interest does flexibility work? Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette (2007) argued that, although flexible working is usually considered to facilitate work-life balancing, employer-led flexible working may lead to work intensification. Kelliher and Anderson's (2010) research on three UK organisations found that both those who worked reduced hours and those working remotely experienced work intensification, because they responded to the ability to work flexibly by exerting additional effort, therefore returning benefit to their employer. The zero-hours contract, which is another work schedule accommodation, has also attracted both attention and controversy.

The zero-hours contract allows companies to employ staff without guaranteeing work, but rather to offer work when it arises. Although workers on zero-hours contracts can either accept the work or decide to decline it on that occasion, they are usually given little notice before shifts and receive no sick pay. According to a report published by the UK Office for National Statistics, around 905,000

people were on zero-hours contracts during the period October to December 2016, accounting for 2.8 percent of the total workforce (Office for National Statistics, 2017). The introduction of the zero-hours contract was considered to offer flexibility to both employers and individuals. However, it was argued that the so-called flexibility of these contracts is far more one-sided: employers use it to keep wage costs down and to maximise the flexibility of their workforce, while employees are not guaranteed working hours and have much less power than workers on fixed contracts to stand up for their rights (Watson Farley and Williams, 2015). Research conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that individuals feel pressured to accept work or risk being excluded from future offers (CIPD, 2013). The imbalance of power between employer and employees means that employers are more likely to benefit from the zero-hours contract, while the financial and security risks are transferred to the workers. Thus, the zero-hours contract is considered to be a symbol of an increasingly insecure labour market, in which flexibility is heavily weighted in favour of the employer (Elliot, 2016).

Discussion on the zero-hours contract brings out the demands for greater labour-market flexibility on the one hand and the need to provide adequate levels of social protection for workers on the other. The concept of flexicurity was proposed in response to concerns about balancing flexibility and security. The emergence of this concept was closely connected to the Dutch labour-market reforms of the 1990s (Wilthagen and Rros, 2004). The Netherlands was historically a country with a rather restrictive system for the dismissal of permanent employees, which induced enterprises to hire temporary workers to increase flexibility in the workforce (Madsen, 2007). These ‘atypical’ workers were generally given a lower level of social security (e.g. rights to unemployment benefits, pensions and holidays), as well as a lower level of employment security than the permanent staff. In order to strike a balance between labour-market flexibility and job security, a new approach was adopted

by the Dutch Minister of Social Affairs and Employment in 1995, in which a memorandum entitled 'Flexibility and Security' was announced. This memorandum contained proposals for combining atypical, flexible types of work with the social security rights that were the entitlement of standard employment. This approach was known as 'normalising non-standard work' (Wilthagen, 2007, p. 3).

Although the idea of flexicurity originated from labour-market reform in the Netherlands in particular, it has become central to employment-related debates in the European Union countries. As in the Netherlands, Denmark has also been at the centre of a discussion on flexicurity. The Danish flexicurity policy included three main policy domains: flexible labour markets, generous unemployment support and a strong emphasis on activation (Viebrock and Clasen, 2009). The combination of these three elements was considered to be 'an example of how to achieve economic growth, a high level of employment and sound public finances in a socially balanced way' (European Economic and Social Committee, 2006, p. 48). Compared with Denmark, in Belgium and Germany, more attention was paid to internal-numerical flexibility and some forms of functional flexibility, as well as income security (Wilthagen and Tros, 2004). While different approaches have been taken between countries in terms of facilitating flexibility and security, it was wage flexibility, internal-functional flexibility and combination security that appeared to be increasingly considered important in all countries (Wilthagen and Tros, 2004).

The above discussion provides a review of the national welfare policies that have influenced women's employment choices and work-family balance, including childcare facilities, parental leave arrangements, the availability of part-time work opportunities and other flexible working arrangements. Although the level and development of national policies aiming to support the combination of work and family life cannot be reviewed in full here, this overview illustrates the

variations between countries with respect to the type of support that is developed and emphasised.

To sum up, many attempts have been made to explain, predict and support women's choices around employment and family arrangements. Both the attitudes and behaviour of women towards employment are determined by a complex range of factors, including individual preferences, the attitudes of women and their partners towards gender roles, and various government policies and provisions. Thus, although it is important to take normative and structural perspectives into account as well as individual preferences when examining women's choices in employment, a critical stance should be retained to reveal the many ways in which people's choices about their own lives are formed. Having explored various explanations for women's employment choices, I will now turn to discuss the conceptual debates and arguments about combining work and family life.

Conceptual debates about combining work and family life

The terms 'work-family conflict' and 'work-life balance' have been commonly used in talking about the challenges of combining working life and family life in the 21st century. A shift from 'work-family' and 'family-friendly policies' to 'work-life conflict' and 'work-life balance' emerged as increasing numbers of women experienced increasing work demands, which resulted in general busyness and feelings of pressure (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006). This shift in language shows a broader and more inclusive way of framing issues of paid work and personal life. For example, the notion of work-family conflict has been seen as essential for raising awareness of the growing blurring of boundaries between paid work and other activities.

Work-family conflict research was grounded in theories of role stress and

inter-role conflict. The latter concept was first proposed by Kahn et al. in 1964. They used the term inter-role conflict to describe a form of conflict in which ‘role pressures associated with membership in one organisation are in conflict with pressures stemming from membership in other groups’ (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 20). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p. 77) developed Kahn et al.’s definition and considered work-family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects. This definition has been commonly adopted in a number of work-family studies. Research indicates that these role pressures are directional and has distinguished two components of work-family conflict: work interference with family (WIF) – termed work-to family conflict and family interference with work (FIW) – termed family-to-work conflict, with each possessing unique antecedents and consequences (Byron, 2005). While the inter-role perspective addresses the incompatible demands of work and family roles, it tends to suggest that work is not a part of life. Although paid work is often too much of a part, it is still a necessary and meaningful aspect of life for many people. In current studies, work-family conflict is used as a term to illustrate the interference between work and family in general, while work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are used to refer to conflict in a specific direction.

A number of research studies have discussed the negative consequences of work-family conflict, including difficulties in practising parenthood, depression, work stress and dissatisfaction with one’s job and family (Allen et al., 2000; Spector et al., 2005). The consideration of gender differences has been a central topic in the analysis of work-family conflict (McElwain et al., 2005). Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991) proposed two frameworks to explain the gender differences in work-family conflict: the rational view and the gender-role perspective. The first, the rational view, posits that the more hours one spends in a domain, the more potential there will be for a conflict to occur. In other words, the number of hours spent in the work or family domain is directly associated

with the degree of work-family conflict experienced (Gutek, Searle and Klepa, 1991). According to the rational perspective, women tend to report higher levels of family-to-work conflict as they spend more time in the family role while men are more likely to report higher levels of work-to-family conflict due to their longer working hours.

Despite the obvious differences in time spent in each domain, and the perceived conflict between genders, Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991) pointed out that men's and women's reports of role conflict might depart from 'rational view' predictions in a manner consistent with gender-role expectations. For example, the perceived work-family conflict was influenced by the expectations created by gender roles either directly or as a moderator (Gutek, Searle and Klepa, 1991). Specifically, as women were assumed to take more responsibility for family caring, they were more sensitive to work-to-family conflict, as opposed to men, who were more sensitive to family-to-work conflict because they were more specialised in work responsibilities. Thus, the hours spent in one's own sex-role domain should be considered less of an imposition than hours spent in the opposite domain.

Both the rational view and the gender-role framework received mixed support. Some evidence suggested that men and women reported different levels of work-family conflict (Eby et al., 2005). In accordance with Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991), research had shown that the number of working hours per week was positively related to work-to-family conflict (Byron, 2005; Major et al., 2002), while the number of hours spent on family-related activities was positively associated with family-to-work conflict (Byron, 2005; Fu and Shaffer, 2001). In spite of these two frameworks, attempts have been made to discuss work-family conflict from different perspectives. From the 'family practices' perspective, the discussion of work-family conflict provides an illustration of how family practices extend beyond the confines of the home (Morgan, 2011).

By contrast, from a labour-market perspective, work-family conflict can be partly seen as a result of the increasingly feminised labour force (Houston, 2005).

In addition to work-family conflict, 'work-life balance' emerged as a popular way of discussing work-life issues. Research on work-family balance originated from the discussion of women's multiple roles. Barnett and Baruch (1985) explored the psychological distress connected to women's multiple roles as paid worker, wife and mother. Based on their research, role balance was defined as 'rewards minus concerns difference score', with the score ranging from positive to negative values. More recently, the importance of individual satisfaction with multiple roles has been taken into account. Drawing on 'work/family border theory', Clark (2000, p. 751) defined work-life balance as 'satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home within a minimum of role conflict.' In a similar vein, Kirchmeyer (2000) defined work-life balance as obtaining satisfying experiences in all life domains, which requires personal resources (e.g. time and commitment) to be well distributed across domains. Compared with these two definitions, Clark's concept was more about 'balance' within one's identity (combining multiple roles, such as mother and worker) while Kirchmeyer emphasised the practicalities of managing time, care and work demands. Clark and Kirchmeyer's studies discussed work-life balance from a gender-neutral perspective, without emphasising any gender differences in the role conflict. Based on these nominal definitions, work-family balance was defined as the extent to which individuals are equally engaged in and equally satisfied with their work roles and family roles (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Although the term 'work-life balance' has been commonly used in the literature, several scholars have argued that it paints a superficial and over-simplistic picture of the challenges that individuals encounter in modern society (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Gregory and Milner, 2009; Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006). It has been pointed out that the notion of work-life balance refers to an

outcome rather than a continuous process. Marks and MacDermid (1996, p. 421) argued that role balance is not an outcome but rather 'both a behavioral pattern of acting across roles in a certain way and a corresponding cognitive-affective pattern of organizing one's inner life of multiple selves.' It describes an ideal situation rather than the process of achieving the balance between work and family. The idea that it is possible to reach a balance between work and other parts of life glosses over the shifting nature of couples' work and non-work involvements and the gendered meaning given to these activities (Moen and Sweet, 2004). Hochschild (2003) criticised the concept of work-life balance as a bland slogan with little bearing on real life. Given the rise in women's employment, more women are combining paid work with other commitments in their lives. However, this does not mean that a harmonious balance has been achieved. The term work-life balance considers unpaid work as part of the non-work domain, which under-estimates the value of domestic labour (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006). The word balance has also been criticised for ignoring the many ways in which paid work and other parts of life may feed into or influence each other in various ways throughout the life course. Moen (2011) pointed out that work and family role experiences and vulnerability to work-family conflict are subject to change across the life course. People in different stages of life have different sets of tasks and issues. For instance, key tasks for families with newborns involve adapting to new economic and social roles, while the tasks evolve into negotiating new boundaries when the children become teenagers (Erickson, Martinengo and Hill, 2010). These various tasks appear to be associated with varying degrees of role stress, thus upsetting the flow of work-family balance (Allen and Finkelstein, 2014). In addition, different family tasks that occur through the life course might be more likely to be taken on by one gender rather than the other, which contributes to a better understanding of gender differences in work-family balance and how it might be better viewed as a process rather than an outcome. As such, Morgan (2011) argued that it is probably more advisable to refer to 'work family articulation'.

Morgan proposed that the term ‘work family articulation’ is a more neutral concept with which to analyse the process of combining work and family, rather than implying forms of conciliation or equilibrium between the two spheres.

The above discussion has explored the main themes and arguments that emerged in examining the combination of work and family. Taking into account the Western debates and perspectives, this study focuses on exploring young Chinese women’s views, experiences and beliefs about managing paid and unpaid work. It will also examine the factors that facilitate or hinder finding a balance between working life and family life. I am aiming to provide detailed information about how young women and their families struggle with many pressures and tensions in order to combine paid work and care responsibilities. In this study, I will loosely employ the term ‘work-family balance’ in order to discuss the processes and practices whereby women and families develop specific strategies to manage employment and family responsibilities. Although the term work-life balance has been increasingly used in work and family research, I will still use the term ‘work-family balance’ in this study, as I am emphasising the combination of paid work and family responsibilities specifically, rather than taking a broad approach considering all aspects of life, such as health, leisure, and pleasure. In addition, the term ‘work-family balance’ was employed by the respondents themselves in the interviews, illustrating their experiences and the strategies they used to achieve a balance between working life and family life. It is not just about the outcome of combining working life and family life but, more importantly, it considers the process of coordination and negotiation around employment and family responsibilities. Hence, the term work-family balance is a more useful concept when discussing the range of work and family issues in this study, considering work-family balance itself from an analytical perspective based on women’s perceptions and bearing in mind the difficulties and challenges of using the term.

Chapter Two Work and Family in China

China is a country with five thousand years of history; its political, economic and cultural environment differs from those of Western countries. As I will show below, changes in economic structures, the welfare system and family structures have greatly altered both gender relations and family life in China. Women's roles are socially constructed within a specific historical context and are subject to change, rather than being natural and universal. The traditional gender ideologies have still been considered important in influencing the way in which women practise their roles as daughters, mothers and wives. Therefore, in order to explore young women's experiences of balancing work and family, it is necessary to have some basic historical and cultural background to women's roles in China's past. Drawing on the existing literature, in this chapter, I will provide a review of the history of Chinese society, with an emphasis on changing social policy and the welfare system in China, and I will discuss how these factors influence Chinese women's lives and work-family experiences. As China has a very long history, I intend to provide a broad and condensed view of varied aspects of Chinese society. I organise this chapter into three chronological periods: the pre-1949 period, the Mao era (1949–1978) and after the economic reforms (1978 to now), followed by a review of the social policy and welfare system in contemporary China.

The pre - 1949 period

The traditional Chinese family has long been characterised as patriarchal and patrilineal, and is influenced by Daoism, Buddhism and, particularly, Confucianism. Confucianism is a prominent philosophical strand in China's long history. Confucian ideology was adopted by the emperors as the principle to regulate society in pre-modern Chinese society (Liu, 2007). The classical Confucian ideology was embedded in two traditional ethical concepts

‘Rites-Music-Humanity-Righteousness’ and ‘Three Bonds-Five Relations’.

These ethical concepts were conceived of by Confucius (551–479 BCE) and Mencius (390–305 BCE), then developed by *Han* philosopher Dong Zhongshu (180–115 BCE). Their purposes were to achieve a harmonious and hierarchical order; therefore, people were asked to behave in accordance with their positions in society. According to Winfield, Mizuno and Beaudoin (2000), Confucius aimed to create social harmony by defining everyone’s roles based on key family relationships. At the same time, various moral pressures were imposed on individuals to conform to their roles. Man is superior to woman was one of the core beliefs of Confucianism. The ideas of ‘*Nan zun nü bei*’⁴ and ‘*San cong*’⁵ described women’s lower position in the hierarchy, and indicated that women were inferior to men at all stages of life – ‘obeying fathers before being married, husband when married, and adult sons when widowed’ (Liu and Xu, 2009, p. 4). Chinese women’s identities were constructed through their unquestioning obedience and deference to the authority of men. For example, Zang (2003) emphasised that women occupied the lowest position in a family, they had to show filial respect not only to their parents-in-law, but also to their husbands’ younger siblings. In other words, in patriarchal families, women were dependents of men, and they were viewed as members of their husbands’ families rather than their natal families. This male-dominated pattern was continued into the first half of the 20th century and had been seen an essential obstacle preventing China from achieving modernity (Hershatter, 2007). The core wifely virtue, *xiao* (filial piety), was another essential core belief of Confucianism, which highlighted the significance of providing services to parents-in-law. It gave women more filial responsibilities and duties within husband-centred marriage. This also reflected Confucius’s principle of the sexual division of labour, which can be summarised as ‘men outside and women inside’. According to Rofel (1994, p. 235), women were not permitted to gain knowledge of the outside world, they remained inside

⁴ *Nan zun nü bei* refers to ‘male as superior and women as subordinate’.

⁵ *Sancong* refers to the ‘Three Obediences’ – a woman should obey her father before marriage, her husband when married, and her sons in widowhood.

as a ‘spatial statement of virtuous femininity’.

During the *Zhou* (1046–256 BCE) and *Han* (202 BCE–220 CE) periods, the articulation of ideas about gender, family and body constructed the cultural norms and political theories, and these were developed into the 20th century. After the *Han* Dynasty collapsed in 220 CE, no emperor was strong enough to hold China together. Over the next 350 years, more than 30 local dynasties rose and fell, until the *Tang* dynasty was established in the year 618. Compared to the *Zhou* and *Han* eras, *Tang* women had many opportunities to participate in activities outside the home; for example, they attend parties that featured board games, music and poetry. *Tang* women seem to have been more independent and self-assured (Hinsch, 2016). With a prosperous economy and radiant culture, the *Song* Dynasty was considered another period of ‘golden age’ after the glorious *Tang* Dynasty. Two significant changes were made during the middle empires of *Song* (960–1279) and *Yuan* (1279–1368). One was the new obsession with widows’ fidelity; new honours were given to those women who refused to remarry after the death of their spouses (Mann, 2011). Another was the start of footbinding of women – a cruel practice of mutilating young girls’ feet. Young girls had their toes forcibly bent under the bottom of their feet with a tight and lengthy cloth, so that the feet remained bound for the rest of their lives. This practice made women dependent upon men, as their feet eventually became deformed so they could barely walk, and this confined them to the home environment (Li, 2013). Both changes were considered core aspects of women’s gendered identities during the *Qing* period. When it came to the *Qing* period, the beliefs in female virtue were dominated by the so-called chastity cult, which believed that women’s ultimate moral obligation was to the patrilineal line into which they married (Du and Mann, 2003). This commitment proclaimed women’s determination to serve their parents-in-law unto death when confronted with the death of husbands. The chastity cult honoured two female virtues: purity and martyrdom. The first virtue, purity, was known as *Jie*, which was not only

defined as sexual purity but also referred to absolute fidelity to one husband (Du and Mann, 2003). It required that women should be devoted to their husbands and families lifelong. Martyrdom referred to *Lie*, described as women's absolute commitment to sexual purity and fidelity, which may require self-sacrifice or even suicide.

In response to the decline of the *Qing* state, the Revolution of 1911 led by Sun Yat-sen, which was also called the *Xinhai Revolution* took place in October of 1911 in China. Four months later, in February 1912, the abdication of the last Emperor, Puyi, marked the end of an imperial rule which had lasted for more than 2000 years and the start of China's republican era. The 1911 Revolution was the first step towards modernisation and a democratic movement in China. However, the new government in Nanjing ended up failing to govern the whole country. The young nation faced many challenges, from foreign imperialism to the struggle between the Communist and Nationalist Parties.

After World War One, the Treaty of Versailles was signed by the Allied powers, acknowledging Japanese territorial claims in China, which angered the Chinese, who refused to sign the Treaty. Due to this, about 5,000 students from Peking University crowded the streets to demonstrate against the Versailles Treaty, leading to the May Fourth Movement. The May Fourth Movement gave rise to discourses on women's liberation. The activists and reformers considered women's lack of education and the problems within the traditional family structure to be the source of China's underdevelopment, which prevented the country from becoming a stronger nation. The May Fourth Movement openly and systematically challenged the gender stratification of Chinese society (Li, 2013). However, this movement had a limited impact on the majority of women, who lived in the countryside, as it only involved a small number of urban and elite women.

The Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921 in Shanghai, and this completed the long process of government upheaval in China begun by the 1911 Revolution. The history of the Chinese Communist Party shows that there were conflicts between the women's rights movement and the Marxist Chinese Communist Party. Specifically, activist women were urged to shift their concerns from combating gender oppression to economic class oppression. The rigid Marxists of the early Chinese Communist Party ignored the fact that women were anomalous in the Marxist class categories, as class referred to property ownership and people's relationship to the means of production under the communist ideological context (Johnson, 2009).

It was after the revolution of 1949 that changes took place which had a significant impact on the lives of hundreds of millions of Chinese women. The new government committed itself to guaranteeing women's liberation and equality. A government department called the All-China Women's Federation, which aimed at improving women's status in social and political activities, was established in March 1949. The All-China Women's Federation was largely administrated by women and generally concerned health and education, which had been seen as traditionally female issues (Nolan, 2008). According to Edwards (2004), this structure ensured that the population of women was well represented and their rights and situations were considered in accordance with the fact that the majority of members of the Chinese Community Party were male and had little interest in gender equality. Since the establishment of Communist China and the All-China Women's Federation, women's status in society and the family was enhanced through increasing opportunities in education, as well as through protective laws and policies in marriage and the labour market, well into the Mao era (Liu and Xu, 2009).

The Mao era 1949–1976

Generally, the Mao era refers to the period between the foundation of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949 and Deng Xiaoping's policy reversal in 1978. Women's involvement in work outside the home was one of the key developments during the first phase of this period from 1949 to 1966 (Liu, 2007). Along with economic development, a nationwide upsurge of women stepping out of their homes to take part in social production appeared, which was referred to by various terms such as 'to go out'; 'to walk out' or 'going out'. According to Croll (1983), Chinese women's employment rate was higher than in any other country in the developing world during this period. In rural areas, around 70 percent of women participated in agricultural work. Nearly all working-age women in cities entered the labour market for full-time work after completing school. This provided women with an independent source of income and changed their previous situation of being excluded from social productive labour. Although women went out to work at that time, the majority of them worked in the service sector, with low salaries. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the traditional patriarchal and caring patterns still persisted. As such, women's responsibilities for looking after their families were unchanged, while men were mainly decision-makers and breadwinners in a family (Liu, 2007).

According to Mao's ideology, the priority of a woman's role was to undertake productive work, they were expected to satisfy the needs of their families second (Leung, 2003). A woman's status in the family was related to their contributions to economic activities. Moreover, Mao sought to create a country in which women were seen as rational human beings. His famous quotation 'Women hold up half the sky' reflected the government's determination in raising women's status. According to the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference paper published in September 1949:

Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, educational and social life. Freedom of marriage for men and women shall be put into effect.

In accordance with the law, two important legislative documents were adopted by the Chinese Communist Party in 1950. First, the Marriage Reform Law was introduced to outlaw prostitution, child betrothal and arranged marriage. The law prescribed that ‘all marriages must be based on the free consent of both parties and that no marriage can be entered into by any person under the legally specified age’ (Wang, 2016, p.23). It also made it easier for women to obtain a divorce which was nearly impossible under the old regime. According to the estimated figure, the divorce rate was as high as 1.3 per 1000 population in the early 1950s in China (Stacey, 1983). In addition to the Marriage Reforms, the Land Reform took place one month later which was based on the Communist’s concern with class struggle. According to the Land Reform Law, land was redistributed to the peasants, regardless of sex (Leung, 2003). This reform was motivated by the goal of achieving growth in agricultural reproduction, therefore ensuring a basic living standard for the whole population (Whyte, 1999). Hence, the Land Reform changed the economic basis of the landlord-tenant system (Leung, 2003).

The Cultural Revolution which began in 1966 and finished with Mao Zedong’s death in 1976 was another important event during the Mao era. The Cultural Revolution influenced individual’s life both at that time and afterwards (Liu, 2007). It aimed at attacking and re-educating class enemies, therefore strengthening proletarian dictatorship. The slogans such as ‘Times have changed now, men and women are the same’ were proposed at that time. In addition, people were encouraged to take part in political activities and to criticise family members’ wrong decisions. However, gender equality was not actually achieved, women were not seen as active agents of their own liberations. For example, the

revolution failed to address the oppression of women in the patriarchal society; it only emphasised the struggle of the working class (Barlow, 1994).

Mao led the Chinese Communist Party to eliminate the ‘three great differences’ between worker and peasant, city and countryside, mental and manual labour (Brown, 2012). In order to achieve this goal, the campaign which was called ‘Down to the country movement’ or ‘Up to the mountains, down to the villages’ started in 1968. This programme sent young people raised in the cities into mountainous areas or farming villages, to live and work with peasantry, so that they could discard their bourgeois ideas (Unger, 1979). As a result, more than sixteen million young Chinese were forced to small towns and villages. Mao and other leaders expected these young people to bring new knowledge to the countryside and believed that their work would benefit the nation. However, the reality was less positive. The peasant population was not willing to feed more mouths, because the young people from urban areas lacked the skills of undertaking intensive agricultural work (Unger, 1979). Many of these young people lost the opportunity to attend university and to see their families. As such, they were considered by many researchers to be China’s ‘stolen generation’ or ‘lost generation’ (*shi luo de yi dai*) (Bonnin, 2014; Hung and Chiu, 2003).

Although several Maoist programmes had been set to transfer urban youth to villagers which were considered as ways to redistribute wealth, the Communists indeed widened rural-urban differences rather than erasing it (Unger, 1979). Before the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, the economy was based on agriculture, more than 80 percent of population lived in rural areas in China. There were few legal and institutional barriers to geographic and social mobility at that time, the system of household registration generally aimed at keeping track of people’s location rather than restricting their movements (Whyte, 1999). This pattern did not change in the early years of Mao era. However, a series of institutional changes launched between 1953 and 1958 changed this

situation. The relatively free movement of people was replaced by a regime of bureaucratic assignment. Free migration from the rural areas to cities was seen as a problem by China's revolutionary leaders that might lead to a lack of control over cities.

In order to control population mobility, the *hukou* system was established in 1951 in cities. Four years later, it was extended to the rural areas, then becoming a permanent system in 1958. The *hukou* system was designed to provide statistics of population and personal status as well as avoiding unmanageable migration from the rural area to urban area (Chan and Zhang, 1999). During the Mao era, controlling *nongzhuanfei* [conversion of one's *hukou* from rural to urban] was the key of regulating population shifts from the countryside to cities under the *hukou* system. Specifically, *nong* referred to the *agricultural hukou* while *fei* defined as *non-agricultural hukou*. The policy regulated the number of qualified people who were able to obtain the non-agricultural *hukou*. In 1962, the Ministry of Public Security intensified the control of formal migration from rural to urban areas especially from small to big cities (Chan and Zhang, 1999).

Overall, the *hukou* system was a tool used by the government to maintain the public security and political stability. It was designed to serve the economic and political needs of the state in economic growth. Based on the *hukou* system, citizens were divided into agricultural *hukou* holders and non-agricultural *hukou* holders. They were given different opportunities, responsibilities and socioeconomic statuses in relation to their *hukou* types (Chan and Zhang, 1999). This system not just defined an individual's relationship with the state, but also the benefits one could derive from the state.

Chinese social policy and welfare systems varied by province, people's access to jobs and services were associated with the residential area shown on an individual's permit (Cheng and Selden, 1994). The official distribution policies

were also different in urban areas and rural areas. More specifically, the ‘urban public good regime’ provided various welfare services to urban residents, including secure jobs, medical care and heavily subsidised housing (Whyte, 1999). By contrast, there was no such guarantee for people in rural areas. Although the direct taxes on farmers were relatively moderate, they needed to pay for the increasing cost of urban manufactured goods, such as chemical fertilizer for their agricultural work. These policies and the decreasing investment in rural areas lead to the continuity rural poverty. The gap between urban areas and rural communities had thus been enlarged during the Mao era. The lives of urban women at this time were governed by *danwei* system, which was the key unit of social and political organisation in urban areas in the Mao era.

The *danwei*: women’s work and family life

The term *danwei* is usually translated as unit. However, Bray (2005) argued the word ‘unit’ cannot fully capture the meaning of *danwei* in the Chinese context. According to Lu (1989, p.25), *danwei* represented a common system shared by Chinese urban workplaces: ‘In China everyone calls the social organisation in which they are employed—whether it be a factory, shop, school, hospital, research institute, cultural troupe, or party organ—by the generic term *danwei*’. The term *danwei* referred to the workplace where the majority of urban residents were employed and the specific range of practices that it embodied (Liu, 2007). In urban areas, the *danwei* represented the traditional social assurance of life-long job security, which is called iron rice bowl (*tie fan wan*) (Ding, Goodall and Warner, 2006). *Danwei* transformed China into a work-unit-oriented society in which the government employed nearly 90 percent of the labour force (Liu, 2007). It had been seen as the basic organisation in urban China, not only offering salary to its members, but also providing social guarantee and welfare services, such as the provision of housing, dining halls, free medical care and kindergartens. In addition to the material benefits, the *danwei* also has a variety

of political and social functions, which influenced urban residents' identities and personal relations. Liu (2007) examined both economic and noneconomic factors within and outside the workplace in her research. The findings suggested that gender inequality persisted in the working practices and *danwei* system. In other words, *danwei* was not a gender-neutral place, but a complex component of the government's control over people.

In order to illustrate the familial culture in the *danwei* and its gendered implications, Liu (2007) examined three main work unit practices: matchmaking, allocation of housing and surveillance of family life. Specifically, matchmaking was a popular activity in *danwei* system which aimed at trying to set up an arranged marriage for young people. It was regarded as part of the operational responsibility of the *danwei*. For example, some leaders provided opportunities for young people to meet each other when planning cultural activities (Liu, 2004). In the matchmaking process, the *danwei* leaders were using their powers from the workplace to interfere in personal matters. This popular matchmaking culture might cause problems for workers. For instance, the relationship with matchmakers was directly influenced by workers' relationships with the potential candidates that were introduced by their leaders. A common principle held by matchmakers was that love comes after marriage (Liu, 2004). Actually, the characteristics of love changed in accordance with governments' needs. According to Evans (1997), the same political and ideological view was the foundation of love in the 1950s. In contrast, in the 1980s, when the economic principles were accepted, love was more likely to be seen as a personal matter rather than the state's business. The allocation of housing was another gendered practice that influenced women's family life. Based on the regulation of the *danwei* system in China, generally male employees were the only applicants for housing in the work unit (Bian, 1994). Hence, a man was the one who provided accommodation in a marriage whilst a woman was joining a man's family. Accordingly, women took it granted that it was men's responsibilities to offer

housing. This housing arrangement strategy in the *danwei* strengthened the traditional concept of female dependency in marriage and family life (Liu, 2007). Then the *danwei* leaders took a close interest in maintaining harmony among workers which included the surveillance of family life. They performed like a parent, involved in marriage decision making and house allocation. The reinforcement of sex segregation in the workplace and the maintenance of gender divisions within the wider society contributed to the familial culture in the *danwei* (Liu, 2007). The reconciliation committee was used to exemplify the *danwei* leader's consideration toward domestic lives of workers. According to Liu (2007), the duty of the reconciliation committee was to deal with family problems which were usually reported by neighbours. In addition, this committee played a significant role in reinforcing the traditional ideology. For example, the members of the reconciliation committee expected women to be the ones to take more responsibilities for looking after elders and children when solving the problems in a family.

In spite of the above factors, the *danwei* has an impact on women in how they balance their work life and family life. Generally, the *danwei* employees worked six days a week, from 8am to 5pm with a lunch break which was called the normal working hours. In addition to the normal working hours, three-shift rotation was the basic working pattern for industrial workers. The shifts comprised the daytime shift (8am to 4pm), middle shift (4pm to 12 midnight) and night shift (12 midnight to 8am) (Liu, 2007). In 1995, the six-day working week was changed to the five-day working week while the three-shift rotation was unchanged. The long working hours and less personal time made women exhausted and with no energy to fit in their family needs (Liu, 2007). The shift work system also upset workers' bodily rhythms, which tended to result in a poor quality of family life.

The public childcare system played an essential role in the *danwei* working

pattern. The *danwei* was the principle provider of childcare to workers, because subsidised childcare was a major component of the welfare package that was provided by *danwei* (Du and Dong, 2010). In the *danwei* system, care was provided to children from the newborns to children until they entered primary school (Du and Dong, 2010). Such support for childcare was based on the ‘Regulation for Kindergarten’ issued by the Chinese government. This regulation stipulated that the goal of childcare support was to develop children’s health and cognitive capabilities prior to primary school, therefore reducing the burden of childcare on mothers so they were able to participate in productive work (He and Jiang, 2008).

In summary, *danwei* is the foundation of urban China in the Mao era (Bray, 2005). It is not only the unit of employment, but also the source of employment and material support for most urban residences. It regulated, educated and policed the employees, influencing their work and life in various ways. The structure and management of *danwei* was changed significantly in the Chinese economic reform process.

Economic reform period

Before the economic reform in 1978, China maintained a centrally planned economy (Liu and Xu, 2009). The government directed the production activities and facilitated the central control of resources. Some researchers (Lai, 1995; Zuo and Bian, 2001) have indicated that women’s active participation in the labour force reduced the gaps in women’s and men’s experiences. However, the government only emphasised gender equality in the labour market, but failed to extend its attention to the household (Liu and Xu, 2009). Chinese women were primary care providers in the household as well as productive workers in the society (Lai, 1995). As such, Zuo and Bian (2001) concluded that Chinese women encountered almost the same household burden even though they

experienced significant improvement in the labour market between 1949 and 1978.

The transition from a planned economy to a market-oriented economy was launched in 1978. It changed the structure of *danwei* and influenced women's employment in urban areas. During the planned economy period, the Chinese government was committed to gender equality in the labour market and women's job security was guaranteed for a life time. During economic restructuring, private organisations gradually replaced the public manufacturers owned by state, provincial and local governments (Liu and Xu, 2009). The guaranteed lifetime job was replaced by contract positions in organisations. The government also changed the previous job allocation system during this period. They no longer assigned jobs to university graduates. From full reliance on the government for jobs, all employees, especially women who worked in the private sector confronted the risk of losing jobs and social benefits (Lin, 2003). Lee (2002) identified two main reasons that led to women's higher probability of being laid off by the organisations than men. Firstly, employers generally viewed women as less desirable workers, because they might go on maternity leave and were more likely to take time off to look after family members. Secondly, according to Chinese traditional beliefs, men were more intelligent and productive than women. Hence, in the free labour market, women had less opportunity to be employed when they were competing for jobs with men (Liu and Xu, 2009). Unemployed women only had opportunities for low paid, low skill and low social status jobs. The traditional idea that 'husbands work outside and wives take charge of household' was thus reinforced.

Economic reform also had an impact on the gendered division of labour in rural areas and how agricultural work was distributed. In the early stages of the economic reform, women's participation in agriculture was decreased (Jacka, 1997). This was partly due to the loosened restriction on movement from villages

to cities. In the Mao era, rural women's mobility to work and live in cities was restricted by the *hukou* system. It was not possible for them to leave their villages except through marriage and a few other means (Lin, 2003). However, the significant economic and social changes under the economic reform put pressure on the existing *hukou* system, resulting in some key changes since the late 1970s. Faced with the increase in population mobility, a series of measures had been taken to improve the *hukou* system. Firstly, the Temporary Residence Certificate (TRC), also referred to as the temporary resident permit, was introduced in 1985. It allowed internal migrants who are wishing to reside in urban areas for more than three months to register with the local authorities legally (Wang, 2005). However, the Temporary Residence Certificate did not entitle its holder to the urban benefits associated with the regular urban *hukou*. In addition to TRC, administration and application fees were charged for obtaining work permits and family planning permits (Chan, 2004). Moreover, in 1983, the citizen identity cards (IDC) were proposed to modify the *hukou* system. It shifted the focus of population registration from one book per household to one card per person (Chan and Zhang, 1999). In contrast to the policies in the 1970s, a special channel⁶ was opened for *nongzhuanfei*. Since 1980, workers in a variety of industries and occupations would be able to change their agricultural *hukou* to non-agricultural *hukou*. With the looser *hukou* system, millions of women migrated to cities, working as household workers, waitresses, babysitters and factory workers. Many young girls from rural areas went to coastal cities, working more than 10 hours a day and seven days a week on low wages (Lin, 2003). These young girls were referred to 'dagongmei' in Chinese, they accounted for a large number of factory workers in textiles and electronic manufacturing (Pun, 2006; Nolan, 2008). Lin (2003) found that a few migrant women settled down in cities and integrated into urban life while the majority still remained at the bottom of the urban social society. Although the system was loosened in the reform era, *nongzhuanfei* was still difficult for those migrant

⁶ This channel was only available to migrants with economic resources.

women, because most of them were doing unskilled work for low wages which were not covered by the policy for granting non-agricultural *hukou*. As such, they were not eligible for various welfare services in cities, for example, it was impossible for a migrant woman's child to go to kindergarten without a non-agricultural *hukou*.

Furthermore, the collective farming under the Commune system introduced by Mao in 1958 was replaced by the Household Responsibility System in 1978 (Lardy, 1983). In the previous commune system, a farmer was not rewarded for working harder, because all members of the team should share the additional output. Some Chinese farmers realised that if they farmed separately, the team could produce more in total. At the same time, they would still be able to satisfy the requirement of the government for distributing agricultural products in the economy (Chow, 2004). This practice was introduced in some areas of the country. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping recognised the benefit of this practice and adopted it as a national policy called Household Responsibility System. This programme substantially increased agricultural productivity. It not only increased the supply of food, but also changed the ideological thinking of Communist Party members in support of a market economy (Chow, 2004). From women's perspective, this change reinforced traditional home-based production, therefore increasing women's burden within the household to some extent (Nolan, 2008).

In addition, the expansion of opportunities also led to men's shift from agricultural to industrial employment. Income inequality increased with the economic transition. Men had the chance to work in the urban or coastal areas with a much better salary than women. Therefore, although some women, especially young women entered the labour market in cities, the ones who stayed in the countryside, particularly married women took responsibility for agricultural work. According to Lin (2003), more than 60 percent of agricultural work was undertaken by women in the 1980s. This over representation of women

in agricultural work has been referred to as ‘feminisation of agriculture’ (Chen, 2004). The reasons for the concentration of women in agriculture were associated with local policy decisions and individual women themselves (Jacka, 1997). Based on the Chinese marriage system, women lost their rights to land in their natal villages. If a woman divorced, her right to land in the village might be withdrawn (Jacka, 1997). However, if she used to farm that land, she tended to have a stronger claim on it. Moreover, women’s participation in agricultural work was related to the strong identification for women with an inside sphere of work. This meant that it was difficult for married women to leave home to work. As such, many married women, especially those with children preferred farming rather than working in cities. According to Jacka (1997), rural women’s positions in the family and wide community were not improved under the economic reform. Women had not benefited from the reform to the same extent as men.

The industrial restructuring has also led to a decrease in agricultural employment and an increase in employment in industry and services. In urban areas some traditional female trades, such as light and textile industry came to standstill while some new occupations, such as real estate, finance and retail grew. Industrial restructuring has opened up many new kinds of occupations for women, for example, waitresses and saleswomen have become popular female occupations. In addition, the increase in the number of female specialised personnel and technicians has given enormous impetus to the rise in the occupation level of educated women in cities (Fei, 1995).

In addition to the impact on labour division, the economic reform also provided Chinese women with more opportunities and freedom both in the social and economic sphere. For example, the economic change enhanced women’s overall educational achievement which made it possible for them to live independently and to enter the labour market. At the same time, there have been new changes in social policy and welfare, which impact on women’s lives and opportunities for

paid work.

Social policy and welfare in contemporary China

After more than three decades of the market-oriented reform and open-door policy practice, the political and sociological landscape in China has undergone remarkable changes. These changes also challenge social welfare systems in China previously tied to the planned economy. The ending of the job allocation system provides both opportunities and challenges for women in the workforce. With the decline of the state-owned enterprises, working mothers received less support for childcare from the government and employers. The aging population and the new 4-2-1 family structure increase the burden of elderly care for the younger generation. I will explore how the key policies impact on women's employment and family practices by considering women in the workforce, the one-child policy and population ageing and childcare network.

Women in the workforce

Women's labour force participation is an important aspect when analysing work family issues. China is a country with the largest labour force in the world, about 0.77 billion employed people in 2015 (China Statistical Yearbook, 2016). While women's labour force participation rate has fallen gradually from 71.24 percent in 2000 to 63.35 percent in 2016, it remains relatively high. According to the Global Gender Gap Report published in 2016, the labour force participation for women aged between 18 and 64 in China was 70 percent (World Economic Forum, 2016). China ranked 59 out of 145 countries for women's labour force participation rate in the workplace (World Economic Forum, 2015). Chinese women's high employment rate is associated with the government's commitment to protect women workers in the labour force. The 1994 Labour Law ruled that women and men had equal rights to paid work. This law indicated that women should not be refused employment because of sex; women and men had equal

rights with respect to employment. However, the social policies and employer attitudes still provide different contexts in which Chinese women encounter the labour market. For example, with the end of job allocation system, the problem of a gender bias in recruitment increased. In a 2010 survey, more than 72 percent of women stated they were not hired or promoted due to gender discrimination (Yang, 2012). According to a recent report published by Shanghai-based news agency China Financial Information Centre, 50 percent of Chinese women reported that they had experienced gender discrimination in the workplace (Wang, 2016). It should be pointed out that such discrimination does not just exist in private companies, but also in government departments and foreign companies. The gender wage gap is another key issue concerning women workers in China (Chi and Li, 2013). Women earn on average 35 percent less than men for doing similarly work, ranking 91 out of 145 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2015). The power of the wage reinforces gender division in most families. In other words, men with higher salary are expected to undertake less domestic labour than women.

In addition to gender discrimination and the gender wage gap, the provision for maternity leave also influences women's choices and experiences in the labour market. In 2012, the Chinese government announced the 'Provision on Female Labour Protection under Special Circumstances', which extended maternity leave for female employees in China from 90 days to 98 days, which just met the minimum maternity leave stipulated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The new provision aimed at enhancing female employees' wellbeing in the workplace. According to the Special Provision, female employees are entitled 98 days of maternity leave which could be started 15 days prior to childbirth. In addition, a Chinese female employee who gives birth to her first child at age 24 or older is considered 'late childbirth', will be entitled to an additional 'late maternity leave' of roughly 30 days, which varies by location. Compared with the maternity leave policy, China does not have unified legislation for paternity

leave. The amount of time that a male employee can have varies between zero and 30 days, depending on where the individual is registered for social security. In most cases, there are no standard paternity leave policies, but ‘late birth incentive leave’ can be shared by a mother and a father. For example, according to the Shanghai Municipal Population and Family Planning Regulations, male employees are entitled three days ‘late birth nursing leave’.

At present, the retirement age for women who are civil servants and those who work in state enterprises is 55, and 50 for others. For men, the mandatory retirement age is 60. The employers believe that women represent a poorer return on investment than men because of their shorter career path (Nolan, 2008). Therefore, the earlier retirement age is an obstacle for women’s career development. China’s early retirement age for women has been considered as a factor that leads to hiring discrimination, reduced pensions, and fewer social security benefits for female employees.

One-child policy and population aging

The one-child policy is an essential factor that influences the social and economic situation in China and family dynamics. The one-child policy referred to the birth planning (*ji hua sheng yu*) programme in China, it was officially announced by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee in 1980. This policy has received both praise and critique in the past 30 years. On the one hand, the successful implementation of the one-child policy slowed the population growth rate from 11.87 percent in 1980 to 5.21 percent in 2014 which is essential for easing the pressures on the state, resources and environment (China Statistical Yearbook, 2015). On the other hand, this policy was intensively criticised for violating fundamental human rights evidenced by the forced abortions (Settle et al., 2013).

The proportion of households with only one or two people increased, which may be explained by the delayed childbearing, but also older people with no co-resident children. Du and Dong (2010) had found that the percentage of one-person households increased more than 4 times and that of two person family rose 3 times between 1989 and 2006. According to Hu and Peng (2015), around 80 percent of households were one-generation and two-generation households in China in 2010. The traditional multigenerational family lost its dominant position in contemporary society for several reasons. Firstly, with the rise of individualisation, the younger generation prefers to have more freedom and individual privacy. Secondly, young people tend to have different lifestyles from their parents. As such, they prefer to live independently to avoid the potential conflicts within the family. The simplification of household structure and the aging population have been considered to increase the burden of elderly care for young adults in China.

In response to the challenge of an aging population, after more than 30 years of family planning, China announced a partial policy relaxation in 2013, which allowed couples to have two children if one parent is an only child. Two years later, in October 2015, it was announced that 'China will fully implement a policy of allowing each couple to have two children as an active response to an aging population' (Xinhua Net, 2015). The change of the policy aims at balancing population development and addressing the challenge of an aging population.

In China, the social welfare provisions emphasise the family's responsibility for providing support and care for the elders. Filial piety [*xiao*] plays an essential role in maintaining family obligation in China. It requires that adult children should support their parents by providing material support and showing respect and obedience (Confucius, 2000). Many families are structured as 4-2-1 (four elders, two adults and one child) since the first generation of the one-child policy

has reached the age of marriage. It has now been common that an older couple has only one child to depend on for their care and support. As such, young married couples have responsibilities for taking care of four elders in a family. The individualisation in Chinese societies has been argued as a factor that weakened family obligation and filial sentiment. For example, Yan (2003) claimed that the collapse of the notion of filial piety is the most significant change associated with elderly support during the period of individualisation in China. However, Qi (2013) indicated that the continuing absence of social welfare system and the interdependent reliance of adult children and their parents determine that the family obligation continues to play a significant role in Chinese society. Specifically, nearly 70 percent of the elderly population relies on their children's financial support because of the lack of comprehensive pension and welfare provisions (Hesketh, Lu and Xing, 2005). Hence, the family remains the major provider for supporting its older members, especially in rural areas in China. Therefore, parental support should not only be seen as a moral obligation, but also an economic obligation that compensated the older generation for investment to children. In 2013, a new law came into effect in China, which institutionalised filial piety. According to the legislation, parents have the legal right to request government mediation or even file a lawsuit against children who fail to regularly drop by for a visit or given them a phone call (Coonan, 2013). The law was designed to protect the lawful rights and interests of parents aged 60 and older, and to carry on the Chinese virtue of filial piety.

Although people generally view elder care as the responsibility of the son, the daughters or daughters-in-law are the ones who actually provide care to elders (Settle et al., 2013). Similarly, Ikels (1990) indicated that in the patrilocal family structure, the daughter-in-law was traditionally considered as the main care providers for elder parents-in-law. According to Chen and Adamachak (1999), a large number of elders receive more assistance from daughters and daughters-in-law than sons in China. The lack of formal services for the elders

and the increasing life expectancy puts pressure on women, especially for those offspring of the one-child policy (Ikels, 1990). Therefore, the one-child policy can be treated as a factor that aggravates work-family conflict for women.

However, when it comes to the question how the one-child policy influences women's experiences of work-family conflict, some researchers provide a different perspective. According to Zhu (2011), the implementation of the one-child policy reduces women's burden of raising children and enhances their participation in the labour market. It has been pointed out the one-child policy changed the position of women. More specifically, based on the traditional Confucian ideology, people have a preference for sons in China, especially in rural areas. To some extent, the one-child policy challenges this. If parents are only allowed to have one child and that child is a daughter, the parents could only rely on her for their future economic welfare, as such, the one-child policy enhances the value of daughters to their parents and parental investments in daughters (Deutsch, 2006). Some studies have reported the equal treatment of only sons and daughters in China (Chow and Zhao, 1996; Short et al., 2001). As such, Zhu (2011) concluded that the one-child policy is beneficial for women to balance their work life and family life to some extent. To sum up, on the one hand, the one-child policy aggravates work-family conflict by increasing women's responsibility for taking care of elders. On the other hand, it enhanced women's status in the modern society and decreases the time women spend on raising children. However, childcare is still seen as women's responsibility. As childcare system was considered a means of substitute for mother roles, the availability of childcare is regarded one of the most significant drivers of mothers' labour force participation.

Childcare networks in China

A great deal of cross-national research has demonstrated that the childcare

system varies in different countries, this would substitute for some aspects of the role of mother. In urban China, childcare for young children is often provided by a combination of formal care from institutions, such as kindergartens and preschools and informal care from family members. Before the economic reform, the formal childcare services were mainly administered by *danwei* and the Ministry of Education in China. For those parents whose employer had no childcare programmes, neighborhood committees which were referred to ‘*ju wei hui*’ in China also provided childcare services. However, the rapid social and economic reforms changed the childcare system. One of the most significant changes was the reduced support from government and employers for childcare programmes. Due to the increasing pressure for profits and rapid economy reforms, the majority of Chinese enterprises stopped providing childcare services to their employees (Du and Dong, 2010). Most of the kindergartens managed by neighborhood communities were closed, because of a lack of funding from the government. In response to the significantly decrease in publicly-funded childcare programmes, the number of private childcare centres has grown rapidly since the mid-1990s (Du and Dong, 2010). According to Du and Dong’s (2010) research, the figure for publicly funded kindergartens reduced by 65 percent between 1997 and 2006. By contrast, the number of private kindergartens increased dramatically from 13.5 percent of the total number of kindergartens in China in 1997 to 57.8 percent in 2006 (Du and Dong, 2010). According to the Educational Statistics Yearbook of China published in 2010, about 73 percent of kindergartens were provided by the private sectors, children enrolled in this type of kindergartens accounted for about 58 per cent of all enrolments in urban China. The childcare changes aroused concerns about availability, quality and affordability of childcare programmes in China (He and Jiang, 2008). In order to provide guidelines for the changing patterns of childcare services, the Chinese government published the ‘2001 Guidelines for Kindergarten Education’ which indicated that ‘state-run kindergartens as the backbone’ and ‘market force as the primary provider’. The rise of the market economy and the relaxation of

migration between rural and urban areas make it possible for people who have difficulties in obtaining childcare support from relatives to hire maids and babysitters from rural areas at a low wage (Ochiai et al., 2008).

However, women tend to consider the nursery school as the main source for childcare only when the child's grandparent is not available due to the employment or health problems. A national survey conducted in 2005 indicated that about 70 percent of children aged 0-6 were cared for by their grandparents in Beijing, in Shanghai 60 percent and in Guangzhou 50 percent (Fu, 2005). In China, childcare is commonly seen as a shared responsibility for family and relatives which is different from other Asian countries. This is partly due to the stronger mutual dependence in China. Chinese societies are characterised by flourishing, active interaction between relatives (Ochiai et al., 2008). The high level of dependence between relatives is a reflection of such social characteristics; people share housework and meals regularly. The relatively youthful age of compulsory retirement is another factor that contributes to this situation. To retire at 55 for women and 60 for men allows husbands and wife to take care of their grandchildren. As Ochiai et al. (2008) indicated, there is a particular life cycle in China which explains that married couples work while having their children cared for by their parents or relatives, they then retire early and by taking care of their grandchildren, supporting their own children's working-couple lifestyle. Similarly, Liu's (2016) recent research on the impact of migration upon aging and familial care in rural China found that the skipped-generation household has been a common form of living arrangement, where a grandchild lives with grandparents and neither of parents is present, as both married men and married women were actively engaged in migration. The young migrants relied heavily on their stay-behind parents' support for taking care of the children, which showed similar trend in cities.

Ochiai et al. (2008) claimed that childcare support is provided to all families

regardless of the social class of the parents in China. The successful creation of public facilities providing childcare for small children makes it possible for women to make decisions to participate in full-time work. However, employees of government and large organisations that still have childcare programmes are more likely to benefit from high-quality childcare services. In contrast, other parents must rely on fee-paying private kindergartens which have been seen as a sign of inequality in access to decent childcare (Du and Dong, 2010). Moreover, although grandparents' support for childcare reduces the childcare burden for women, educational problems will arise if the parents do not look after their own child at home when they start elementary school. So women would like to find challenging and rewarding jobs, at the same time, they would like to take care of their children themselves without relying on their poorly educated parents, especially for those women with well-educated background.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the historical background of Chinese society, focusing on the wider economic and structural changes that contributing to complex shape of gender relations and women's work and family experiences. By looking into Chinese history from imperial era to the economic reform period, I highlighted the historical and socio-cultural constitution of gender roles and attitudes and the challenges that young working mothers are experiencing in contemporary China. The economic reform has been seen to have mixed consequences for women's work and life. On the one hand, it provided new employment opportunities for women. On the other hand, women who worked in the private sector confronted the risk of losing jobs and social benefits due to the breakdown of the job allocation system and guaranteed lifetime jobs. Apart from women's involvement in paid labour, they were still expected to take main responsibility for childcare as well as elderly care. However, the previous childcare support from the government and *danwei* has been reduced while the

burden for taking care of elders has been increased, as a result of the one-child policy and ageing population. Having reviewed these social changes and the challenges young working mothers are confronting, the question is raised as to how young generation women experience work-family conflict in contemporary China and how they juggle paid work, childcare and filial obligation. In the following chapter, I will explain how I went about investigating these issues, introducing the fieldwork setting and my experience of conducting research in Northern China.

Chapter Three Conducting research in northern China

Research on work family issues has been generally focused on Western industrialised nations. For example, Yang et al. (2000) argued that in American society, due to the high degree of individualisation and living standards, people emphasise quality of life. In addition, Beaujot (2000) claimed that relationships, children and work are all important for young adults and are actually difficult to prioritise. Increasingly, as an effect of globalisation and changing employment patterns and family practices, the question of work-family conflict is attracting attention at both the national and international level. I carried out interviews and focus group discussions with young women aged between 25 and 35 with children in Jilin Province to explore their experiences of and views on work family issues. The process of my fieldwork was complicated by cultural specificities, such as a lack of familiarity with qualitative research in China and how to approach respondents. This chapter starts by introducing the location of my fieldwork. This is followed with a description of the research methods used in this study as well as why they were chosen. I will then explain the process of approaching respondents. In this chapter, I consider the problems of conducting interviews that I encountered and detail some of examples. In addition, I examine the ethical considerations involved in this study and power relations between interviewer and interviewee. This is followed by a reflection on my data processing and writing up.

As previous research on women and family has generally been conducted in big cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai (see Figure 1), Jilin province was selected as representative of the old industrial locations in north China (see Figure 1). Jilin Province has a significant place in Chinese history. In 1931, Japan invaded and occupied northeast China. One year later, it established Manchukuo, a puppet

regime. Changchun, the capital city of Jilin Province was renamed ‘Hsinkin’ and became ‘capital’ of the puppet regime until it perished in 1945. Then at the end of the Asian Pacific War, Jilin Province was returned to China and the People’s Republic of China was established in 1949. When it came to the ‘First Five-year Plan’ period from 1953 to 1957, Jilin Province was built up as an important industrial base; the government invested and built 112 key projects in Jilin Province including the first automobile factory. However, as a result of the implementation of the economic reform, the southern part of China, including Jiangsu Province, Guangdong Province and Zhejiang Province experienced dynamic economic growth and replaced Jilin Province’s central industrial position in China. Since the revitalisation of the old industrial base in Jilin, the province has made full efforts to implement state-owned enterprise reform which aimed at restructuring the state-owned enterprises and enhancing enterprise development vitality. In the last ten years, the province’s industrial economy has achieved rapid development, in particular in agricultural products processing and the automobile industry.

Figure 1. Location of Jilin Province in China



Four cities in Jilin province, Changchun, Jilin, Jiaohe and Huangsongdian were involved in this study (see Figure 2). Changchun is the capital city in Jilin Province which represents a typical provincial city in the north part of China.

The second biggest city Jilin is the only city that has the same name as the province in China. It is viewed as a third-tier city. In addition, the county-level city Jiaohe was chosen for the purpose of discovering young women's experiences in small cities. In order to understand how young generation women balance work and life in a rural-urban fringe area, Huangsongdian, a town famous for agricultural production, was included in this study. The purpose of involving these four cities in this study was to approach a diverse group of respondents in Jilin province rather than undertaking a comparative study. After introducing my research location, I will now turn to address the research method that I adopted in this study.

Figure 2. Location of fieldwork cities in Jilin Province



Research method

As this study aims to explore how young generation women manage childcare, paid work and filial obligation in China and what factors facilitate or hinder the coordination between work life and family life, a qualitative research method was adopted. Qualitative methodology has a long history of aiding the

understanding of culture and behaviours (Ritchie et al, 2013). The wide use of qualitative methods was more evident in the latter part of the 20th century. It was suggested that qualitative method has a crucial role in describing the form or nature of a problem as well as examining the reasons for the problem (Ritchie et al., 2013).

The application of qualitative and quantitative research methods in feminist research has been argued for a long time. Jayaratne and Stewart (1991) suggested that quantitative research viewed individuals as islands out of their real lives, therefore it cannot be used to examine social problems. It has been pointed out that it is problematic to use numbers to ‘prove facts’ in social life (Letherby, 2003). Letherby (2003) indicated that many feminist only do qualitative research and semi-structured in-depth interview is the main qualitative method used by them. There are several reasons for the popularity of qualitative methods among feminists. First, in-depth interviews are grounded in the experience of women, they give women chances to speak for themselves and to challenge stereotypes, oppression and exploitation. Moreover, qualitative methods are appropriate in the research which involves private and emotional issues (Maynard, 1994). However, many writers suggested that the in-depth interview may not always be appropriate to the topic or the participant group as it can be used clumsily or exploitatively (Letherby, 2003; Collins, 1998; Kelly et al, 1994). Nonetheless, interviews are a commonly used qualitative research method (Mason, 2002). Face to face semi-structured in-depth interviews were applied in this study for several reasons. First, my research aims at understanding young women’s experiences and views of work family issues, which emphasises depth and complexity of data, rather than measurements in terms of quantity, amount or frequency. In addition, qualitative interviewing is more about generating a fuller representation of the respondents’ perspectives, because it gives participants freedom and control in the interview situation which also meets the research ethics requirement of freedom from coercion and pressure. Compared with

structured interview and unstructured interview, semi-structured interviews not only contain some key questions which assist in defining the areas to be explored, but also provide respondents with opportunities to respond at length (Gill et al., 2008). The flexibility of semi-structured in-depth interview makes it possible to discover information that is essential to respondents but may not have been considered by the researcher (Gill et al, 2008). Similarly, Berg (2007) pointed out that semi-structured interviews enable participants to respond to the topic in varying ways. Hence, the researcher approaches the topic from a subject's perspective. Moreover, in-depth interview enables us to investigate the social experiences of women (Rose, 1982). A specific form of interaction takes place in interviews, which allows participant to construct meanings and interpretations about their personal experiences. According to Scott (1998), ' stories', 'narratives' and 'accounts' are terms commonly used to describe the data collection of in-depth interview, which indicated the emphasis of exploring respondents' social experiences, life histories and their interpretations.

In addition to the face to face semi-structured in-depth interview, the focus group is another qualitative research method used in this study. According to Asbury (1995), the focus group collects data through interactions within a group. Focus groups have been seen as a technique to gain an enlarged sociological understanding of human experience (Merton, 1987). Specifically, a focus group contains several respondents who come together to discuss a specific topic with the researcher. It provides a detailed perspective based on the dynamic of the group interactions. This study primarily relied on semi-structured in-depth interview, but one focus group was included as a supplement to the interviews.

In order to evaluate how effectively the interview would work and whether the research objectives would be achieved, a pilot study was employed in this study. The term 'pilot study' refers to the pre-testing of a particular research instrument, such as an interview schedule or questionnaire (Van Teijlingen and Hundley,

2002). Pilot studies play a significant role in conducting research, because they help to assess whether the research protocol is workable, therefore saving time and cost in the long run. Specifically, I pretested my interview guide through two interviews with Chinese women studying in the UK in June 2014. The interview guide I prepared at the outset was in some ways specific and detailed. I found it difficult to reduce the richness of what I was doing to a few precise questions. Several scholars have pointed out that the qualitative interview aims to expand rather than control variables, therefore it does not require the same type of precision required by quantitative research (Holliday, 2007). With this in mind, I revised my interview guide to be more straightforward and flexible, which enabled me to adapt to participants' specific circumstances. The revised interview guide (see Appendix I) was divided into five topics: personal characteristics, daily life, filial obligation, childcare and work-family conflict. Each of the topics included four to seven questions. These questions were designed to elicit narratives and more in-depth responses, such as 'Tell me about your family' and 'How do you feel about doing housework?'. I also included more direct questions in my interview guide, for example asking 'Who is the caregiver for your children?', ensuring that similar grounds were covered in all interviews. Having drafted the interview guide, the next step was to recruit participants for the pilot study.

When it came to recruiting respondents for the pilot study, I chose to avoid approaching women who were majoring in Women's Studies or other relevant subjects, because their responses to the interview questions may be influenced by their detailed knowledge of or academic position on work family issues which in turn would made it difficult for me to evaluate the effectiveness of the interview schedule. I therefore contacted a Chinese PhD student in Education who was 34 with a child, which met the requirement of this study. As we had known each other before, she signed the consent form and agreed to take part in an interview. Then she introduced me to her neighbour, who was a housewife and also agreed

to be involved in the pilot study. After conducting these two interviews, I transcribed the recordings, comparing the transcripts to the interview guideline to see whether I had obtained the information that I sought. Then slight changes were made based on the comparison and evaluation. More specifically, I found that respondents felt confused about the question ‘How many hours per week do you usually work?’, because Chinese people generally counted working hours by day rather than week. For example, one of the respondents answered: ‘I don’t know how many hours I work per week, but I work 8 hours per day’. Then after a few seconds calculating, this participant told me: ‘So I work around 40 hours per week’. Hence, I modified the question to ask ‘How many hours per day do you usually work?’ Moreover, I noticed that a follow-up question ‘What do you think of gender equality in your family?’ was useful in both interviews, so I added it to the interview guideline. Furthermore, I considered asking ‘What is like being a working mother’ instead of questioning ‘Have you experienced work family conflict?’, therefore encouraging the respondents to provide more information rather than simply answering Yes or No. In summary, pilot study helped me to identify the potential problems in the research procedure and enhanced the likelihood of success. Having finalised the interview guide, there were other factors such as recruitment practices that impact on the form of interaction that takes place in the interviews themselves.

Recruiting participants

I returned to China to conduct my fieldwork between July and September in 2014. In order to investigate young generation women’s experiences and views about work family issue in the social context of rapid economic growth and modernisation, women aged between 25 and 35 with a child were selected for this study. These women were born between 1980 and 1989 and were thus the first one child cohort. They grew up in a period of rapid technological and social change and have had greater opportunities to receive higher education than the

older generations. Previous research has indicated that they have higher expectations regarding their future careers than their parents' generation which can be explained by the great deal of investment in time, energy and resources in their education (Kwok, 2012). Similarly, Fong (2006) has pointed out that the Chinese one child generation has enjoyed a heavily concentrated dose of parental investment; they have similar educational and consumption aspiration as youth in Western countries. Moreover, it was reported that young generation people valued home and family, they treated work as a way of securing family relationships.

As a result of the one-child policy, the birth rate decreased, accompanied with improving life expectancy, which led to an increase in the ratio between elderly people and adult children (Hesketh, Lu and Xing, 2005). In China, pension coverage is only provided for employees in the government sector and big organisations. The lack of adequate pension means that elderly people still rely on their adult children's financial support, especially for those living in rural areas and working in small companies or factories. Moreover, in Chinese society, young people are expected to provide financial support as well as emotional care to their aged parents. Yue and Ng (1999) reported that when it comes to taking care of aged parents, young women are concerned about 'retaining contact with the elders' while the top filial consideration for young men is 'looking after the aged parents' and 'assisting them financially'. So in contemporary China, women have responsibilities for elder care as well as childcare. Based on these changes and differentiations, this study emphasises examine young women's encounters in work and family life in the rapid changing social environment in China.

When it comes to finding interviewees, Yang (1994) indicated that the 'culture of fear' was a powerful force in constraining actions and speech in everyday life in China, which could be a barrier in finding interviewees. Although compared with peasant societies, people are more relaxed about their words, the caution still

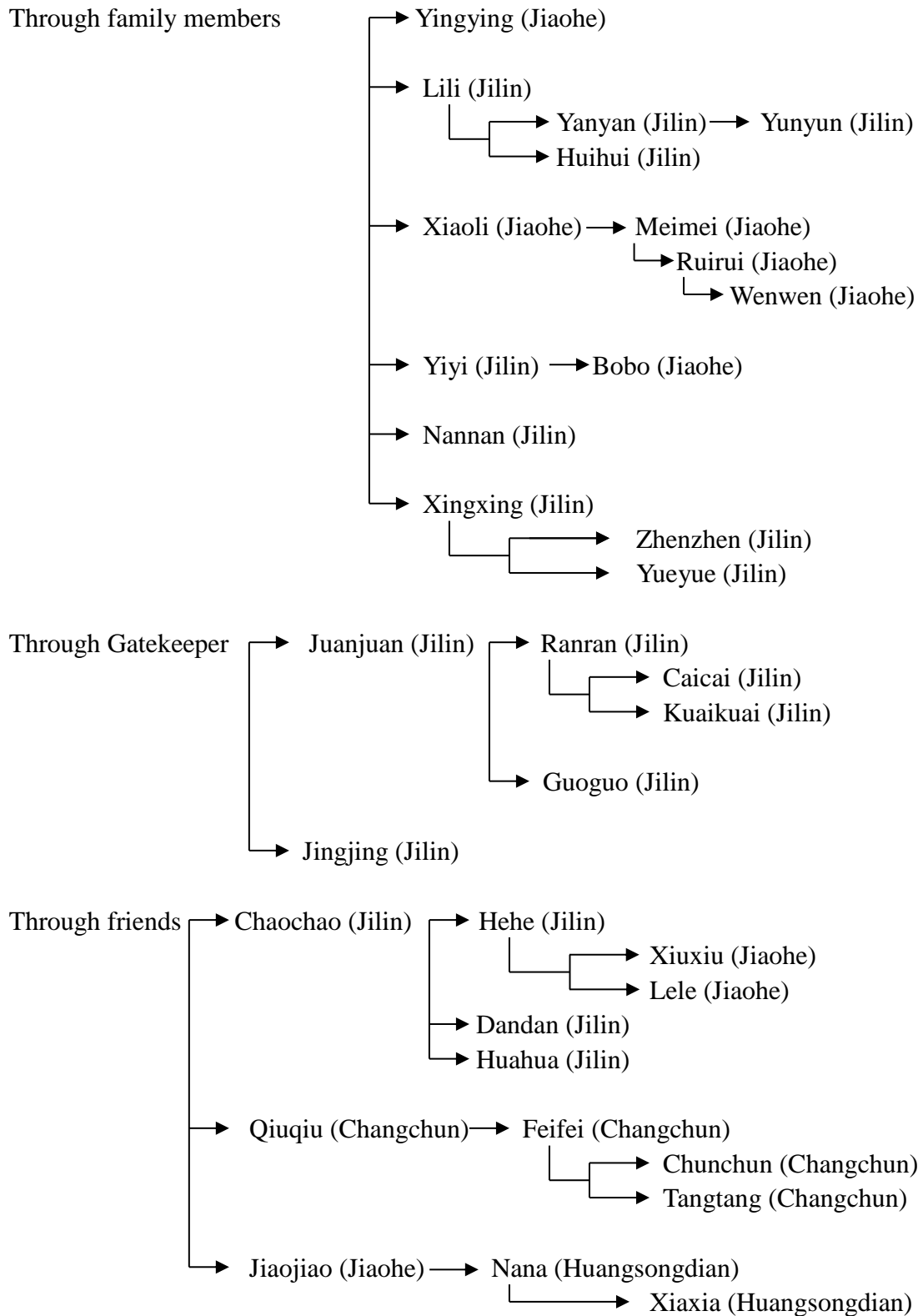
persisted throughout the process of finding interviewees which meant that it would be difficult to approach respondents without any personal connections. For example, Liu (2007) highlighted the importance of personal connection, which was known as *guanxi* in Chinese culture, in recruiting participants. She found that it was difficult to approach interviewees unless they were introduced by a known and trusted intermediary. Thus in Confucian cultural settings, it was more natural to recruit through personal network rather than approaching individuals who lie outside networks (Park and Lunt, 2015). It has been suggested that recruiting through personal networks works much better than other methods in East Asian societies (Jackson, Ho and Na, 2016). Snowball sampling is a technique that approaches respondents through referrals made among people who know people who have some characteristics of research interest (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling has been widely used in qualitative sociological research, and is particularly applicable for research focus on a relatively sensitive issue, therefore requiring the knowledge of insiders to locate people for study. In China, snowball sampling is generally viewed as a way of approaching respondents through ‘*guanxi*’ networks. *Guanxi* literally means relations or relationship. It refers to the interpersonal relationships which are built on particularistic criteria (Tsui and Farh, 1997). This interpersonal relationship has been described as a crucial component of successfully completing any tasks in all spheres of social life in China (Gold, Guthrie and Wank, 2002). In this study, *guanxi* networks were essential for me to approach the interviewees.

I did initially try other methods to recruit participants, particularly advertising in local communities. I contacted the director of a big local community in Jilin, he refused my request to distribute the advertisement within the community, even though I explained that this was only for academic purpose and I could provide my student card or any necessary ID, he still held a suspicious attitude. Then I telephoned another local community director who was introduced by a relative in

Jiaohe, she politely declined my request to post the advertisement on their publicity board in the community. However, I was told that she could help me sending this information to some people in the community through her personal network instead of using a formal way to spread it. As a result, I decided to abandon the official route and turned to snowball sampling.

In terms of how snowball sampling worked in this study, I present the links between the researcher, the intermediaries and the participants in Figure 3. Specifically, I asked my family and friends to suggest possible contacts. Then a close family member approached several teachers in a senior high school in Jilin. As he was the supervisor of these teachers, in order to avoid the potential effect of such connection on their decisions and responses, I asked him to introduce me as a PhD student without telling them my identity as his relative. Generally, teachers in senior high school are viewed as middle class and they have long working hours which may be a factor that influence their balance between work life and family life. I asked another family member to introduce me to a worker in a factory in Jiaohe. With this initial participant's help, I had the opportunity to contact three more women in Jiaohe and they all agreed to take part in the interviews. I recruited four women in Changchun through a friend. This group of women is well-educated, most of them work as managers and are treated as the elite in the society

Figure 3. Links between researcher, the intermediary and the participant ⁷



⁷ Total number of interviewees in each city: Jilin (19), Jiaohe (9), Changchun (4), Huangsongdian (2)

After receiving a number of positive responses from respondents in Jilin, Jiaohe and Changchun. I tried to approach prospective interviewees through a gate-keeper in a Technical College in Jilin. Gate-keepers are those who give access to other interviewees for the purpose of interviewing, but who would not necessarily actually participate in a research by being interviewed themselves (Miller et al, 2012). Gate-keepers have been frequently used in sociological research as a route of initial access to respondents. Specifically, in this study, the gate-keeper was a director in this college who used to be my supervisor before I came to the UK. As he knew that I was a PhD candidate in the UK and had general knowledge about doing research and conducting interviews, he agreed to introduce me to prospective interviewees in his office after reading through the consent form and information sheet for participants. Hence, I interviewed two participants who worked in this Technical College and had the chance to recruit more interviewees with the initial two participants' assistance.

One of my interviewees in Jiaohe mentioned her sister's experience of work-family conflict in Huangsongdian. Huangsongdian is a town located in the rural-urban area in Jilin province in which the majority of women are self-employed in agricultural production, a low wage occupation. Then I asked the respondent to introduce me to her sister. After talking about my project and the current progress of it, her sister agreed to take part in an interview. After that, I found another interviewee in Huangsongdian who lived in the same community as the previous interviewee. In order to achieve diversity in the interview group, I also recruited two divorced women, one from Jilin and one from Changchun through my personal network. Taking into account of the change of the one-child policy in 2013, which allowed couples to have two children if one of the parents was an only child, I interviewed a pregnant woman with a child who was introduced by an initial respondent. In addition, this study involved a stepmother and a mother of twins.

To sum up, respondents were sought from various segments of Chinese society in an attempt to include the experiences and views of diverse grouping of women in Jilin Province, by employing snowball sampling technique. I recruited 34 participants in total, including nineteen in Jilin; nine in Jiaohe; four in Changchun and two in Huangsongdian. These interviewees had a variety of occupations, educational and income levels, including professional jobs (such as lecturer, marketing manager, a doctor and teachers), government employees, workers in private companies and factories, self-employed women and housewives (see Table 1). The majority of my respondents were married young women with one child, but included two single mothers, a pregnant mother and two mothers with two children. While research design is usually considered as static, designed before entering the field, carrying out research into a relative sensitive area, such as family relations, can still meet unexpected situations or difficulties. In the following, I will explore the challenges I encountered in conducting interviews and reflect on how I cope with these challenges by looking at detailed examples.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

| Name | Age | Marriage status | Location | Occupation/Spouse's occupation | Number of children |
|----------|-----|-----------------|----------|--|--------------------------|
| Juanjuan | 32 | Married | Jilin | College administrator/ Government employee | 1 |
| Nannan | 29 | Married | Jilin | Company worker/ Company worker | 1 |
| Huihui | 30 | Married | Jilin | Primary school teacher/ Primary school teacher | 1 |
| Lili | 33 | Married | Jilin | Doctor/Self-employed (business manager) | 1 |
| Yanyan | 34 | Married | Jilin | Self-employed/Dentist | 1 |
| Zhenzhen | 26 | Married | Jilin | High school teacher/ Government employee | 1 |
| Chaochao | 30 | Married | Jilin | High school teacher/ High school teacher | 1 |
| Yunyun | 27 | Married | Jilin | Office worker/ Policeman | 1 |
| | | | | | |
| Xingxing | 27 | Married | Jilin | High school teacher/ Photographer | 1 |
| Kuaikuai | 30 | Married | Jilin | Research assistant/ Associate Professor | 1 |
| Guoguo | 29 | Married | Jilin | Small shop owner/ Soldier | 1 |
| Ranran | 29 | Married | Jilin | College teacher/ Service manager | 1 |
| Caicai | 29 | Married | Jilin | University lecturer/ University senior lecturer | 2 (twins) |
| Jingjing | 33 | Married | Jilin | Journalist/Editor | 1 |
| Yueyue | 35 | Married | Jilin | Power company worker/ Engineer | 2 (1+ a stepdaughter) |
| Yiyi | 31 | Married | Jilin | Doctor/Engineer | 1 |
| Hehe* | 32 | Married | Jilin | High school teacher/ Government employee | 1 |
| Dandan* | 26 | Married | Jilin | High school teacher/ High school teacher | 1 |
| Huahua* | 28 | Married | Jilin | High school teacher/ Administrator | 1 |
| Yingying | 35 | Married | Jiaohe | High school teacher/ Software developer | 1 |
| Bobo | 25 | Married | Jiaohe | Nurse/Self-employed | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|----------|----|----------|-------------------|--|-----------------|
| Wenwen | 28 | Married | Jiaohe | Government employee/ Doctor | 1 |
| Meimei | 26 | Married | Jiaohe | Housewife/ Self-employed | 1 |
| Ruirui | 32 | Married | Jiaohe | High school teacher/ Accountant | 1 |
| Jiaojiao | 33 | Married | Jiaohe | Teacher/ Graphic designer | 1 (pregnant) |
| Xiaoli | 34 | Married | Jiaohe | Factory worker/Taxi driver | 2 |
| Lele | 26 | Married | Jiaohe | Teacher/Worker in private company | 1 |
| Xiuxiu | 35 | Divorced | Jiaohe | Government employee | 1 |
| Tangtang | 28 | Married | Changchun | HR assistant/PhD student | 1 |
| Feifei | 34 | Married | Changchun | Marketing manager/ University senior lecturer | 1 |
| Chunchun | 35 | Married | Changchun | Marketing manager/ Senior manager in bank | 1 |
| Qiuqiu | 35 | Divorced | Changchun | Accountant | 1 |
| Xi Xia | 31 | Married | Huangsongdi an | Self-employed/ Self-employed | 1 |
| Nana | 25 | Married | Huangsongdi an | Self-employed (storekeeper)/Driver | 1 |

*focus group interviewees

Conducting interviews

As Liu (2007) says, interviewing for academic purposes is quite new to the public in China. When I mentioned ‘interview’, the interviewees usually asked ‘Do I need to prepare anything?’, ‘Do I need makeup?’ or ‘I have no knowledge about this topic, I can’t answer your questions’. In this case, I explained that the interview was entirely different from the one carried out by a journalist. I then provided the information sheet for participants to reduce their confusion and anxiety. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and lasted for around one hour. I began with a brief introduction to myself and an explanation to the aim of the interview, then moving to the basic information of the respondents, including their age, city, employment status, marital status. Then I asked a series of questions about participants’ daily journey, housework distribution, filial

obligation and childcare (See appendix I). Each topic was firstly approached with a prepared question, then followed by probing question for the purpose of discovering more information about whatever the respondent has already said in response to the prepared question, such as ‘What happened next?’ and ‘Could you tell me more about that?’. This interview structure motivated respondents to tell a more complete story.

I met some unexpected situations when conducting these interviews. One of the interviewees cried when I asked her ‘how does your job fit in the domestic responsibility’, then I stopped the interview and turned off the recorder. I reminded her that she could end the interview at any point that she wished, but she said that she would like to continue after a ten minute break. I also experienced circumstances when respondents refused to answer some questions. For example, one interviewee was not willing to answer ‘How do you get on with your parents-in-law?’ According to Letherby (2003), silence and noise are both important in qualitative interview and the interpretation of silence is as important as the interpretation of what is being said. As such, I paid attention to interviewee’s expressions, what was avoided and what was noticeably absent from their narratives. Throughout the interview process, I adopted a friendly and easy manners to encourage them engage in the conversation. When they felt uncomfortable about a question, I respected their choices but tried to ask the question from a different perspective.

In addition, I found that it was difficult to collect information when there were other people present. Yang (1994) suggested that people became instinctively sensitive in the presence of others. One of the interviews took place in an office which was shared by the interviewee and her colleague, when I asked ‘What support would you like from the employer?’, the interviewee first looked at her colleague, then smiled and told me: ‘I don’t know how to say it’. This reminded me that the *danwei* was not only a work unit, but also the site of monitoring

thought through peer surveillance, which has been discussed in Liu's (2007) study on living in the *danwei*. Therefore, the interviewee was concerned about the presence of her colleague and finally concealed her views about the employer and work-family conflict experiences during the interview. According to Evans, Gray and Reimondos (2011), a number of factors determine how a third person influences the respondent's answers in an interview, such as the nature of the relationship between the respondent and the third person and the sensitivity of the interview questions. In this study, interviewees' answers toward work family issues, filial obligation and childcare are considered as private life stories which could be potentially influenced by the presence of family members and colleagues. Hence, when I approached participants later, based on their requirements and preferences for the place, I asked to conduct the interview in a private environment without the presence of other people. The majority of the interviews took place in cafés, public place or offices (out of office hours). However, in reality it was sometimes the case that one or more other persons were also present.

There were a range of reasons why a third party was present during the interview. For example, a respondent asked me 'Is it possible to have a friend in present in my interview?' Reuband (1992) indicated that the participants themselves may want to have a third party present as a form of support. As such, if the interviewee requested the presence of others, I agreed with their choices, because they were more likely to tell me their stories and experiences in a comfortable environment. It also happened that third parties were interested in or curious about the process of the interview and the answers given by the respondent. For instance, when an interview was conducted in a respondent's house, her mother-in-law said 'I haven't seen any such interviews before, it sounds really interesting, I will not interrupt you, just sitting in the room to see how it works'. In this case, I tried to let the interviewee herself to decide whether she wanted to have the third person in present. This experience reminded me the issue of

private space in China. I have found that it is not really difficult to find a private place, such as a house and an office to conduct interviews in China. However, the 'private place' does not mean 'private space'. For example, Jackson, Ho and Na (2016) pointed out the difficulties of finding private space in some cultural contexts. They found that in Hong Kong, it was culturally difficult to separate the mothers from their daughters to interview them and the practice of separation might make them feel uncomfortable. In Chinese culture, people viewed appearance in an individual's private space as a symbol of caring and a good relationship. For example, Chinese parents hold a view that they should accompany their child all the time and know everything about the child's life, even if the child is already adult or married, they believe it is a type of responsibility rather than an invasion of private space.

Snowball sampling which relies on '*guanxi*' networks in China appears to have both positive and negative impact on conducting interviews in this study. On the one hand, personal ties are valued within Chinese society. I have found that the role of 'friend of a friend' is more meaningful to my respondents than that of 'researcher'. While the role of researcher is more likely to be suspected in some cases, I was naturally seen as a reliable person when the interviewee's friend or someone they knew introduced me, so they were more likely to participate in the interview and to help me to finish the study by furnishing experiences. As Holliday (2007) noted, the tradition of doing favours for friends enables individuals to participate in research without expecting anything in return. On the other hand, interviewees' refusing to some questions was partly due to the nature of snowball sampling technique, because the interviewee knew me personally or knew I was close to the people in their life, therefore they were careful about their words and expression. In other words, interviewees believed that their opinions would be judged by me, which may influence my impressions of them or their personal relationships with others. Yang (1994) indicated that she had experienced various versions of the common saying:

When there are two people, one tells the truth; when there are three people, one makes jokes; when there are four people, one talks non-sense; when there are five people, one tells lies.

(Yang, 1994, p.18)

In this study, some participants were friends with each other. People worried that what they told the interviewer might somehow reach the ears of others, with whom I had also contacted. People are more likely to say what they really think when they feel safe in an unknown group. Bearing in mind the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, I made an effort to keep a low density network of relationships which means that the majority of interviewees were only connected to me and the referral. In summary, through personal introductions to a larger group of people, most of whom did not know of one another's existence, the component of trust produced by personal relationships and the feeling of security in anonymity combined to make my work much easier and more productive.

Ending the interview was the last step of conducting interviews which was also an important stage of the research. About five to ten minutes in advance, I signaled the approach of the end of the interview by say that 'the final question I want to ask is...' or 'at the end of our interview, I want to know...'. Ritchie et al. (2013) suggested that signaling the end of the interview will help the respondents to return to the level of daily interaction gradually. I have found that it was also helpful to encourage the interviewees to raise final comments or important things that had not been explored. It also happened that the interviewee provided some final reflections or even new information at the end to the interview, which was called 'door step data'. In this case, I asked the participant to repeat the information with the recorder running again or made a note of it after the interview with permission from the interviewees.

Throughout the interview process, I realised that asking women to speak about their experiences of childcare, domestic labour and filial obligation and listening to their accounts is not a straightforward task, but a complex enterprise. In this study, I did not adopt the ethnographic approach in which researchers live in and learn alongside the participants in their own social and cultural settings in an attempt to understand the behaviours and rituals of people, which was due to the fact that family organisation is not a suitable subject for ethnography in China and I had limited time and resources for my fieldwork. As a result, participants may not feel deeply comfortable to describe difficult or emotionally laden experiences to me as to someone with whom they had prior contact and established at least some level of trust. In addition, each interview provided only a snapshot of a particular period and opinions from one individual's perspective. Reflecting on my experience of conducting interviews and a focus group, I considered that more focus groups would be helpful to minimise the limitation of the one off interview. Through carrying out the only focus group in this study, I found that the group dynamic led to brainstorming, generating ideas and a deepening of the discussion because of the variety of participants and their experiences. For example, when one participant's comment feeds off another comment, the group can then really dig deep into an issue. According to Dixon (2015), people in a similar age group have their own discourse styles and peer culture, therefore they are more likely to engage in discussions in a peer group setting and would introduce some issues or elaborate on these issues to a greater extent than in one to one interviews. The rich quality of respondent interaction in the focus groups enabled me to learn more about the lived experience of young working mothers.

Ethics and power

The complexity of conducting interviews also reflects in gaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity and the power relations between

interviewers and interviewees. The importance of ethical issues has been highlighted by a number of academics (Mason, 2002; Berg, 2007; De Laine, 2000). For example, Miller and Bell (2002) suggested that research should protect the participants' privacy and should not be conducted without the full agreement of participant. The notion of 'do no harm' has been highlighted by in conducting qualitative research (Park and Lunt, 2015). This study has been ethically approved by the ELMPS Ethics Committee of the University of York.⁸ A number of ethical issues that may be raised by the usage of qualitative interviews and focus group have been addressed in this research, including gaining informed consent, respecting anonymity and confidentiality and achieving balanced power relation between interviewer and interviewees.

Gaining informed consent is an essential part of ensuring that the research is conducted in an ethical way. A consent form (see Appendix II) and an information sheet for participants (see Appendix IV) had been drafted before my fieldwork trip to China. The information sheet clearly identified how qualitative interviews were being used, the purpose of the study and the potential benefits and risks of taking part in the interview. The consent form is used to ask whether or not they give their consent before the interview begins. Gaining informed consent puts researchers in a powerful and highly responsible situation which means that they engage in a moral research practice (Mason, 2002). In this study, I found that gaining informed consent was a complex procedure. I translated the drafted English information sheet (See Appendix V) and consent form (see Appendix III) into Chinese before my fieldwork trip to China. Benatar and Singer (2000) suggest that informed consent should be obtained in the local language of the respondents and 'with an understanding of their world view or value system'. The first challenge for gaining consent was to produce a Chinese consent form which was concise and understandable, making it easier for the

⁸ Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology Ethics Committee (ELMPS) is a sub-committee of the University of York Ethics Committee.

potential participant to achieve a clear indication of what participation in this study involved. In China, the public generally do not have the knowledge of what a consent form is and how it would be used in an academic research. The use of a long and complex 'consent form' may result in potential participants refusing to take part in the research (Liamputtong, 2008). Hence, I used a one-page consent form which was written in an easy-to-read format and contained the essential information on participants' rights, such as they could refuse to answer any questions and terminate the interview at any time.

When I moved to the stage of gaining consent, the potential interviewees showed different reactions to the information sheet and consent form. Some of the interviewees were not familiar with the disciplinary, academic skills and conventions. However, they were not interested in the detail of the research. For example, one interviewee told me: 'I don't want to read through these documents, just tell me where to sign it, then we can skip to the interview part'. This reflected that some respondents treated gaining informed consent as a not indispensable procedure rather than a legal protection. By contrast, a few women were quite cautious about the consent form. For instance, an interviewee asked me: 'Why do I need to sign the form? What will happen if I choose to not sign it? How this form will influence my participation in the interview?'. I replied to this interviewee: 'The consent form shows my respect for your dignity instead of treating you as a research object. In addition, it has legal effect to make sure that your data are used in a moral way. It also reminds you that you can withdraw from the study for any reason without affecting you in any way'. After such explanations, most interviewees actually signed the consent form. For those who still hesitated about signing it, I told them I could read out the details of the consent form, then they could orally agree to accept the interview by recording it into a tape recorder. According to Miller and Boulton (2007), individuals who identify themselves as socially belonging to a marginalised group are unlikely to formally consent in writing to take part in a research which may help to explain a

divorced women's rejection of signing the consent form.

In addition to gaining informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity is another ethical issue considered in this study. Confidentiality is defined as akin to the principle of privacy (Oliver, 2003). According to Wiles et al. (2006), this principle is related to the societal belief that individuals have the right for their affairs to be private. Anonymity means that research participants' identities and responses cannot be identified (Wiles et al., 2006). In order to minimise the conflict between conveying accounts of the social world in detail and protecting the identities of individuals who participated in the research, pseudonyms are used in this study. Specifically, all respondents were given a pseudonym which replaced their own names on the transcript and in the thesis. Pseudonyms are frequently used anonymising tools to protect participants (Nespor, 2000). In addition, the personal data, such as addresses, postcodes, emails and telephone numbers of the participants would only be used for recruitment and correspondence purposes without appearing in the transcripts or thesis and were kept separately.

According to Letherby (2003), power is a complicated issue in research. It is generally assumed that the interviewer exercises power over the interviewee in an interview. However, the power relations between interviewer and interviewee can be more complex and multidirectional, especially in contexts that involve an intermediary. Giddens (1995) suggested two types of control over resources in power relations between researchers and respondents—control of material resources and control of authoritative resources. More specifically, researchers have time and skills to conduct interviews, therefore discovering relevant experiences and life stories (Letherby, 2003). Researchers generally have control over interview questions and tape recorder, a pen and associated symbols of authority that this brings. In this study, I approached respondents through close family members, gate-keepers and friends, the reliance on the snowball technique

gave me opportunities to know about respondents' lives and stories sometimes before the interview. More specifically, in the process of finding interviewees, the discussion about 'Who is suitable for the research?' generally involved intermediary's brief introduction about the potential interviewee, which included personal information, life experiences and stories. However, I have found that these things mentioned by the intermediaries were not always expressed by interviewees even though they were extremely relevant to some questions and topic in the interview. From an ethical perspective, it suggests the potential exercising of power by interviewer over interviewee, because the interviewer is controlling the data. Therefore, in order to equalise my relationship with respondents act ethically, only the information given during the interviews is viewed as data that will be used in this study.

It is essential to acknowledge that the research relationship is fluid and is usually jointly constructed (Collins, 1998; Letherby, 2003). Similarly, Al éx (2008) indicated that power is changeable, because it appears in all moments and relations. As such, researchers do not always hold the balance of power. My interviewees are women who have married and have a child, to some extent, they are more experienced in family lives than me. Sometimes after my questions, they asked me: 'how do you feel about this issue?' 'What's your plan for your future?' 'Why you haven't got married?'. At such moments, the power position shifted, in order to avoid the potential impact of my words on respondents' reflections on interview questions, I generally tried not to answer their questions immediately, then told them we can have more communication after the interview.

Through my experiences of conducting interviews, I realised that power is productive and changeable. As a qualitative researcher, it is essential to commit to hear the voices of respondents, rooted in their own experiences and understandings and to reflect on my position as an interviewer. Reflexivity plays

a significant role in balancing power between interviewer and interviewee. Al éx (2008) described reflexivity as a way to look at a situation from different perspectives and to reflect on his or her changing positioning within the circumstances. It means that it is necessary to make it explicit where the researchers are located in relation to the research participants. Feminist discussion of reflexivity has suggested that the researcher's position and the relation between the researcher and the respondents are influenced by the extent to which similarities or differences between the researcher and researched in characteristics, such as gender, age and education background (Doucet and Mauthner, 1998). The notion of reflexivity stresses the importance of the researchers' roles in creating, interpreting and theorising research data. The principle of reflexivity highlights the necessity of positioning and the rationalisation of the relationship between the researcher and the research setting.

The necessity of positioning

The theme of the personal position of the researchers in qualitative research has been considered as important by a number of scholars (Gair, 2012; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). The nature of qualitative research is to examine the elements of social actions, hence, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is an issue that inevitably pervades all aspects (Holliday, 2007). I am going to explore my relations with the other people in the research setting by focusing on the 'insider' and 'outsider' issue and the doing of gender in the research process.

'Insider' and 'outsider'

Researchers' membership roles in qualitative research have been much discussed by academics in recent years (Asselin, 2003; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Whether one is perceived as an insider or an outsider by the participants in a study has been considered as significant, which would affect the nature and success of interviews (Mullings, 1999). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argued that the

qualitative researcher always has a paradoxical perspective: it is to be an insider, sharing the characteristic and experience—and at the same time an outsider who is aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may affect what one is trying to understand. Kanuha (2000) defined insiders as people who conduct research with populations of which they are also members. Being an insider means that it would be easier to be accepted by participants, therefore enhancing the depth and breadth of understanding a population. I can be treated as an insider in my research, because I share gender identity, language and age with the study participants. One interviewee told me 'You are the same age as me, so I feel that we do not have the generation gap, I think you know my feeling, I would like to tell you my story'. This explains that the participant is more open with me and willing to share her experience, because I am an 'insider' sharing the same age with her which also helps me to get a greater depth to the data gathered.

Through the process of collecting my data, I felt that my role as an 'insider' could be a double-edged sword, both enabling and limiting the women's voices. For example, I have found that respondents sometimes made assumptions of similarity and failed to express their individual experience fully. When I asked an interviewee: 'How do you get on with your parents in law?'. She replied: 'For 80s generation, um..., you know the situation'. When such circumstance occurred, I followed a question to ask 'so what is the situation for you?' to encourage the respondent provide more information. In addition, although being a member of the group provides a level of trust and openness in respondents that would likely not have been present otherwise, in some cases, participants were still reluctant to divulge the level and detail of their experiences toward negotiating work life and family life. This reveals that the interview is a complicated social process, in which thrust and parry are involved in relation to human interaction (Ryan and Dundon, 2008). It also reminded me that in addition to the limitation of the one off interview, participants' reluctance was

also affected by the insider and outsider issue. Although participants were more inclined to trust me as someone who is local, to some extent I was still considered as a stranger or an ‘outsider’. In other words, although I share gender identity, language and age with the participants, I am also working on a group of which I am not a member. My research is with Chinese women with a child, I am a PhD student, studying in a Western country who is not married and without a child. I have no experience of raising a child and balancing work life and family life. The majority of the participants in my research did not seem to perceive this as an impediment to the research process. A respondent, however, did express concern about my outsider status and questioned my capacity to appreciate her experience. She stated: ‘You are not married, you don’t know my feeling as a working mother – you cannot imagine how difficult it is unless you are in my position’. In this case I acknowledged that I was not a young working mother with a child. On the one hand, I could not claim to ‘understand’ the experience of work-family conflict. On the other hand, being an outsider enables me to ask for explanations, for example, in response to this participant’s concern, I followed up with the: ‘So could you let me know what is like to be a working mother?’. By asking this question, I learned from my respondents and her experiences so that I would be able to gain insight into her lives and the strategies she use to coordinate childcare, elderly care and work commitment. I conducted the interview with honesty and openness. In the end, some meaningful information was shared and the respondent was positive about the process in her feedback. My membership status in relation to the respondents did not seem to affect the interviews negatively. Moreover, I have found that being an outsider contributed to avoiding the potential influence of personal perspective while being an insider might raise issues of undue influence of the researcher’s perspective.

In summary, I occupied multiple positions as both insider and outsider, roles that were subject to change according to the dynamics of each interview. Through my experiences of conducting interviews, I feel that I am firmly a part of all aspects

in the research process. The life experiences and stories of respondents are real to me, they are clear and lasting, instead of lost in a pool of numbers. However, the role as a researcher does not qualify me as a complete insider. Therefore, I occupy the space between insider and outsider, with the costs and benefits this status affords. The core ingredient is not only the insider or outsider status, but also the ability and effort to gather information with my eyes open, deeply interested in the experiences of young Chinese women and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experiences.

The doing of gender in the research process

Both the researcher and respondent who participate in an interview maintain, change or resist the traditional gender categorisations as they negotiate gender between themselves (Jarviluoma, Moisala and Vilkkö, 2003). Researchers were grown up in a gendered environment, they have their own experiences of the gendered society. In addition, the gender performance takes place in interaction with people of both the same gender and the other gender in everyday life. Thus, the researcher takes part in the construction of gender in the course of the research as well. It has been discussed that researchers should be able to create some distance from the gendered perspective, therefore conducting interviews and making interpretations in an objective way (Letherby, 2003).

It is crucial to acknowledge that it is difficult to disguise some aspects of our identity when doing fieldwork, such as gender which actually has an effect on how we are seen by participants, then subsequently influence the data that we collect (Letherby, 2003). For example, women were historically viewed as good interviewers with special talent for fieldwork. That is, women interviewers are considered as less threatening. When it comes to private, personal and intimate issues, they are more likely to be accepted by both male and female participants. However, it is essential for the researcher to consider the objectivity of a study,

which evolves from the methodological choices to the perspectives taken (Jarviluoma, Moisala and Vilkkö, 2003). In the process of doing my fieldwork, I tried to define myself as a 'neutral' person, regardless my social category of 'women', which means that I would try to minimise the influence of sexual orientation and emotional and to consider gender roles as inevitable aspects in the data collection process.

Data processing and writing up

When I finished my fieldwork and returned to the UK in September in 2014, I started transcribing the interview recordings. As all interviews and focus group were conducted in Chinese, the first step of data processing in this study was to determine the language of transcription. Bearing in mind the principle of keep original colour of the data, I decided to transcribe in Chinese, then translating the selected quotations after analysing the data. The task of transforming speech into words is not without challenges. The overlapping sentences, incomplete speech and background noise were difficulties that I have encountered during transcribing. For example, I had to carefully decide when and where punctuation is required, ensuring that the intent and emphasis of a respondent's response would not be changed. More importantly, the level of transcription should complement the level of the analysis (Drisko, 1997). The analysis of this study focuses on providing a full description of the young women's experiences, values, attitudes toward work family issue. Hence, a greater number and possibly lengthier units of text need to be involved in the transcripts. In other words, I am not only interested in identifying patterns and themes, but also aims at demonstrating variations in how young generation women manage childcare, paid work and filial obligation in China. Based on such considerations, the audiotapes were transcribed entirely and provided a verbatim account of the interview. Specifically, to ensure that all transcripts were generated systematically, the grammatical errors, mispronunciations, nonverbal sounds (e.g.

laughs, sighs) and silence were recorded in the transcripts.

After completing all transcripts, I began to construct an initial thematic framework to organise the data. I underlined ideas or themes that link particular items. According to Ritchie et al. (2013), it is crucial for the researcher to have a hierarchical arrangement of themes which means that the overall structure will be held, instead of losing in proliferation of more detailed labels. Themes and subthemes were then named, accompanying a note for each subtheme to clarify its meaning. After reviewing and finalising the main themes and subthemes, each theme had its own matrix in which each subtheme is allocated a column. Each case was then assigned a particular row that stayed in the same location on every matrix so that comparisons could be made between separate parts of the thematic framework at the individual case level as well as comparisons being made across cases within a single thematic matrix. At the early stage of data analysis, themes were descriptive rather than abstract and stayed grounded in the data. This approach identified commonalities and differences in the data, before focusing on relationships between different parts of the data, therefore seeking to draw descriptive conclusions clustered around themes.

The analytic processes described above were illustrated with respect to data generated through individual interviews. The focus group data were analysed by participant-based group analysis, where the contributions of individual respondents were separately analysed within the context of the discussion as a whole. If data are being summarised, individual group members are each allocated their own row (Ritchie et al., 2013). According to Ritchie et al. (2013), participant-based analysis can be used to investigate similarities and differences between members of each group as well as across all the groups in the sample. This study aims at collecting life stories from young generation women to explore how they manage childcare, filial obligation and paid work which is based on individual's experience, thereby participant-based group analysis was

adopted in this research.

In addition to the analysis of individual data, a description of group interaction was also involved in processing the focus group data. According to Madriz (2000), focus groups provide opportunities for the researcher to observe participants sharing ideas, opinions and experiences which is a clear advantage over individual interviews. In my study, the group interaction data has been found in the focus group transcript and observations recorded in field notes. For example, a focus group participant had expressed concern about not having any children to rely on when she was old, another respondent in the focus group then gave some suggestions to help with this problem. In the study field notes, I have noted that participants often made gestures and comments of support when discussing problems. Duggleby (2005) indicated that all types of data should be analysed by incorporating them into the transcripts. Hence, I produced a completed transcript which included what was said, nonverbal behaviour and comment on group interaction.

In analysing both the interview and focus group data, the key challenge was to ensure that it was comprehensive and systematic. I examined the whole body of the interview and focus group data, ensuring that no single voice or perspective dominates the findings. It is also essential to summarise the data in a way that retained the context and essence of the point without losing the voice of the respondents. I included enough details and contexts in the framework so that I did not need to go back to the transcript to understand the point being made, but not including so much that the matrices become full of undigested material.

Having transcribed and analysed the data, it came to the stage of translating the data from Chinese into English. Instead of translating all the data into English, I did a preliminary selection and only translated the selected quotations. The challenge here was not just reproducing the source text accurately, but also

translating the cultural meaning embedded in linguistic expression (Temple and Yong, 2004). Through translating the selected quotations, I found that many words and phrases that existed in Chinese did not have an exact equivalent in English. Therefore, I have to find a solution for translating these expressions and concepts in a way that their meanings were not lost. For example, the Chinese word '*guanxi*' was used by several participants. It was commonly translated as 'relationship' and 'personal network'. However, these translations fail to capture the complicated and rich meaning of the word, as *guanxi* involved 'personal connections between individuals in their formation and maintenance of long term relationships which follow implicit social norms which seem to be purely local' (Qi, 2013, p.309). Hence, translating the word '*guanxi*', only as 'personal network' or 'relationship' would reduce the meaning and change the voice of participants. Filep (2009) pointed out that the words of considerable significance for understanding a given culture cannot be translated into other languages. For qualitative researchers, it is essential to ensure that the distance between the meanings as expressed by the respondents and the meanings as translated and interpreted in the findings was as close as possible (Polkinghorne, 2007). Hence, *guanxi* and other culture-related norms, such as *mianzi* (face) and *nv qiang ren* (strong women) were left untranslated in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented some of the key issues that arose during my experience of interviewing in Northern China. While qualitative research method has been extensively discussed by Western scholars, local adjustments need to be made when they are applied in non-Western countries. By reflecting on the whole process of my fieldwork, I have explained the strategies and actions I had chosen in conducting interviews in the Chinese setting. Much has already been said about the difficulties I encountered in trying to recruit my participants by the 'official route'. Alternatively, the snowball sampling technique enabled me to use

my social network to recruit participants and to collect rich data. In addition to sampling, I paid attention to ethic and power balance and insider and outsider issue, which were all crucially important in creating a space in which women feel able to voice their personal narratives. This chapter detailed the ways in which I processed my data and wiring up my research findings. Having reviewed the transcripts and analysed the data, certain issues emerged as expected, such as the division of domestic labour within families and the attitudes to and practices of filial obligation. However, I had not anticipated the complexity of women's daily journeys in coordinating work, care and education. The next three chapters will present the findings and discussions in relation to these three key themes, starting with exploring the meanings and practices of the domestic division of labour in China.

Chapter Four The domestic division of labour in China: meanings and practices

Introduction

Chinese women's social and economic status has undergone many ups and downs since 1949. The understanding of women's family role in urban China was limited to the domestic setting, which changed during the Maoist period between 1949 and 1979. Achieving gender equality was one of the most important goals during that time. In order to achieve this goal, the government implemented a number of policies. For example, the state mobilised more than 90 percent of urban women into the labour market, which helped in raising women's social and economic standing (Zuo and Bian, 2001). However, compared with the industrialised countries, Chinese women were pushed into the paid workforce by the government's policy rather than by their own choice. In addition, they continued to play a significant role in domestic work. Hence, Zuo and Bian (2001) concluded that the transformation of women's role in Mao's China took away the individual's freedom to choose between work and family, at the same time placing a double burden on women's shoulders.

During the reform period between 1980 and 1991, the Maoist idea that 'All should eat from the same big pot', no matter what their contribution to the economy, came under attack. The emphasis on economic efficiency and privatisation has led to increasing unemployment, particularly for women. At that time, a widely accepted view in China was that women's withdrawal from the labour market could be seen as a solution to the increasing unemployment in the cities (Yee, 2001). It became a nationwide phenomenon for factories to hold back on recruiting recent female graduates, because of the financial cost of maternity leave or baby nursing (Sechiyama, 2013). This situation sparked a debate during the latter half of the 1980s on the question of whether or not women should leave

work to return to the home, which was referred to as '*fu n ü hui jia*' in Chinese. In this debate, how the labour involved in housework should be judged was a central issue. According to Sechiyama (2013), the advocates of returning home highlighted the importance of the social contribution made by women who engaged in housework whilst those who encouraged women to work outside the home did not recognise household labour as part of social labour. The debate continued throughout the 1980s until the *Tiananmen* incident in June 1989. No clear conclusion had been reached on the debate, as the authorities did not express a clear position on it, which left the issue of women 'returning home' below the surface as an unresolved contradiction in Chinese society.

Research on gender has since suggested that modernisation and development offered women access to social spaces, therefore encouraging women's social advancement and gender equality. However, Hiroko (2008) argued that modernity, industrialisation and capitalism have enhanced a separation of the domestic and public spheres and women's specialisation in childcare, which they refer to as the 'housewifisation' of women. Mies (2001, p. 103) proposed the concept of housewifisation to describe the gendered division of labour, namely 'woman as mother and housewife, and the family as her arena, the privatized arena of consumption and "love", excluded and sheltered from the arena of production and accumulation.' Women became the cheapest consumers and producers in the market system through the process of housewifisation. Housewifisation means that the externalisation or the ex-territorialisation of costs was covered by women, which would otherwise have to be covered by capitalists. Hence, women's labour was considered a natural resource, freely available like water and air.

It has been argued by Hiroko (2008) that economic development first 'housewives', then 'de-housewives' women. The de-housewifisation of women refers to the phenomenon of the decreasing and disappearance of the category of

‘housewife’ as the assumed and preferred role for adult women in the United States and north-Western Europe. The de-housewifisation of women was an inevitable consequence of the second demographic transition, which referred to the decline in legal marriages and the increase in the number of children born outside of marriage. In other words, the de-housewifisation of women is considered to be part of a broader social transformation, which was known as postmodernity, second modernity or high modernity (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994).

It should be noted that ‘modernisation’ ‘housewifisation’ and ‘de-housewifisation’ was first experienced in Western countries. Due to the different social and cultural context, we cannot expect a similar trajectory to be followed in China. A gendered division of labour existed in China before the arrival of the modern family. As Sechiyama (2013) suggested, in the 1950s, women had long taken part in agricultural labour in southern China, while this had not happened in northern China. Women’s work included the cultivation of vegetables for family consumption and caring for domestic animals such as pigs and chickens, which reflected a gendered division of labour – ‘men working outside and women working inside’. Thus, it is worth modifying the preconditions in the theory of the modern family, because China had a relatively high labour-force participation rate for women before modernisation started. Moreover, during the Mao era, Chinese women were pushed into the labour market, they were ‘de-housewifised’ during this period. However, we cannot simply say that this means the appearance of ‘de-housewifisation’ in China, because women’s participation in the labour force resulted from governmental policy, rather than their own choices. Sechiyama (2013) predicted that Chinese women are going back to the stage of ‘housewifisation’ with China’s process of social modernisation, while a conscious ‘de-housewifisation’ has not yet occurred. Wu (2014) has argued that one of the essential preconditions for being a housewife is to have a rich husband, because under the context of China’s low-wage system, it is necessary to have

two full-time workers to sustain the family.

In contemporary China, young women are more likely to have a better experience of gender equality than the older generation, which is considered to be related to the wider acceptance of Western beliefs, economic development and the implementation of the one-child policy. Before the introduction of the one-child policy, most families tended to prioritise their resources in favour of sons rather than daughters. However, when parents were allowed to have only one child, and if it happened to be a girl, she benefited from being the focus of all their investment and aspirations, particularly in urban areas. In the one-child generation, women's participation in higher education has increased significantly. In addition, women are no longer expected to have more children, which reduced their burden of raising children and enhanced their participation in the labour market. There are more opportunities and choices open to women in the labour market, at least for those who are well educated, although choice is still limited by women's domestic responsibilities and perceptions of appropriate jobs for women.

Given that most Chinese women are employed, the question arises: how do women view their gendered role as 'wives' and 'mothers'? Do they press men to share the responsibility for housework or do they attempt to restore a traditional female identity? How is a sense of fairness constructed around the resources and attitudes of wives and husbands in relation to domestic work? Before turning to my data to answer these questions, I will first set the context for research into the domestic division of labour, including the quantitative evidence from the time-use survey and three main theoretical arguments around the topic.

Researching the domestic division of labour

Domestic labour is one of those subjects that almost everybody – except

those men who have freed themselves from it completely – has a position on.

(Anderson, 2000, p. 7)

As Anderson (2000) stated, domestic labour is a basic component of everyone's daily life. Human existence depends on these routine activities, such as feeding and caring for both adults and children. From a theoretical perspective, domestic labour is as important as productive work to the maintenance of society. The topic of domestic labour has been explored by scholars from various backgrounds, with an emphasis on discovering the causes and consequences of the division of household labour for women, men, children, families and society. An attempt has been made by many of these studies to operationalise concepts and test hypotheses emerging from the time-use research tradition (Coltrane, 2000).

Time-use surveys

In order to discuss the meanings and practices of domestic labour in China, I start by using the latest worldwide time-use survey data to illustrate the trends in the gendered division of household labour. Time-use surveys were first used during the early years of the 20th century and aim to provide information on how individuals spend or allocate their time over a specified period, typically the 24 hours of a day or over the seven days of a week (Mrkić and Chief, 2008). During the second half of the 20th century, a need to measure the time spent on 'invisible' unpaid work was raised by some feminist groups. Thus, the time-use survey was applied to collect information on the unpaid activities that people perform over a given time period, as well as the amount of time they spend on the specified activities, which is generally under-recorded in surveys (Budlender, 2007). Time-use surveys were considered to be helpful in understanding women's activities, which are often not 'counted' in statistics, not 'accounted for' in representations of the economy and not 'taken into account' in policy making

(Esquivel, 2011, p. 217).

It has been reported that women do more unpaid work than men in all 29 OECD countries (Miranda, 2011). The gender gap was 2.5 hours on average per day. In addition, the data showed a significant divergence in the gender gap across countries. For example, Turkish, Mexican and Indian women spend 4.3–5 hours per day more on unpaid work than men. In contrast, the difference was only a little over one hour in the Nordic countries. Women in Southern Europe, Korea and Japan also did considerably more unpaid work than men.

According to the latest American time-use survey report, published in June 2017, on average 85 percent of women and 69 percent of men were involved in household activities (US Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2017). 70 percent of women reported that they undertook food preparation and clean-up tasks, while 45 percent of men were involved in these. The data showed that men were slightly more likely to engage in garden-lawn care than were women. In addition, in households with children under age 6, on an average day, men spent 26 minutes on physical care to household children while women spent 1.1 hours on it.

In China, the time-use survey carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics in May 2008 was the first official survey. It covered 37,142 individuals aged between 15 and 74 years in 10 provinces, including both urban and rural areas (Jia, 2016). According to the data, gathered by a time-diary approach, Chinese women spend more time than men on unpaid care work while men spend more time than women on paid work, which indicated a similar trend in the gendered division of labour in paid and unpaid work as other countries. More specifically, the time spent on unpaid care work for men in urban areas was 12.9 hours per week, whilst for women it was 27.6 hours per week; for men and women in rural areas it was 8.1 and 26.9 hours per week, respectively. The survey results

indicated that the gap in unpaid work between women and men in rural areas was 4.1 hours higher than that in urban China. In addition, it has been noted that among the four unpaid work components – housework, adult care, childcare and volunteer work – women reported markedly more time on childcare and housework than men, while similar amounts of time are spent on adult care and volunteer work by women and men.

Although time-use surveys offer a unique tool for analysing the division of labour between women and men, they do have limitations. The widely accepted method for collecting time-use data is the time diary. Usually, time diaries rely on respondents' self-reporting the amount of time they spend in activities, which is a potential source of error (Ver Ploeg et al., 2000). For example, individuals tend to underestimate activities lasting short times, such as trips to the bathroom and going to the refrigerator for a snack. Participants may also encounter difficulties in recording multitask activities, as the term multitasking has not been clearly defined in time-use surveys. Offer and Schneider (2011) reported that working mothers are doing more than one thing at once more than two-fifths of the time they are awake. They try to meet the multiple demands of work and home by multitasking. For example, working mothers may prepare dinner while supervising children's homework or do the laundry while talking on the phone. The inconsistency in how the details of people's participation in more than one activity at a time are recorded may limit the understanding of time-using experiences (Kenyon, 2010). While the major contribution of time-use surveys is that they throw light on unpaid as well as paid activities in a society, this method is unlikely to capture the meaning of housework practices.

In summary, the time-use survey contributes to knowledge about how people spend their time during a typical day. It is a common phenomenon that women spend more time on housework than men throughout the world. However, the extent of the imbalance varies across countries. Before investigating young

Chinese women's practices and attitudes to domestic labour, it is worth firstly defining the term 'housework' and reviewing different perspectives on gender and the household division of labour.

Theoretical perspectives on the household division of labour

The domestic division of labour has received a large amount of attention from researchers interested in gender, work and family. Various attempts have been made to define the term 'housework'. For instance, Smock and Noonan (2003) described housework as all the work that goes on to maintain the well-being of families and households which are performed by a family member without any payment. However, Delphy and Leonard (1992) argued that not all work done within the family should be considered unpaid. For example, women baking bread are recompensed for their work by saving themselves money. Moreover, the defining characteristics of housework – unpaid work, done in the home, by women – mean that the term should cover much more than the commonly agreed list of tasks of housework, such as cooking, cleaning and shopping. Delphy and Leonard (1992) suggested that various tasks that are done by mothers and wives for their husbands and families, for example, booking holidays, giving moral support, taking care of sick family members and sending birthday cards should also be considered types of housework. These tasks vary between households, depending on the particular needs of the family members. Therefore, the term housework refers to the regular day-to-day tasks which are considered necessary to maintain a home. Such tasks are mainly done by women, whilst some are completed by men, child family members or servants. In addition, the term 'household work' was proposed to cover all the work done within the family household, which was not only limited to housework, but also included the production of goods and services for exchange on the market rather than self-consumption. In this chapter, the term 'housework' is used to cover daily household tasks as well as other forms of domestic labour (e.g. emotion work

and kin keeping) and parenting.

Most research on the household division of labour is based on the United States or other industrialised countries (Chen, 2005). Although women are generally assumed to be the people who are responsible for the domestic work in a family, researchers have diverse explanations for this phenomena (Oakley, 1974; Chen, 2005; Bianchi et al., 2000). Three main theoretical perspectives on this topic are: the time availability perspective, the relative resources perspective and the gender perspective.

The time availability perspective suggests that the number of hours spent in paid employment is associated with the division of labour within the family. Research has found that, the longer the working hours for women, the shorter the housework time, which indicates a negative association between these two factors (Brines, 1993). South and Spitze (1994) found that the time men spend on housework was also negatively associated with their working time. As such, the time that women and men spend on housework is associated with their working time, but women still do most of the housework.

This approach simply assumes that women spend more time in household tasks because they are less involved in paid labour than men. The time availability hypothesis ignores the historical and contextual basis of power. It regards the gendered division of labour as an individual issue rather than a wider social issue. It takes gender difference for granted, without questioning why it exists or how it is practised.

According to the relative resources perspective, the power difference between men and women is reflected in their division of labour. The one with the most resources tends to do the least housework in the family. Relative resources are commonly measured in relation to educational attainment, earnings and

occupation. A number of studies have been done on the relative resources framework. For example, it has been found that the person who has greater earnings within the family has more power in negotiations over the division of domestic labour. Moreover, women's household labour time is negatively associated with their educational level, while men's participation in housework is positively related to their educational level (Kamo, 1988). This perspective was criticised on the basis that it failed to address how resources translate into power in families and why income should be associated with power.

In recent years, academics and feminists have argued that the division of domestic labour is not only a matter of time availability and rational choice, but also a symbolic enactment of gender relations (Treas and Drobnič, 2010). The gender perspective suggests that the understanding of gender embedded in daily life and housework enforces gender through the everyday enactment of male dominance (Chen, 2005). The greatest gap in housework time was found between married men and women, indicating the power of the roles of 'husband' and 'wife' (South and Spitze, 1994). Researchers argue that a wife's full-time employment and earnings do not have the same meaning as those of her husband (Zuo and Bian, 2001). According to Bianchi et al. (2000), housework helps to define and express the gender relations within a family, thus it is not a natural practice. Husbands are traditionally considered to be the breadwinners, whose wages support and maintain the wellbeing of their family, whilst the wife and mother is expected to do domestic work. In other words, when the husband's and wife's earnings are at the same level, the wife is viewed as co-provider, contributing to the family economically, but she still remains responsible for domestic work. A number of studies have demonstrated that married women's movement into paid labour has not been accompanied by an equivalent increase in husbands' involvement in housework (Smock and Noonan, 2003; Crompton, 1999). Thus, it was concluded that the reduction in the gap between men's and women's time spent doing housework was more the result of a decrease in

women's housework than a substantial increase in men's housework time. Another important finding is that women not only constantly do more housework than men, but also perform a wider range of tasks, not only including household chores and childcare activities, but also specified tasks based on men's requirements and preferences. On the one hand, individuals are largely influenced by the gender ideology at the societal level. For example, people tend to take it for granted that wives do more housework while husbands do less or even no housework (Liu and Xu, 2009). On the other hand, individual attitudes towards gender roles and domestic labour are also influenced by other factors, such as personal experiences in families as well as educational and societal achievement (Chen, 2005). Gender roles are interrelated both inside and outside the household.

From the late 1960s into the 1970s, sociological researchers sought to analyse women's unpaid family work within a framework of Marxist political economy. Such an analysis would provide a foundation, they thought, for understanding women's differential positioning as mothers, family members, and workers. Feminists started the discussion of domestic labour by challenging the orthodox Marxist view that housework was marginal to capitalism (Jackson, 1996). Productive labour and reproductive labour (also referred to as unproductive labour) have been recognised as two different types of labour in a capitalist economic system. In Marxist terms, productive labour refers to labour or work resulting in services and goods that produce 'surplus value'. According to Jackson (1996), the value produced by workers was partly used to cover their wages, the remainder was appropriated by capital and was the source of profit. The majority of Marxists agreed that the term productive labour was associated with work that directly produces surplus value, thus excluding housework, because housework was not done for the purpose of earning a wage, and therefore had no exchange value. Marxist feminists suggested that domestic work was socially necessary. It was vital to the functioning of capitalism. Marxist

feminism states that, in capitalist economics, housework is usually regarded as exclusively women's labour. This system suggests that women's labour is less valuable, as it does not earn monetary compensation. Thus, women as a group are devalued and oppressed. Delphy and Leonard (1992) provided a different perspective from Marxists' approach to housework, which stated that (most) housework was different from waged work, and the reason it was not paid was because it was not done within the capitalist mode of production. Rather, the unpaid character of housework was due to the fact that it took place within distinct, non-market relations. With the process of industrialisation, many goods and services were produced in factories by waged labour, but this did not mean that family households no longer produced anything (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). On the contrary, family households provided various personal services that were considered to be representations of love and harmonious relationships within the family. Moreover, households had not simply lost productive functions, because some production that used to take place outside the home was reintroduced into the household, such as doing laundry in households for convenience and economy and food preparation by freezing. Within the domestic sphere, they argued, men as heads of households appropriate the unpaid labour of their wives and sometimes other family members. Delphy and Leonard (1992) summarised that women as wives were an exploited class within the domestic sphere, which became more apparent where households produced for exchange, such as on farms or in small family enterprises.

Chen (2005) has argued that the empirical research suggests that none of the theories are sufficient to explain the variation in the division of household labour. However, Delphy and Leonard (1992) have explored the variety of work done by wives in their book *Familiar Exploitation*. They suggested that 'the work which wives do for their husbands' occupations, for men's leisure activities, and for their emotional and sexual well-being, gets completely lost sight of because it is so varied, so personalized and so intimate' (Delphy and Leonard, 1992, p. 226).

It should be stressed that women's work is varied, because it is performed outside the capitalist framework and is provided as a personal service. The variations in wives' work reveals that women are actually providing personal services to their husbands according to their needs. In other words, women do the domestic work, which has no clear boundaries or limits, without a job description or fixed hours (Jackson, 2006). They contribute to their husbands' work by doing some of it for him or with him as well as helping indirectly by doing most or all of the household work, which frees men for paid work, as well as other activities, such as hobbies and socialising. In addition, wives give moral and psychological support to their husbands, assisting them in coping with their employment as well as with life in general. Although Delphy and Leonard have made contributions to the empirical studies on the variety of work done by wives, there still appear to be limitations and gaps in the empirical literature.

In terms of the empirical perspective, the time availability perspective and the relative resources perspective limit the understanding of the division of domestic labour by hiding the increase in 'buying-in': i.e. the domestic work services that are purchased in modern families. According to a fact sheet published by the International Labour Organisation for China and Mongolia in 2012, China has about 20 million domestic workers and 600,000 domestic service agencies, which fit in with the increasing demand for domestic help in modern families (ILO, 2012). As such, the household division of labour is not only associated with working hours and relative resources, but this data suggests that it could also be related to the domestic services employed in the family.

There appear to be three gaps in the empirical literature. Firstly, most studies employ quantitative research methods, showing the relationship between various factors and the division of domestic labour without paying attention to detailed information or narratives on women's experiences of domestic work and their attitudes to it. Secondly, most of the research focuses on Western countries,

where gender ideologies, economic development and cultural values are different from developing nations. In addition, the sociological literature on household labour focuses on housework in assessing inequality in the gendered division of labour, therefore giving relatively little attention to childcare (Bianchi et al., 2012). The focus of this chapter is to investigate the behaviour of young Chinese women and their husbands in relation to domestic work, which raises the question of how housework is divided within contemporary families in China. It aims to enhance understanding of the gendered meaning of household labour by looking at women's attitudes towards housework and childcare. This chapter seeks to discuss what factors influence the division of domestic work in a family and how young wives and husbands communicate and negotiate about it, as well as the strategies they use to achieve a 'satisfactory' or 'equal' allocation of housework. In this study, interviews were only conducted with women and not with their husbands, and thus the information on husbands' attitudes and practices comes from the women. It could be argued that to rely only on women to report their husbands' domestic role is inappropriate. For example, women may underestimate their husbands' efforts for help in the home. However, Rutter and Brown's (1966) study on the measurement of family activities and relationships found that the tendency for such bias to happen is insignificant, especially around questions that aimed to discover actual performances and narratives in the family.

I will now turn to my data to explore women's attitudes to housework and their practices around it by drawing on a gender perspective, particularly in terms of the variety of work done by wives.

Attitudes to housework and practices around it

A wide range of housework tasks were listed on the interview schedule before the interviews, but I entered the field in an open-ended manner, starting by

asking ‘What housework do you and your husband do?’ instead of providing a predetermined list of housework items. For the named tasks that were shared between husbands and wives, I followed up by asking who did more than the other. The main purpose was to provide a full picture of how housework chores and parenting duties are constructed and distributed between wives, husbands and others in the everyday experiences of individuals. It then came to the question of how they viewed their own and their husbands’ roles in domestic work in order to investigate how a sense of fairness was constructed around the attitudes of wives and husbands to domestic work. I start by providing information on the household arrangements of my interviewees, which is essential in order to understand their domestic activities. Then I move on to an overview of the division of domestic labour within my sample. This is followed by a discussion on working mothers as well as non-working mothers’ views about their gendered roles as mothers and wives and their attitudes to household chores and childcare and their practices around them.

Among the 34 families, there is some variation in the household living arrangements (see Table 2). The majority of respondents live with their husbands and child, including three families with two children. There were also two divorced women, living independently with their children. It should be noted that all my participants are married women with children; the two ‘married couple’ households live separately from their children on weekdays, because they are unable to take care of their children due to the long working hours and conditions of work (discussed further in Chapter Five). Five families in this study co-reside with either the grandparents (three sets of paternal grandparents and one set of maternal grandparents) or a live-in nanny.

Table 2. Household living arrangement (34 families)

| Characteristic | Number |
|---|--------|
| Married couple with one child | 22 |
| Married couple with two children | 3 |
| Single parent with one child | 2 |
| Married couple | 2 |
| Married couple with one child and grandparents | 4 |
| Married couple with one child and live-in nanny | 1 |
| In total | 34 |

The division of domestic labour among the 34 families is summarised in Table 3. Both wives and husbands participated in doing housework. However, women’s commitments clearly exceeded those of their husbands. In order to gain an overview of the division of household chores, I asked each participant ‘Overall, who does more housework in your family?’ Twenty-four young women indicated clearly that they did more housework and childcare than their husband in the family. Five participants agreed that they shared housework responsibility equally. Only one young woman said that her husband had been doing more household chores. In addition, four respondents admitted that grandparents, other family members or housekeepers took the main responsibility for housework. My data is consistent with the trend that women do more housework than men in all the 29 surveyed OECD countries, with an average of 271 minutes spent on housework per day, while the figure for men is only 137 minutes (Miranda, 2011).

Table 3. Distribution of housework chores (34 families)

| Items | Wife does more | Share equally | Husband does more | Grandparents/others do more | N/A |
|------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
| Cooking | 14 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 2 |
| Grocery shopping | 20 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| Dishwashing | 18 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| Laundry | 25 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| Childcare | 21 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Housekeeping | 21 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 0 |
| Overall | 24 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 0 |

The symbolic meaning of gender

The above data shows that most women take the majority of the responsibility for household work in their families. The traditional gender-role expectation – men being the breadwinner and women the homemaker – was still the dominant gender ideology among young women. A husband’s role is defined primarily by his paid work and his occupational achievement becomes central in evaluating his contributions to the family, while the roles of wife and mother are primarily considered to include the responsibility for doing housework. In other words, wives display their ‘proper’ gender roles through the type and amount of housework they perform. For example, Yunyun, an office worker in Jilin, said:

My husband is busy with his work, he works longer hours than me and contributes most of the income for the family. I am aiming at being a good back-up, dealing with all the ‘inside’ issues, therefore he can keep his mind on the ‘outside’ part.

Yunyun’s words reflected the concept of the time availability perspective and relative resource perspective; her husband’s longer working hours and higher income led to his less active participation in the household work. However, this

cannot just be explained by time allocation and relative resources. It is more about reproducing gender inside and outside the family, which is a symbolic enactment of gender relations. Another example was given by Caicai, a lecturer at a University in Jilin:

I am a traditional woman. I strongly agree that the men should work hard, earning money to support the family. And the women are responsible for taking care of the family. So I would like to do the housework, even if I am also doing a full-time job. I may feel uncomfortable, or a bit embarrassed if my husband changes diapers for the child or does the dishes in the kitchen.

Both of these two respondents believed that women's family role should be associated more with household responsibilities and men's with market work. Husbands' role expectations informed and were reinforced by their wives. The notion of 'men outside, women inside' has greatly influenced women's status in China. In the traditional Chinese agricultural economy, men went out to work in the fields and took responsibility for affairs that occurred outside their houses, while women were responsible for looking after the family, being good wives and loving mothers. Within the context of economic development, this notion has dissolved to a certain extent (Chen, 2008). However, the traditional stereotype of 'men outside, women inside' still has an impact on the division of labour in contemporary China. Most wives in the sample, like Caicai and Yunyun, did not expect their husbands to share the responsibility for housework with them equally. It has been mentioned that men's responsibility for the family should be fulfilled mainly through working outside. For those interviewees and their husbands, they act in a certain way simply because they are male or female. The women had internalised the idea that womanhood should be practised in relation to caring for others, particularly husbands and children. In addition, a man's over-involvement in housework would be viewed negatively. Caicai and Yunyun even considered their husbands' participation in household chores to be shameful.

Indeed, they acted as gatekeepers to men's involvement in domestic labour, deciding whether they were required for 'inside' issues. As such, in the long run, the husbands believed that they were not needed for the housework and that their wives should take a large share of the domestic chores even if they must juggle paid and unpaid work.

According to the interviews, many women's attitudes towards domestic labour are still influenced by male-dominated cultural norms to some degree. Liu and Xu (2009) suggested that, while social and economic changes have had a crucial impact on gender roles both inside and outside households, the process of adapting traditional cultural forms to the newer social reality takes time. Gender ideologies also varied across individuals and their ways of displaying gender roles. One of the participants, Nannan, a worker in a private company in Jilin, told me her story:

In my family, the housework is shared unequally between me and my husband. I think this is partly due to my attitude to family roles. Seven years ago, when we were just married, he helped with cleaning the kitchen after meals and we shared the responsibility for grocery shopping. At that time, he was on the staff of a bank. I encouraged him to pursue a good career development rather than staying at home and doing the housework. I would look down upon a man who has no ambition and who can only perform simple tasks in a family. So slowly and slowly, my husband came to feel that he only has the financial responsibility for the family; now he is not willing to do any household chores even if I ask him to give me a hand.

Caicai, Yunyun and Nanan's experiences indicate a new patriarchal structure in which the husbands go off to work and the wives undertake a 'dual role' – engaging in both domestic work and paid employment. This has replaced the old patriarchal structure in which the household engaged in productive labour as a

unit. For these young women, the unequal gender-based distribution of housework was perceived as a fair allocation. They were not bothered by housework as long as their husbands showed their appreciation and respect for their contributions to the family. Hence, women were to obey men, and provide support for the men although taking responsibility for the housework. Nannan said:

I can take responsibility for all the housework, because I love my husband and my family, my husband needs me to do so, to leave him more time and space for his career development. I am also doing a full-time job, working eight hours per day and five days a week. So I don't want my husband to take it for granted. In other words, I care about his attitude, just a few sentences or some tiny things, such as if he encourages me: 'Good job, the food taste really good' or 'Thank you for all the things you have done for this family', I would feel really happy. Actually, I haven't imagined that one day he could share the housework with me, and I don't need him to do it. I just hope my husband can understand me and appreciate my hard work for the family, that's all.

In this case, Nannan located herself in a lower position than her husband. She held the idea that women were to obey men, to support and assist men, rather than putting her own needs first. However, Nannan's obedience originated in her love, her emotional attachment to her husband and family. She transformed her domestic labour into a labour of love. As Westwood (2002) has suggested, women work outside the home for wages and within the home for 'love'. Their emotional and intellectual commitments can only be made within the context of the family. However, this does not mean that women exert every possible effort to provide their families with clean, comfortable environments, without any complaint. For example, Nanan did complain of her husband's absence from housework, albeit in a moderate and conservative way. Other respondents also

mention that they were tired and exhausted and considered their husbands' reluctance to do housework as a result of their emphasis on career. Indeed, these types of complaints were more about seeking understanding and attention from their husbands rather than looking for real assistance with household chores. As Mill (1869) suggested, women always complain of their husbands or of the husbands of their friends. However, my data did not actually show the hidden stories with vivid details about how the young mothers complain their husbands. This may relate to the fact that Chinese women tend to perceive housework as a relatively sensitive issue within families and they were concerned that their complaints would negatively influence their reputation or the family relationship. In some cases, participants indicated that complaining would not help to change the gender-based allocation of housework and mentioned that they were undertaking various types of housework according to men's requirements and preferences.

The variety of work done by wives

Women's lives as wives have been assumed to be uniform – doing housework, caring for husbands and elders and raising the child. However, my data show that women provide various domestic services to family members, especially to their husbands. Therefore, I am going to stress how women's work varies according to the requirements of the men to whom they are married. As Delphy and Leonard (1992) suggested, the variation in wives' work according to their husbands' needs depends on men's occupations and circumstances. For example, it is common for self-employed husbands to make use of their wives' work for occupational purposes. One of my interviewees, Yanyan, shared her experience of working in her husband's dental practice:

My husband runs a dental practice; he is a famous dentist in our local city. I would say I am self-employed acting as an assistant in the centre, helping

with the reception, assisting in the management of patient care and keeping the patients' records and documents appropriately, as well as being familiar with his clients and networking with them sometimes. Obviously, my husband is 'ding liang zhu', he paid for all our living expenses. He works really hard, feeling exhausted every day. I am willing to take more responsibility for housework, as my husband has been a successful provider which released me from the obligation to share equally in breadwinning, so generally I will do the things he would like me to do and agree with his family decisions.

In this case, Yanyan worked full time for her husband's dental practice, making direct contributions to his occupation. She was doing the office work that was central to the daily performance of her husband's business, but routine and not highly specialised. Yanyan was also involved in being familiar and networking with her husband's clients, which is called 'peripheral activities' by Finch (2012). Peripheral activities refer to 'things which are not central to day to day demands on the husband but which help the smooth conduct of his work and his ultimate success' (Finch, 2012, p. 88). Yanyan received little personal recognition or reward for such work and she was unpaid, or in other words nominally paid, in the man's business. Yanyan mentioned that in order to be in a better position to support her husband's business, she has done some training in dental-care services, which reflects the hierarchies of gender in family production. While giving direct support to a husband in his occupation can perhaps be seen as specific to certain men in certain occupations, it is common for women to perform a wide range of tasks in families, including doing household chores, giving moral support and supplying the men's personal needs. For example, Caicai reported that she was responsible for various types of domestic work in her family. She said:

My husband does almost nothing in the family. He is busy as well as stressed

with his work. I would say I do all the housework tasks in my family: cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry. I make sure everything is in order, so my husband feels comfortable. In addition to the ordinary types of housework, there are some other things that I believe also belong to 'Housework', including matching clothes for my husband and my son every day, family financial planning, keeping a good relationship with parents, relatives and colleagues. For example, I will remind my husband about his parents' birthdays and help him buy the gifts or attend the family dinner party organised by his supervisors or colleagues. Maybe I have a broad idea about housework, I'm not sure if I understand it in the same way as others, but I think all the things mentioned above are important parts of family life. And sometimes my husband complains about the food I cook, at this time I ask him to cook when I have chopped the meat and vegetables and prepared the sauces. To be honest, he cooks more delicious food than me, but he doesn't have the time and more importantly is not willing to do it.

Caicai's words summarised the idea that wives should do the routine housework to 'make a house a home'. She took responsibility for all the housework, and for manipulating the environment to make it comfortable and warm, so that the man could concentrate his time and energy elsewhere. The services that Caicai provided were not fixed, but rather determined by the needs of her husband. In this case, even though Caicai did not work directly for her husband, she actually acted in a back-up role, providing moral support through her emotional labour, which is regarded as an essential part of helping a man unwind, relax and feel good (Jackson, 1996). As such, wives did not own their labour power, because their husbands usually had a claim on it. They did not even realise that the work they did had a cash value, because they were servicing the needs of their husbands. Women's active participation in the various household tasks does not mean they are not expected to contribute to their families financially. Therefore, we should also consider variations according to the household's need for the wife

to earn money. One of my interviewees mentioned that her husband considered employment to be an essential part of her family role, that it would be an unequal division of labour if she could stay at home to be a housewife. Another respondent, Feifei, who is a marketing manager in Changchun, pointed out the fact that women were building their identities as independent individuals through working outside the home as well as practising womanhood as working women in modern China. She also shared her feelings about being a ‘*nü qiang ren*’ [superwoman]:

I am widely recognised as ‘nü qiang ren’, but I do not really like the title, to be honest, I want to distance myself from the image, because it generally highlights your employability or your success in the labour market. Beyond the word, it also means you are not a traditional good wife and mother, you work hard without paying attention to your family and the child. Actually, it is important for a woman to share the responsibility of earning money in most Chinese families nowadays. However, hard-working women are always perceived as ambitious, sometimes more negative in meaning than positive. In my family, we don’t have too much housework, because I live separately from my child on weekdays, but I am still the person who takes more responsibility for domestic work.

Feifei’s understanding of ‘*nü qiang ren*’ reflects the different values that are placed on women’s and men’s paid work. Despite their contributions to economic resources, women’s paid work does not have the same meaning as men’s work, which results from the gendered expectations of women’s family responsibilities. According to Zuo and Bian (2001), a woman’s employment might contradict her prescribed gendered domestic role; ‘over engagement’ in paid work was considered selfish and to contradict the traditional norm that family needs should be given top priority. In addition, a wife’s successful career and higher income may serve as an ‘assault’ on the male breadwinner and be

regarded as a debt rather than a resource in the marital exchange (Hochschild, 1989). Similarly, Delphy and Leonard (1992) argued that women's earnings should not be so large as to undermine their husbands' status as breadwinners. Women should not change the men's or the children's routine because of their employment. In other words, within a family, the man's needs are accorded top priority, followed by the children and in some cases the elders, with the wife's own paid work relegated to the lowest level (Finch, 2012). As such, women tend to withdraw from the labour market to serve the needs of their husbands or their families. One of my respondents, Kuaikuai-a research assistant, was asked by her high-income husband to quit her job in order to take care of their young child and her parents-in-law. In this case, the social position of a woman's husband not only influences the actual tasks she performs, but also the employment choice she makes. Another example is Meimei, who was a 26-year-old housewife with an 18-month-old son. She was not employed outside the home and had become entirely dependent on her husband for financial support. She gave up her low-skilled job due to childcare concerns. When I asked: 'How does your husband feel about your decision to leave the labour force?' she told me:

At first, he was not really happy about it. If I quit my job, he has to take all the responsibility for supporting the family. He is self-employed, running a small business, and he is not sure how the business will develop in the future, so it makes sense that he would be worried. From my perspective, I was a sales assistant in a supermarket, the salary is relatively low even in such a small city. I don't think my earnings would really help with my family. Another important thing is, when my child was born, no one was available to take care of him, such as the grandparents or relatives. And the fee for employing a nanny was higher than my salary, so I think it's better for me to be a housewife.

In this case, Meimei was forced to give up her job, rather than making the

decision based on her own choice, which resulted from the lack of assistance with childcare. Her choice reflects the notion of Becker's (1991) efficiency model, which explains the division of housework from a rational, economic perspective. Becker (1991) argued that families seek to maximise utility by distributing tasks as efficiently as possible. For Meimei, taking into account her own and her husband's employment conditions and the cost of hiring a nanny, her household was most productive when she specialised in domestic work, while her husband specialised in labour activities.

By contrast, Juanjuan had been a housewife for a year because of health concerns. Ruirui defined herself as a housewife for a short period when she was unemployed and preparing for her postgraduate examination. These contrasting examples of non-working mothers show that various reasons contributed to women's decision to give up paid work. It should be noted that they were pushed into becoming housewives by the lack of adequate support or by the requirements of their husbands rather than making a decision based on their own choice. However, these women's sacrifices went unnoticed, reflecting the fact that imposing restrictions on oneself and leaving the best for others has long been accepted as part of being a good wife and mother (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). In addition, the male provider's acceptance of his wife's traditional gender role has been reflected in their action of asking their wives to leave the labour force. In other words, women were only allowed or expected to enter the labour market when it fitted in with their husbands' demands on their time. Hence, Delphy (1991) suggested that marriage was 'a self-perpetuating state', because women's earning capacity tends to decrease over time compared with their husbands'. More specifically, if a woman chooses to withdraw from paid work in order to fulfil family obligations, she will be in a disadvantaged situation for future employment. On the other hand, if a woman decides to continue her job, she may have to limit her working hours to fit in with her husband's requirements. In this sense, married women are not able to concentrate on paid work in the same way

as men, who are freed to concentrate on their work, because their wives do domestic work for them, while married women still do domestic work, including childcare, in addition to paid work.

Childcare

Commentaries on the family, and in particular feminist writing on the family, has emphasised the labour women perform ‘for children’. This reflects the dominant ideology of the family in both the West and the East today, which is increasingly child-centred, and the commonality of experiences and problems households share in providing good-quality childcare.

In terms of childcare responsibilities, parents need either to be available to take care of pre-school children for 24 hours a day or be responsible for outside school hours for school-age children. In this study, the majority of participants were members of dual-earner families and therefore in most cases had to rely on support from third parties (mainly grandparents, see Chapter Five) to care for their children whilst they and their husbands were at work. Instead of focusing on all the childcare arrangements, here I emphasise mothers’ views on fathers’ roles.

As with household chores, mothers continued to be mostly responsible for childcare. The women were much more likely than their husbands to undertake all kinds of childcare tasks. For example, Hehe, a high school teacher in Jilin, said:

My husband does not spend much time with my child. Sometimes he takes care of the kid, like playing games and telling bedtime stories, but just for 5 or 10 minutes, once the child is crying, he will ask me to take over immediately.

Compared with Hehe's reflection on her husband's participation in daily care activities, Nana, a self-employed storekeeper with a 3-year-old son in Huangsongdian mentioned her husband's participation in disciplining the child.

My husband is a long-distance driver. He is not involved in childcare in general. Due to the nature of his work, he does not really have the time even to 'see' the kid. The only thing he does is disciplining the child. We believe the traditional Chinese view that a strict teacher makes a great student. There has to be a person to be strict with the kids in a family, that's my husband.

Nana's words reflected the traditional Chinese cultural value that the father should be strict while the mother should be mild to balance the role. This is based on the view that a man sheds blood but not tears, which emphasises the tough, strong but less expressive male role in the family and community (Xu and O'Brien, 2014). However, there was no consensus among the interviewees about the father's role in disciplining children. Some participants said that they prefer their husbands to be the nicer and milder person in the family, which was considered a way to build a closer relationship between fathers and their children. No matter what the respondents' views on the father's role in disciplining children, they all expressed their concerns and expectations about men's involvement in childcare. For instance, Hehe told me:

I think the father is a role model and influences the child in a different way from the mother. I hope my husband can improve, spending more time with the kid. There is a popular TV show called 'Where are we going, Dad?' in which five celebrity dads took their young kids to the countryside, to deal with every kind of challenge together. I've encouraged my husband to watch the show, hoping it will inspire him to be more active in parenting duties.

To sum up, the data revealed that the division of labour in childcare between mothers and fathers followed a traditional pattern, suggesting that mothers are still the main caretakers of children. This finding accords with the results of a study on women's social status in China in 2010, which found that women spend significantly more time than men 'taking care of children' and 'tutoring children' (Xu, DeFrain and Liu, 2017). It should be noted that 70 percent of fathers under 40 years of age reported themselves as never or seldom involved in taking care of children.

Although males tend to be absent from childcare activities, they are regarded as more active than in previous generations. Lili, a doctor in Jilin, shared her experience:

In my mind, my father is a quiet person, he is less responsive, less demanding, but can be more harsh. I cannot remember any childcare tasks that my father undertook, such as preparing meals, supervising homework or playing games. I think my husband has made great progress, he takes my daughter to school on weekdays and helps with tutoring.

In addition to men's involvement in childcare activities, they have also been considered as specialising in technology-related household tasks. I will now turn to explore how technological development and grandparents' involvement have influenced the division of domestic labour in contemporary China.

Outsourcing: how do technology and grandparents influence the division of domestic labour?

Existing domestic outsourcing studies are generally quantitatively based, relying on household expenditure surveys or general household surveys, which include information on whether households employ paid help with domestic tasks.

Compared with the buying-in of services, I found that the usage of technological appliances and grandparents' involvement were two key aspects of outsourcing that influenced the division of housework in the family. Therefore, I take a relatively narrow definition of domestic outsourcing – focusing on technological appliances and grandparents' involvement rather than the purchase of paid assistance in the home.

Technology

In the interviews, technology was an emerging theme that influences the division of housework in the family and explains the gendered meaning of housework. On the one hand, technology is widely recognised to have increased the convenience or efficiency of performing housework (Bose, 1984). It changed the way in which household tasks are divided among members of that household. On the other hand, men's involvement in domestic work was generally related to technology-based tasks, which are seen as masculine housework, such as driving, outdoor gardening and household maintenance. I will explore how technology influences the division of household chores among these young couples and whether it facilitates or hinders gender equality within the family. Zhenzhen, a teacher in a high school in Jilin, gave an example of how technology influences the allocation of housework in her family.

I don't think there are too many household chores in the family. Washing machine, slow cooker, vacuum cleaner, microwave and online shopping, they all help me to save energy. For the laundry, if you have a washing machine, it's just a 'pressing button' job (my husband's words). However, it's not as simple as just pressing the button; for example, I need to categorise the clothes before they go into the machine, like separating dark colours from light colours, paying attention to the suits or jackets which are not appropriate for machine washing, ironing and putting them back in the right

place in the wardrobe after drying. Technology reduces the drudgery of housework, but not really the time, I'm still the person who takes responsibility for the various household tasks, even the 'pressing button' job.

Zhenzhen's comments on technology suggested that technological innovation has not changed the division of housework in her family. In other words, the development of technology has not been a factor that facilitates men's involvement in domestic work, which supports Cockburn and Ormrod's (1993) argument that gender relations have been sustained through waves of technological change. Moreover, the role of technology in saving time for housework has been questioned by scholars. For example, Vanek (1974) observed that, for non-employed women, the time spent on housework remained relatively constant. A study on domestic technology and housework time for Australian women and men suggested that domestic technology appliances rarely reduce household chores (Bittman, Rice and Wajcman, 2004). Liu and Li (2009) argued that people spend less time on cooking food and washing clothes by using electrical kitchen and laundry devices. Housework may have become less physically draining – no more hauling water or firewood to the kitchen and no more hand-wringing of wet clothes – but the time demands have not changed. Thus, it is worth considering the difference between ease of housework and reduction of time spent on housework, which has not been conceptualised in previous studies. For example, Zhenzhen agreed that technological appliances make it easier for her to accomplish housework tasks, but were not helpful in reducing the time spent on them. Zhenzhen said:

In the past, in my mother's generation, they did not rely on technological things. I feel that they only needed to do an OK job on housework, for example cooking food, we didn't expect that my mum would cook the things I like, served on an elegant plate. At that time, doing housework was more about fulfilling the basic needs of the family members. Compared with my

mum, I spend more time on selecting the technological appliances, which is part of the housework, comparing the price and quality in-store and online, getting the knowledge about how to use it. So even though the technological appliances do save some time for me, I also spend time on becoming familiar with the technology. In addition, people (especially men) get the impression that the technology makes things simpler and easier, so we're expected to do a better job of cooking and cleaning as well as to invest more in the domestic work that can't be done by machines, such as childcare. In total, the amount of time on housework has not been reduced.

Zhenzhen's comments on technology suggest that the rising standard of domestic production is connected with expectations of a greater quantity or quality, as well as a failure to save time by using technology. In addition to technological appliances, gender specialisation in domestic work was discussed by respondents. The data showed that women were responsible for the majority of housework, including cooking, house cleaning, laundry and grocery shopping, while men were more likely to contribute to household maintenance tasks. Yingying, a high school teacher from Jiaohe said:

Even though my husband does not do well on some aspects of housework, he is good at repairing things, like the air conditioner and computer, he has the ability to fix it.

Yingying's words reflect the way in which the notion of masculinity was stressed in the use and repair of machines. Wajcman (2013) argued that machines are extensions of male power whilst women's use of machines is not considered to be a competence with technology.

Similarly, Ranran, a teacher in a technical college in Jilin, stated that:

My husband believes that the kitchen is the place for women. Laundry is a job for women, it sounds as though we are born to do these things and it's none of men's business. So he's not willing to devote time to these kinds of 'women's work'. In contrast, he participates in repairing things, which makes him feel that he is a masculine man. Technology has not really changed the allocation of domestic labour in my family.

The concept of women's work is reflected in Yingying and Ranran's domestic work experiences. Household cleaning and childcare have traditionally been viewed as women's work. According to Lerman, Oldenziel and Mohun (2003), laundry work has always been one of the most powerfully gendered domestic chores. In addition, sex-segregated housework was not only related to the unequal division of domestic chores, but also connected with women and men's attitudes to their family role.

Throughout the interviews, I found that it was not only the housework-related technologies that have a gendered character, but also the technologies of leisure demonstrated a gendered meaning. For example, Ranran told me:

My husband usually watches TV or plays computer games while I am taking care of the kid or cooking dinner. He likes to enjoy the entertainment technology without any interruptions while I have to multitask.

Ranran's experiences indicated that men are more likely to enjoy leisure technologies. Women tend to experience a continuing sense of domestic responsibilities; they primarily consider home to be a domain of work, while for men it is a site to escape from the world of paid work (Wajcman, 2013).

In summary, domestic technology did not directly reduce the time women spent on housework. The allocation of housework has not in fact changed between

women and men. The data suggests that to some extent domestic technology has reinforced the traditional gendered division of housework within these contemporary Chinese families. After exploring the influence of technology on the division of labour within Chinese families, I will now turn to look at another important outsourcing factor – grandparents – by focusing on their involvement in domestic activities and how they influence the participants’ attitudes to and practices of domestic labour.

Grandparents

Four respondents in my sample said that the domestic work was done by other people, mainly parents and hourly paid workers. Tangtang is a human-resource assistant in Changchun. She said that her parents-in-law helped with most of the housework:

I'm embarrassed to say that neither I nor my husband does the housework. We live together with my parents-in-law, they take responsibility for most of the housework in my home. They are open-minded and thoughtful parents, they feel that things are not easy at such a 'climbing' age, climbing the career ladder as well as taking care of our 11-month-old son. Thus, they are willing to help us with the housework, so that we can concentrate on career development and achieve a higher level of attainment, that's the main reason that we choose to live together. Specifically, my mother-in-law takes care of my son during the day, cooking meals while my father-in-law helps with shopping in the supermarket. I take over my son after dinner, so the grandparents are generally free for the evening. I may wipe the table or wash the clothes.

Grandparents participated in raising the family’s third generation and took responsibility for the bulk of the housework. They were the people who provided

support for the mother, reducing the burden of raising the child and domestic work. Hence, grandparents were considered a positive factor who facilitated work-family balance for young women. In addition, grandparents, particularly grandmothers, were not only helping with household chores, but they also influenced the wife's and husband's attitudes to domestic work. Caicai shared the story of how the grandparents influenced her behaviours and attitudes towards domestic work.

I was raised by a traditional mother in China, who did housework for a living, to raise my brother and me. I remember that my mum cooked all the meals, washing clothes for the whole family (it was not really common to have a washing machine in northern China in the 1980s), making clothes for my brother and me, cleaning and tidying the rooms. She also bought hundreds of kilos of cabbage in the autumn, washed and dried it, then made it into pickles, which was the main vegetable for the family in winter. I am not from a wealthy family, my parents are workers in a chemical fertilizer factory, but we always feel proud of our warm and clean house. My mother is widely recognised as 'neng gan' and 'xian hui' (virtuous wife and good mother) in the community. My father is a male chauvinist, he works hard in the factory to earn money, but does nothing in the family. That's the housework allocation in my family, all done by my mother. When I grew up, I knew how to keep a house, it's not drudgery for me. I believe doing housework is just a process of everyday life, keeping things flowing and going. I don't think that it's a problem to be responsible for the household chores, because my mum had done these for all her life. I would say my mother deeply influenced my attitudes to housework.

Another interviewee similarly stated:

I was taught to be a 'xian hui' wife by my mother. She told me: 'It's your job

to keep the family going, raising the child and taking care of your husband, don't pay too much attention to your work, family is the world for a woman.'

Both of these grandmothers taught their daughters to respect their husbands and to raise the child well, revealing a wife's subservient relationship to her husband. This suggests that the traditional expectations for women to be a 'virtuous wife and good mother' have not relaxed among the older generation of women, which impacts upon the younger generation of women's behaviour and attitudes towards housework. According to Cunningham (2001), children's observations of their parents' household labour behaviours influence their long-lasting attitudes and behaviours related to household tasks. A number of researchers have argued that children's understanding of gender roles is significantly affected by the characteristics of the same-sex parent. For example, a mother's gender role is more likely to be associated with her daughter's gender role than her son's, and this has been reflected in these two interviewees' experiences (Cunningham, 2001; Blair, 1992; Johnson, 1975). However, it has been found that mothers not only have effects on women, but also affect men's behaviours related to domestic work in various ways. Caicai mentioned her husband's absence from housework:

For my husband, he does nothing, sometimes I make a joke that: 'you're the king in our family'. My parents-in-law do not allow my husband to do any housework, they always say, 'you're a man, family work is not the thing for you, go out to earn money, work hard at your job.' I have to say their attitudes have partly led to my husband's laziness and absence from housework.

Chaochao, a 30-year-old teacher in a high school has similar experiences to Caicai:

My mother-in-law is from a rural area, she has a deeply rooted traditional

gender attitude – men outside and women inside. Every time she saw my husband doing even a tiny thing in the family, such as throwing out the rubbish, she was unhappy and asked me: ‘why do you ask him to do that?’ (With a serious face.) ‘He’s your husband, it’s your responsibility to deal with all things in the family.’ So when I ask my husband to give me a hand sometimes, he always complains that ‘my mum has never asked my father to do any housework in the family, why do I have to?’

Compared with these two grandmothers’ negative influence on the equal division of household labour within the family, a small number of participants agreed that the grandparents hold a neutral attitude towards their role as a wife and mother in the family, which means that they do not take women’s efforts at housework for granted, nor do they hold back the men from household chores. There were also indications that older generations with a better educational background (like high school or university) are more likely to have an egalitarian gender-role attitude.

To sum up, grandparents’ support is a doubled-edged sword; they help the women and provide support for childcare and housework, but also hinder things by keeping gender inequality going.

Doing gender: Negotiations about domestic work

After providing an insight into the division of housework for the 34 families, I come to the question of how a sense of fairness is constructed towards the attitudes of wives and husbands about domestic work and how the young generation of Chinese women negotiate the division of domestic labour with their husbands. The majority of participants did not consider the dual burden that is placed on women to be problematic or unfair. For example, Nannan said:

I am doing the things that a mother, a wife should do – doing daily

household chores, taking care of the child, looking after the old family members. I am trying to be a 'good wife', as I have been taught by my mum, am expected to be by my husband and even assumed to be by society.

Nannan's expression on the division of housework reflects the idea of 'doing gender', which was firstly conceptualised by West and Zimmerman in 1987. The term 'doing gender' refers to the process of performing gendered activities. It emphasises that gender is not a natural attribute of men and women, but a dynamic social construction and actions which are performed and enacted in various contexts (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Nannan's understanding of her gendered role in the family was based on her mother's teaching on wifeness as well as the expectations of her husband and the public. The dispositions acquired over the life-course are reinforced by a variety of ongoing cultural and social pressures, such as traditional gender ideology and gendered inequalities in the labour market. In other words, women's practices of domestic work and their attitudes towards it cannot only be viewed as individual behaviours, but are also shaped and developed through interactions in particular institutional settings, and individuals are evaluated by the norms that prevail in those settings (Nelson, 2006). Similarly, Jackson (2006) has indicated that gender is continually produced and reproduced by embodied individuals. Hence, women are encountering strong internal and external pressures to produce gender in their marriages.

People's behaviour cannot only be explained by the positions which they occupy in the social world; for example, being a woman or a mother. By contrast, the concept of negotiation suggests that individuals do have some room for manoeuvre (Finch and Mason, 1993). According to Finch and Mason (1993, p. 60), negotiation refers to 'the course of action which a person takes [that] emerges out of his or her interaction with other people.' In this study, the women did refer to negotiations on the distribution of domestic work, but the outcome

varied, which should also be considered as a way of ‘doing gender’ differently. The possibility of negotiation was based on the flexibility of division. For example, Dandan her husband worked in the same high school in Jilin, but they did not have an arrangement for cooking on a daily basis. Dandan explained:

Neither I nor my husband is taking charge of cooking dinner. We work in the same school, so generally I send a message in the afternoon to ask him does he have any ideas about dinner; if he wants to eat some dishes that I am good at, then I will cook the dinner, otherwise he does it. We may also choose to eat out or to call for food delivery if we are tired.

Not only did Dandan show flexibility in terms of who did the cooking, she held an open view on using outside resources, such as a delivery service, therefore freeing both of them from the work when necessary. The service-oriented economy has increased rapidly during the 21st century in China, such as breakfast services, food-delivery and hourly workers. To some extent the availability of outsourcing offers various options in negotiating domestic work. In Dandan’s case, ‘cooking’ is not a fixed task for a particular person, which means that neither she nor her husband has to do it. In this sense, on the one hand, Dandan was doing her gender role as a wife differently from the traditional notion that women were primarily responsible for cooking. On the other hand, even though Dandan may not necessarily need to do the cooking herself, she was still the person managing the cooking task, asking her husband’s opinion on the dinner, then arranging the dishes. However, the flexibility of this division of domestic labour implied that the division was negotiable, and thus adjustable and changeable.

Another example is, Bobo, a 25-year-old nurse in Jiaohe, who had gone through a negotiation process with noticeable results:

I did the majority of housework, including cooking, cleaning, and laundry, two years ago when we married, while my husband participated in wiping the table sometimes. Last year, our son was born, I feel exhausted with taking care of the baby, doing housework and working outside. So I talked with my husband, expressing how I felt, and proposed a new way of deciding the allocation of household tasks. We bought a devil's bones, we throw it every day in the morning, if it's an odd number, I will cook the meal, do the cleaning, if it's an even number, my husband will be responsible for these tasks. I feel it works really well, indeed changing the division of domestic labour in my family. It's a relaxing and interesting way to make a decision on housework though playing games. More importantly, it's a random choice which can be assumed to be a fair result, therefore no excuses or arguments would be acceptable. I have recommended the devil's bone to my friends and colleagues.

Bobo achieved a satisfactory result, which could also be seen as a successful negotiation of housework through employing the strategy of playing games. She was doing gender differently by breaking the gendered role assumption and ideology, putting men and women in an equal position in the allocation of household tasks. In other words, the idea of gender was taken out of the picture, rather than by leaving it to chance. Bobo's experience shows the importance of negotiation as a means through which family responsibility can be developed.

Unlike Bobo, Xi Xia's negotiation for the re-division of housework arrangements ended in failure. Xi Xia took responsibility for all the housework at the beginning, but started to challenge the arrangement after a while. She eventually raised the issue with her husband and expressed her intention to change the situation. An explicit negotiation was undertaken by Xi Xia, which was promoted by specific needs. However, her husband was still reluctant to share the housework responsibility. It was mentioned by respondents that it was useless to make any

efforts to push their husbands to get involved in the domestic work, because it ended in disappointing results.

According to Jackson's framework (2006, p. 114), individuals do gender in two senses. In the first, doing gender entails the production of 'a socially intelligible reality' through everyday interpretive interaction. In the second sense, doing gender entails actual practical activities which construct a gendered performance. In Nanan's case, she built the 'reality' of a gender role as a wife and mother through the interaction with her mother and through the expectations of her husband and the public. In the second sense, she took responsibility for household chores, childcare and elderly care, performing her gendered role by completing these housework activities. Bobo, meanwhile, was trying to do gender differently, which was also shaped by the conversation with her husband and her interactions with friends. In other words, she was active in working out her own course of action with reference to others. These cases imply that social interactions with others are important to practise, to negotiate and to fit into the ongoing housework activities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the meanings and practices of domestic labour in contemporary China. In line with previous research on the organisation of daily household chores and childcare activities, the data revealed that gender differences in domestic labour still persist. By drawing on the gender perspective, particularly the variety of work done by women, I argue that women's participation in domestic labour cannot just be explained by time availability and relative resources; it is less about what women do in families, and far more about the meaning of their participation and their attitudes towards the gendered division of domestic labour. The traditional gender ideology of 'male breadwinner, female carer' has been found to have a great influence on women's

attitudes to and practices of domestic labour. Women are practising their symbolic 'gender roles through the amount and type of housework they perform' (Bianchi et al., 2000, p. 194). In addition, a variety of work was done by wives, ranging from making a direct contribution to the men's occupations to giving moral support. They provide personal services according to men's requirements and preferences, freeing men from housework and prioritising men's careers. Domestic technology has been found not to change the gendered division of labour in families, but rather to have reinforced the unequal division of labour between women and men to some extent. Similarly, grandparents have been seen as hindering factors in relation to achieving an equal distribution of domestic labour, while at the same time they provide support for childcare and housework. While women tend to perform a larger share of the household chores, some also practised doing their gender differently by negotiating about the division of housework. However, the results of these negotiations varied. My data shows that women not only spend large amounts of time in household work, but also perform a variety of tasks according to men's or children's needs. This then raises the question: how do women manage these activities alongside their paid employment? In the next chapter, I will examine young women's experiences of coordinating childcare, filial obligations and paid work commitments by emphasising the daily journeys all family members make during a typical working day. By drawing on Skinner's (2003) framework, five case studies are used to provide detailed information on the range and complexity of the activities in which families are engaged around organising their work and care responsibilities.

Chapter Five Daily journeys: Coordinating work, care and education

Introduction

The female labour-force participation rate in China (percent of female population aged 15+) was 63.3 percent in 2016 (World Bank, 2016). In China, there is a high level of women's labour-force participation and 72 percent of mothers between 25 and 34 years of age with children under the age of six are employed (All-China Women's Federation, 2011). While most Chinese women, including mothers, actively participate in the paid labour market, traditional gender norms still place the majority of household and childrearing responsibilities on women. Yet, women now get less support from the Chinese government as a result of China's economic reforms, which cut back public and employer-provided care provision. Women's contributions to unpaid domestic labour have also not been taken into account in the design of the new emerging social security system (Cooke and Dong, 2011). These changes in the care economy resulting from policy reforms, alongside a demographic transition towards families with more elders, have intensified the tensions between women's dual roles as income earners and caregivers. Chinese women now face complex and contradictory challenges in the 21st century, particularly those younger generations who are the only child in the family, as they are expected to take care of four elders (parents and parents-in-law) after marriage. A large body of sociological literature on women's work and family life has thus focused on understanding their experiences of work-life conflict and assessing the amount of time spent on household chores and childcare. However, little is known about how paid work, care and children's education activities are coordinated in the everyday lives of Chinese families. As women take the majority of responsibility for housework and childcare, they are also most likely to be the ones involved in arranging and coordinating family activities and their use of services (childcare services, for example). Arranging can mean just sourcing the services on an individual basis (service by service), whereas adding in the word coordination also suggests that each service does not just need to be arranged, but they all need to be coordinated

together in a whole package for the family. Understanding how the demands of paid work and care work are reconciled in families is thus not simply a matter of counting the number of hours in the day that parents spend doing specific activities, but also requires an examination of how these activities are managed on an everyday basis. It is, therefore, important to consider the everyday routines operated by women (mothers) and other family members to try and expose these more taken-for-granted and hidden aspects of family life.

This chapter examines young women's experiences of coordinating their filial obligation alongside their childcare and paid-work commitments by focusing on the daily journeys made by all family members during a typical working day. It looks in detail at the practical arrangements by mapping out these journeys, counting how many people are involved in them, what time they take place and how they are coordinated. This information is necessary in order to understand the range and complexity of the activities in which families are engaged around organising their work and care responsibilities. In order to contextualise Chinese practices of coordination, the chapter therefore starts with a discussion on the gendered culture of filial obligation and Chinese parental investment in their children's education. The findings are then presented by providing contrasting examples of the daily journeys made by five families, with the aim of providing detailed information on the arrangements and strategies used by mothers to coordinate work, care and education.

Intergenerational obligations

Care exchanges across the generations based on cultural gendered norms and Confucianism are considered to be significant factors that influence women's daily lives and working arrangements. The cultural ideal of filial obligation has long been considered an important element holding together the Chinese familial system of care and intergenerational relationships (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003). Filial obligation, which is called *Xiao* in Chinese, refers to a concept that involves a wide range of behaviours, including children's respect, obedience and loyalty to their parents along with material provision and physical care for parents. The deeply rooted cultural belief of filial obligation contributes to

traditional values, which imply that children are raised to ensure security in old age; sons are particularly important for passing on the family name and providing both financial and physical care for older people (Ikels, 2004). Women are expected to take responsibility for caring for their parents-in-law when they marry into their husbands' families. According to Xia and Ma (1995), women are usually care providers for parents. Similarly, Ikels's (2004) study has found that daughters-in-law traditionally have the primary care responsibility for elderly parents-in-law in China, because married women are generally viewed as members of their husband's family, while in Western countries it is usually the daughters. In addition, sons are generally considered to be the financial providers. However, the economic reforms and 'open-door policy' have brought economic growth as well as cultural diversity, which have led to changes in elder-care practices. Specifically, research has shown that more elders received financial assistance from daughters as well as sons during the late 20th century (Pan, 2002). According to Zhan and Montgomery (2003), the increasing involvement of women in both physical and financial care for parents was a significant change in the practice of filial obligation.

As the younger generations have more opportunities to gain access to well-paid jobs and begin to be influenced by Western attitudes towards their elder-care responsibilities, the parent-child relationship has become more egalitarian in China (Sheng and Settles, 2006). Filial obligation not only encompasses physical and financial support from children, but also involves elders' help to the children and their families. The older generation tends to be seen by their adult children as an essential resource for daily help, including helping with housework and childcare (Sheng, 1991). Sheng and Settles (2006) suggest that two main considerations lead to parents' involvement in housework and childcare activities: 'should do something for children anyway, as retired' and 'reducing the children's burden'. Since the implementation of the one-child policy, grandparenting has become a significant form of intergenerational relationship in China as resources and attention are devoted to the only grandchild in the family. Chinese grandparents treat grandparenting as an exchange for help received from their children and a way to fulfil their potential and to enjoy family happiness, rather than as an extra burden of daily life (Sheng and Settle, 2006).

Intergenerational obligations and different exchanges of care up and down the generations include not only direct provision of care (childcare by grandparents and elder care by adult children) but also ‘caring about’ a child’s education.

Education possesses special meanings in Chinese values. On the one hand, it is regarded as an instrumental means to climb the social ladder. On the other hand, it fulfils two fundamental values: human malleability and self-improvement (Leung and Shek, 2011). To enable their children to attain better education is a significant task for parents in China, which is not easily fulfilled. Family investment and parental involvement in their child’s education are the two main aspects involved in parents’ contributions. Parental sacrifice is a central concept when considering parents’ contributions to their child’s education, giving up their personal needs or desires in order to satisfy the educational needs of their children (Leung and Shek, 2011). For example, parents need to mobilise various family resources, such as money, time and effort to meet their child’s educational requirements. In Chinese culture, parents are supposed to nurture their children unconditionally and be ready to ‘pay’ for the development of the child. In return, the child is expected to subordinate his/her personal interests and goals to the welfare of the family.

In recent years, due to rapid economic and social development, Chinese people are becoming richer, particularly in urban areas. People’s lives have moved from meeting basic necessities to seeking quality and relative comfort, and this is also reflected in the changes in parental investment in their child’s education. Currently, parents’ investments extend beyond learning activities in schools, to encompass extracurricular classes and various tutorial workshops. Xi, Sun and Xiao (2006) have found that children who engaged in extracurricular classes accounted for 75.5 percent of the total. Given this complexity, and the change in filial obligations, including an increased investment in children’s educational extracurricular activities, the question arises: how do working parents manage? How are all these arrangements for childcare and education organised and dovetailed together within families? The rest of this chapter presents five in-depth case studies to show how women in families manage to coordinate work, care and education and to show what is involved graphically by mapping out the

daily journeys of family members as they move from home to work, to school, to extracurricular activities and back home again. This gives an indication of the complexity involved in making sure childcare and work arrangements are dovetailed together effectively, which also reveals gender inequality. Before these cases are presented, it is important to discuss the analytical framework used for this part of the analysis.

Coordination: An analytical framework

Whilst a number of studies have been conducted on childcare and elderly care in China (Maurer-Fazio et al., 2011; Sheng and Settle, 2006; Zhang and Goza, 2006), none have focused on the ways in which women coordinate childcare and filial obligations alongside their work commitments. Skinner (2003) in the UK did explore this for childcare only, and she developed the particular analytical framework that is applied here.

Skinner (2003, p.11) developed the concept of ‘coordination points’, which captures ‘those times in the day when children need to be taken to and from different childcare/education settings.’ Exposing these kinds of routine arrangements highlights the mundanity of these activities and how they are often taken-for-granted aspects of family life, but the picking up and dropping off of children is vital to the successful management of care alongside work commitments. The ways in which Skinner (2003) was able to expose them was to examine in detail the number and types of daily journeys each family member makes in a typical working day.

She found that, for women using full-time childcare or education, at least two coordination points are involved each day: dropping the child off in the morning and picking the child up in the evening. In real-life examples, due to the mother’s work arrangements and family members’ availability, generally more coordination points are included. It is important to take into account both the

coordination points and the number of journeys, because even if the mother does not do the transporting herself, she often still takes full responsibility for arranging these journeys to ensure that various childcare and educational settings are dovetailed together (Skinner, 2003).

A mixture of strategies to manage coordination points were found in my interviews. As Skinner (2003) illustrates, the number of people involved, the number and ages of children in the family and the number of childcare providers used determines the complexity of the strategies for managing coordination points. Two key strategies are identified in my study: arranging formal support with coordination points and arranging informal support with coordination points. Formal support refers to paid child carers, such as childminders and nannies, while informal support is provided by family members and friends (Skinner, 2003). In order to give a picture of what is involved for the families in this study on a daily basis, four coordination points are described individually: morning, lunchtime, post-school, and evening.

The morning coordination point refers to the interface between home and nursery or school (Skinner, 2003). Among the 34 interviewed families in my study, 17 mothers regularly transported the child to and from nursery/school, as did four fathers, four grandparents and two other family members (see Table 4). Compared with other coordination points, less support was received in the morning. The majority of childcare services and schools open between 6:30am and 8am, which suits mothers' and fathers' normal working hours, which start at 8am. The main reason for needing support from grandparents and other family members included mothers starting work before formal childcare begins, such as teachers and journalists, or mothers and fathers being unable to manage the coordination point because of the long commuting distance from home to school and workplace. For those children aged up to three years who were taken care of by grandparents at home, there was no morning coordination point. No formal

support was received by interviewees in the morning.

Table 4. Persons providing informal and formal support with daily coordination points

| Informal/formal support | Number of people at the daily coordination points | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------|-------------|---------|
| | Morning | Lunchtime | Post-school | Evening |
| Mother | 17 | 4 | 8 | 10 |
| Father | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Paternal grandparents | 2 | 5 | 6 | 2 |
| Maternal grandparents | 2 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Other family members | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Childminders | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Nannies | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Mother/father+ grandparents | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Mother+ father | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Others* | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| N/A | 5 | 15 | 5 | 8 |

*Others include children travelling on their own, an aunt and a sister-in-law.

The lunchtime coordination point mainly occurred for children in primary and secondary school, as a lunch service is provided in nurseries in China; therefore, the lunchtime point is applicable to 19 families in this study. Some eight grandparents were responsible for transporting the child during lunchtime, while the number of mothers and fathers was four and one, respectively (see Table 4). The limited lunch break for working mothers and the long journey between the workplace and the school led to a reliance on grandparents for lunchtime coordination. In two cases, other family members were involved in the lunchtime coordination, one was the mother's elder sister and one was the wife of the father's brother. Generally, mothers said they preferred assistance from grandparents. However, when the grandparents are unavailable for some reason, such as a health problem, living in a different city or personal unwillingness to offer support, mothers seek help from other relatives. The four marked as others in Table 4 include two older children (aged 12 and 13) in secondary schools walked by themselves between home and school and two families used lunch

delivery services. This service is provided by small private restaurants. The reasons for choosing this service included: the unavailability of parents or family members during lunchtime, the lack of lunch services at the school, and a preference for a wide range of lunch selections for the child. Similar to the morning point, no formal support was involved at lunchtime.

The post-school coordination point refers to the interface between school and after-school care (Skinner, 2003). The greatest amount of support was received at this time: 11 grandparents helped with picking up children from nurseries and schools; a childminder was used in three cases; three other family members and one nanny were also involved at the post-school point. So we can see that a mixture of informal and formal support was used at the post-school point. For the informal support, grandparents generally picked up the child from the nursery/school, then either returned to their own home to wait for the mother to come back or took the child to his/her own home directly. Grandparents played a significant role in providing support for those mothers who finished work later than the child left nursery/school on weekdays. In addition, formal support was considered when the grandparents and other relatives were unavailable. In two cases, when classes were over, the teachers were responsible for taking the children from their classroom to study clubs or training sessions within the school.

The evening coordination point occurs when children are picked up from school and/or from the childcare provider and taken home after the parents have finished work. Ten mothers took responsibility for picking the child up after work. In seven families, the mother and the father collected the child together in the evening, mostly from the grandparents' home. In four other cases, the grandparents provided support for transporting the child in the evening.

Overall, among these 34 families, mothers were usually the people who arranged

the coordination points as well as transporting the child on a daily basis. Informal support from family members, particularly from grandparents, played a more important role in coordination than formal support, which is mainly provided by childminders. In addition, informal support was received for all the types of coordination points, including morning, lunchtime, post-school and evening, while the greatest amount of formal support was received at the post-school point. In addition, the lunchtime coordination point only applied to families with children in primary or secondary school, since generally lunch is provided for children in nurseries in China. The post-school coordination point was one of the most difficult points to deal with, due to the gap between mothers' working hours and the school/nursery's education times. Some respondents also reported that they were troubled by the lunchtime coordination point as they could not get anybody to help at lunchtime. Moreover, the parents with children under nursery age received the greatest amount of support from others, because no official childcare services are provided for this group of children, aged up to three years, in China.

Based on this framework of coordination points, I will firstly show what families in the whole sample were doing, before providing five case studies in-depth (see Table 5). The sample included 32 married women and two divorced mothers. There were 30 families with one child, two families with two children and two single mothers with one child. The children ranged from newborns to secondary-school children aged 13. Due to the importance of the involvement of elders, this table also summarises the number of elders in the family. There were 27 families with two paternal grandparents and two maternal grandparents while seven families reported fewer than four elders due to illness or accident.

Table 5. Family characteristics of respondents

| Number of families | |
|--|----|
| Marital status | |
| • Married | 32 |
| • Lone parent | 2 |
| Number of children in the family | |
| • 1 | 30 |
| • 2 | 4 |
| Age of children in the family | |
| • aged three or less | 10 |
| • in nursery | 3 |
| • in primary school | 10 |
| • in secondary school | 4 |
| Number of families with four elders | 27 |
| Number of families with fewer than four elders | 7 |
| • Total number of families | 34 |

Based on this framework of coordination points, five case studies are presented. Each one diagrammatically maps out the family members' daily journeys and helps to expose the more hidden strategies used to reconcile work and family life. The analysis also extends the mapping of journeys into the weekends, thus going further than Skinner (2003), in order to develop a more holistic picture of the rhythms of journeys across work time and non-work time.

Case studies

Five cases were chosen for this chapter to show exactly what is involved for parents in getting themselves to and from work and transporting their children to and from care and education, as well as their arrangements at weekends.

According to Seawright and Gerring (2008), random sampling is not a viable approach for case selections when the total number of cases to be selected is small. As such, I adopted purposive modes of sampling for the case studies.

Seawright and Gerring (2008) state that the chosen case is required to stand for or represent a population of cases. My choice of cases is therefore driven by the

way in which a case is situated along the various dimensions of the participant characteristics. The first two cases were selected as traditional families, with the focus on showing how the young mothers' labour-market conditions influenced their daily journeys. The next three case studies are recognised as non-traditional families, highlighting different and less traditional gendered divisions of labour within the family.

In summary, two traditional families, one split-residence family, one step-family and one lone-parent family were chosen for the case studies. They included women in three locations: Jilin, Changchun and Jiaohe; women with one child and those with two children, in nursery, primary school and secondary school. These case studies reveal the different rhythms of family life and the operation of childcare and filial obligations. They illustrate useful variations in women's employment conditions, different patterns in the gendered division of labour and the consequences of these for arranging the daily journeys, but they also reflect diverse strategies for coordinating work, care and education.

Two traditional cases

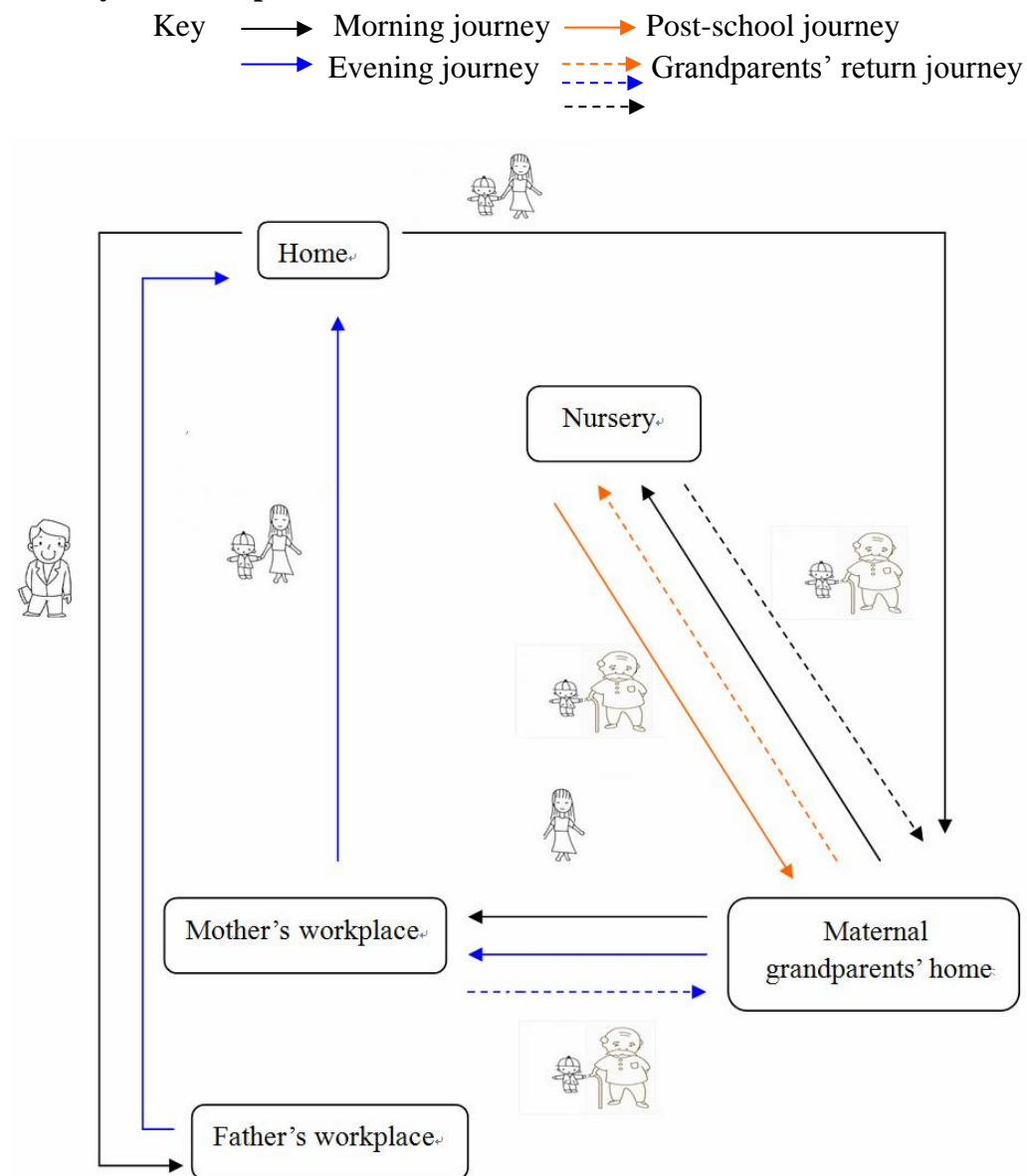
Case study 1: Huihui

Huihui is a 30-year-old, full-time primary school teacher in Jilin. She has a son aged four years and her husband is a full-time marketing assistant in a bank. This family has a typical set of arrangements for work and childcare on during weekdays. This can be seen in Figure 4. In total, 16 journeys occur during a typical working day; six of them are made by the grandparent, three by the mother, two by the father and five by the child. Three coordination points are identified in this case study: morning coordination point, post-school coordination point and evening coordination point.

At the *morning coordination point*, Huihui drives the child to the maternal

grandparents' home at 7am. She then leaves the maternal grandparents' home and travels to her workplace; the journey takes around 25 minutes. The child is taken by the grandfather (the grandmother is at home) to the nursery at 8.30am. Huihui is unable to manage this coordination point as her work starts at 7.45am, 45 minutes earlier than the opening time of the nursery. There is no lunchtime coordination point for Huihui, because the nursery provides childcare service between 8.30am and 4pm (including lunch), which is common in government childcare centres in China. At the *post-school coordination point*, the grandfather takes responsibility for collecting the child from the nursery at 4pm and looks after the child at his home until 4.50pm. When it comes to the *early-evening coordination point*, he walks the child to meet the mother at her office at 5pm, with the aim of saving the transportation time between the mother's workplace and the grandparents' home. The mother then drives the child from the workplace to her home. In this case, the father does two journeys on weekdays, one from home direct to his workplace in the morning and one back from his workplace to home in the evening. He is completely uninvolved in the daily journeys for childcare.

Figure 4. The daily journey made by Huihui’s family to and from home, nursery and workplace



In addition to the daily journey, Table 6 shows Huihui’s daily time arrangements; she works for 7.5 hours each day, and spends 65 minutes on travelling between home, the grandparent’s home and the workplace. It takes the same amount of time for her to do housework, including cooking dinner, cleaning and doing the laundry. In addition, Huihui has approximately 1.5 family hours each day, generally involving family dinner time and evening story time with the child. One hour has been allocated for leisure and relaxing in the evening before going to sleep, and involves activities such as running, online shopping, reading or

watching TV.

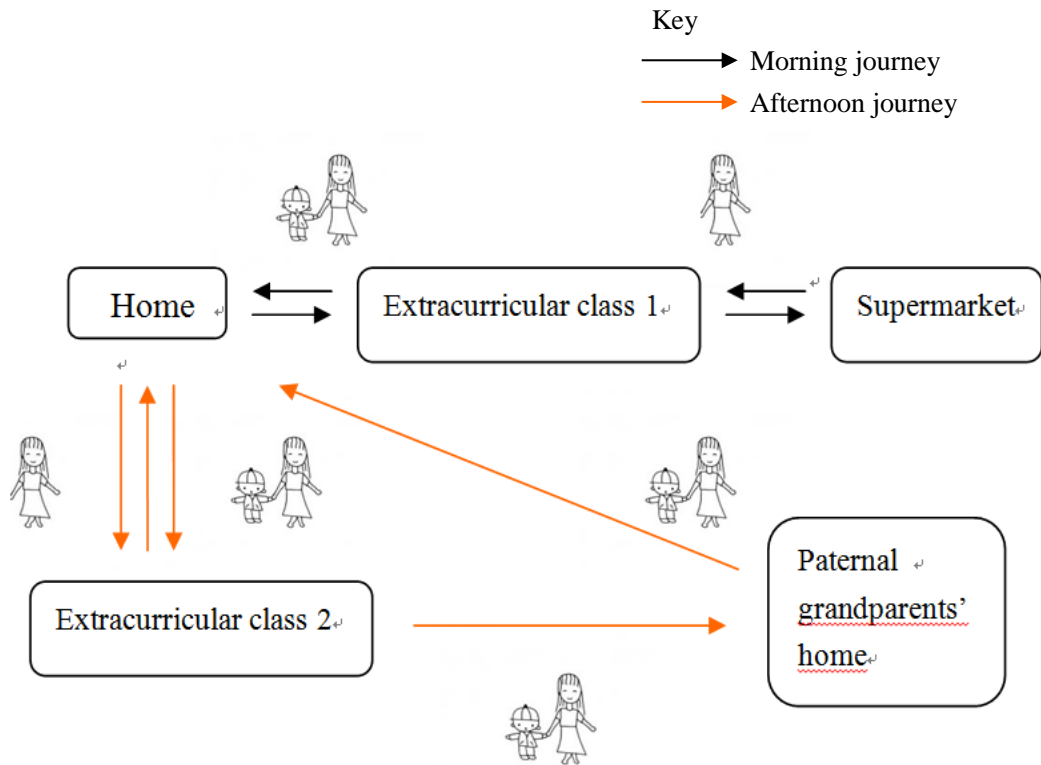
Table 6. Huihui's daily time arrangements

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 6.30am | Get up, help child wash and dress |
| 7.00am-7.05am | Home to parents' home (5 minutes driving) |
| 7.10am-7.35am | Parents' home to workplace (25 minutes driving) |
| 7.35am-7.45am | Breakfast (eating in organisation's canteen) |
| 7.45am-11.50am | Working |
| 12pm-1.30pm | Lunch break |
| 1.30pm- 5pm | Working |
| 5.10pm | Pick up child from parents (meet in mother's office) |
| 5.15pm -5.50pm | Workplace to home (35 minutes driving) |
| 5.55pm-6.25 pm | Cooking dinner |
| 6.30pm-7pm | Family dinner time |
| 7pm-7.20pm | Cleaning, washing dishes |
| 7.20pm-8.30pm | Playing and story time with child |
| 8.30pm-9pm | Housework |
| 9pm-10pm | Leisure time (running/online shopping/ reading/watching TV) |
| 10.10pm | Sleep |

Huihui's weekend journey is mapped in Figure 5 and reflects a different routine from weekdays. Her journeys on Saturday and Sunday are mapped together in Figure 5, as she has the same routines on these two days. In total, nine journeys are made by Huihui, going to and from the child's extracurricular training classes, the supermarket and her parents-in-law's home, whilst five journeys are made by the child. More specifically, in the morning, Huihui takes the child to an extracurricular class; during the two-hour class session, she goes to the supermarket, shopping for food and all the necessary things for the family, then she returns to the extracurricular class to pick up the child, then they go back

home together. Huihui does five journeys in the afternoon; taking the child from home to another extracurricular class, returning home herself and back to the extracurricular class to pick up the child, then leaving from the extracurricular class to her parents-in-law's home and then back their own place in the evening.

Figure 5. Huihui's weekend journey



When she was asked the reason for choosing these extracurricular classes, Huihui said:

My son is four years old, and has not yet started school, I chose the 'Handwriting' and 'Taekwondo' courses for him, because the 'Handwriting' may help him to build a good habit of writing and will prepare him for the first year studying at primary school. Generally, the children are asked to learn to recognise and write words through playing games and doing activities in the course. For the 'Taekwondo', he is more likely to become a strong boy through doing the basic exercises and enhancing his sports abilities. I think it's really common for Chinese parents to send their children

to extracurricular classes, whether to enhance abilities or to cultivate tastes.

Compared with the journeys on weekdays, the weekend journeys are more complex and the coordination points cannot just be divided based on the time arrangements for childcare. Huihui does six more journeys on weekend days than weekdays, without any support from grandparents or the father. In addition to childcare, Huihui takes the child to visit the parents-in-law at weekends. Through this arrangement, she is also involved in providing elderly care as she helps the paternal grandparents to do some housework, such as cooking and cleaning. Huihui describes the weekend arrangement at her parents-in-law's home:

It's more like family time, for us to get together, especially for the older people to see their grandson, having an opportunity to communicate with each other. I think it's a way to practise filial obligation.

Huihui describes her husband's activities at the weekend:

He generally does whatever he likes at the weekend, sometimes hanging out with friends, going to the gym or doing various outdoor activities, occasionally visiting his parents. Even though he is at home and has nothing to do, I still can't leave my son with him, I don't know why, it may be because I don't think he is as cautious as me, I'm a bit worried that he can't care for the child well, so I take all the responsibility for taking care of my son, sending him to the extracurricular classes at weekends.

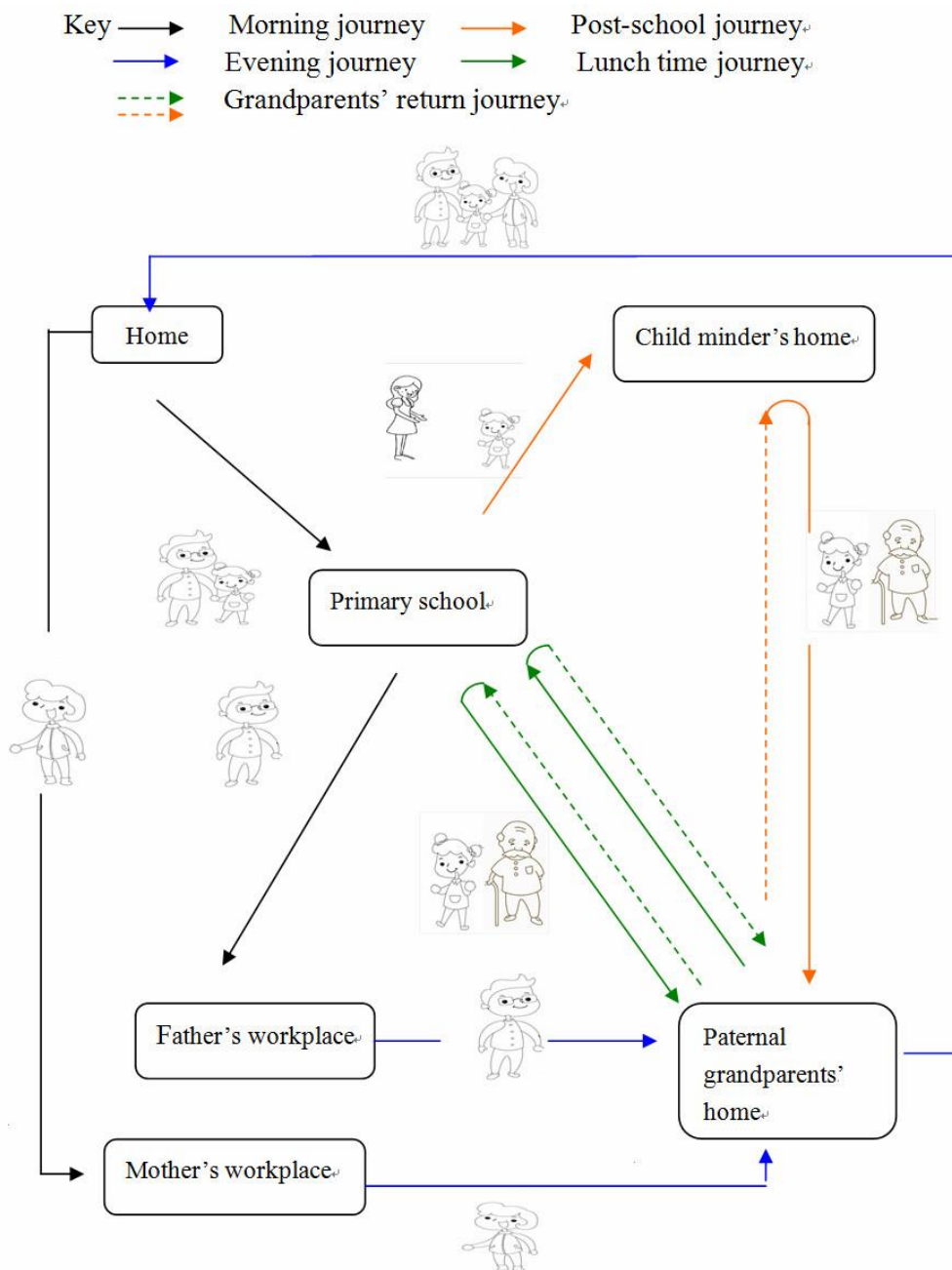
Huihui's family is seen as a traditional family: two adults and one child. They also have a typical arrangement for the daily journeys between home, workplace and nursery. Huihui's family relies on the maternal grandparents' assistance for transporting the child after school on weekdays. Moreover, in order to have some three-generation family time and to practise filial obligation, Huihui visits the

paternal grandparents at weekends, which is common for young women who live in the same city as their parents-in-law. Compared with Huihui's tight schedule and various responsibilities for childcare and filial obligation, the husband is not involved in daily childcare or even the arrangements at weekends. This reflects a traditional unequal division of domestic labour within the family, in which the father appears to have no sense of responsibility. In the next case study, however, the father shares at least some of the responsibility to coordinate childcare and work arrangements with the mother.

Case study 2: Lili

Lili is a 33-year-old doctor who works in a local hospital in Jilin. She has a ten-year-old daughter, studying in a primary school. Lili's husband runs his own business, involving building operations. As we can see from Figure 6 and Table 7, 13 daily journeys are made by all the family members going to and from work and childcare on weekdays: all 13 of these are made by the adults whilst six journeys are made by the child. At the *morning coordination point*, the father leaves home with the child and takes her to school first and then travels to work by car, while the mother walks directly to her workplace. The factors that contribute to the father's involvement in the morning coordination point include: the mother's early work time and night-shift schedule, the father's flexible working hours, and shorter distance from the primary school to his workplace than the mother's. At the *lunchtime coordination point*, the arrangement is supported by the paternal grandparents. The child is collected by her grandfather from the primary school at 11.40am. It takes 15 minutes for the grandfather and the child to walk to the grandparents' home, where they have lunch, which has been prepared by the grandmother, when they arrive at 11.55am. After having lunch and a 20-minute break, the grandfather takes the child from home back to the primary school, arriving there at 12.45pm. The grandparents play key roles in supporting Lili to coordinate childcare and work arrangements for the *lunchtime coordination point*.

Figure 6. The daily journey made by Lili's family to and from home, nursery and workplace



The grandfather is responsible for transporting the child to and from primary school, while the grandmother cooks lunch for the child. Lili says:

It is really important for the grandparents to help with the childcare during my daughter's lunch break, they save my life, otherwise I don't know how I would deal with it, because I'm working as frontline staff in the hospital

which means I have just 30 minutes lunch break, so it's impossible for me to manage childcare for lunchtime. My daughter's school has a canteen, providing lunch boxes. But they only have limited choices, including a lot of junk food, even though it's relatively cheap, I prefer the healthy food cooked at home. If the grandparents are not available for preparing lunch and transporting my daughter between school and their home, I think I have to ask my child to eat in the canteen. Again, I really appreciate the grandparents' help and support. In addition, my daughter is just 10 years old, I am a bit worried for leaving her alone for lunch. My husband runs his own business and usually has different schedules on weekdays, therefore he is unable to guarantee the time for childcare".

At the *post school coordination point*, arrangements are more complicated. The childminder collects the child from school at 3.30pm and takes her to her home, supervising homework for an hour. Then the grandfather walk to the childminder's home and takes the child back to his home to care for her until her parents return from work. Lili leaves from her workplace to walk to the grandparents' home at 4.30 pm. Then she shares the responsibility for cooking dinner with her mother-in-law. The father returns to the grandparents' home by car at around 5pm. After having dinner together, Lili spends 30 minutes cleaning. At the *early-evening coordination point*, Lili's husband drives the child and Lili home at 6pm.

When it came to Lili's reliance on the paternal grandparents and childminder for the child's daily arrangement, she said:

I'm a doctor, we have a complex work schedule. Generally, I have to take two night shifts per week and my regular working day is nine hours, from 7am to 4.30pm, which is a bit different from the normal working hours in China. I have to say my work commitments really influence my family life

and arrangements. For example, I can't take my daughter to school in the morning due to my early working time. It's particularly difficult when I'm on nights; if my husband is on a business trip, I have to make another arrangement for my daughter, such as sending her to her grandparents' house.

In addition to the daily journeys, Table 6 provides more detailed information about Lili's daily time arrangements; she works for 9 hours each day, and spends 50 minutes on travelling between home, her workplace and the grandparents' home. It takes 75 minutes for her to do housework, including cooking dinner and cleaning in the grandparents' home and doing the laundry for her own family.

Lili explains:

I feel that I'm lucky, my husband shares the responsibility of coordinating childcare and work arrangements with me, particularly in the morning, and the grandparents fill in the gaps at lunchtime and post-school collection. But I still need to make a lot effort to arrange all the schedules for everyone involved in the daily journey, making sure the journeys are accurately connected with each other with the minimum of difficulty for my daughter.

Table 7. Lili's daily time arrangements

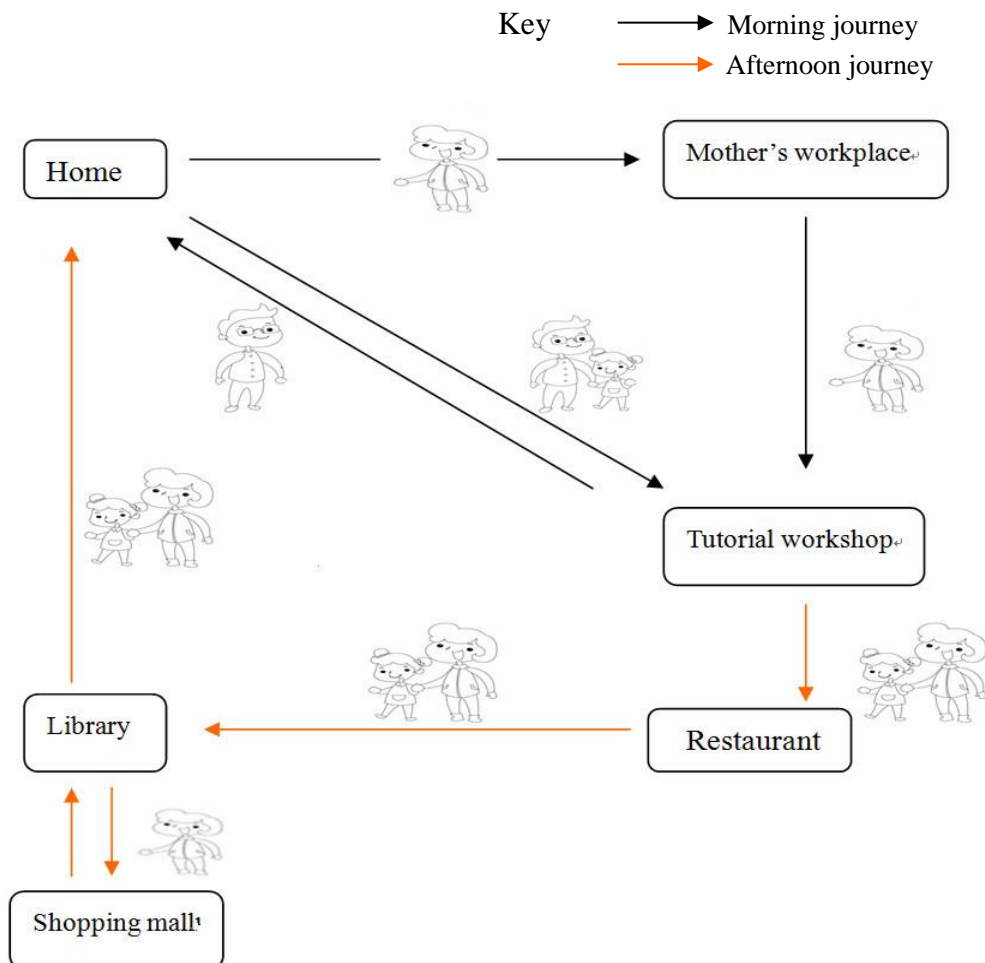
| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 6.30am-6.50am | Get up and wash |
| 6.50am-7.10am | Breakfast (take away/prepared by husband) |
| 7.10am-7.30am | Home to workplace (20 minutes walking) |
| 7.30am-8.00am | Prepare for work (change clothes, meeting with colleagues) |
| 8.00am-11.30am | Working |
| 11:30am-12.00pm | Lunch break (lunch provided by organisation) |
| 12.00pm-4.30pm | Working (sometimes overtime work) |
| 4.30pm-4.45pm | Workplace to grandparents' home (15 minutes walking) |
| 4.45pm-5.00pm | Cooking dinner (share with mother-in-law) |
| 5.00pm-5.30pm | Family dinner time |
| 5.30pm-6.00pm | Cleaning |
| 6.00pm-6.15pm | Grandparents' home to home (15 minutes driving) |
| 6.30pm-8.00pm | Review and help with child's homework |
| 8.00pm-9.00pm | Watching TV (whole family together) |
| 9.00pm-10.00pm | Shower, doing laundry |
| 10.00pm-10.30pm | Relax |
| 10.30pm | Sleep |

It can be seen from Figure 7 that 12 journeys are made by the family members at weekends. In the morning, the father makes two journeys, taking the child from home to the tutorial workshop and returning home himself. As a clinic doctor, Lili has three hours of work on Saturdays; she firstly goes to her workplace and then picks up the child after she finishes work. In the afternoon, Lili makes five journeys, from the tutorial workshop to a restaurant for lunch (the father does not join them for lunch), then from the restaurant to the library where her daughter studies for 2.5 hours. During the studying period, Lili generally goes to a shopping mall, shopping with friends or having coffee, then she goes back to the library to pick up her child and they go home together.

Lili is generally free from filial obligations at weekends as she is involved in cooking dinner and cleaning in the paternal grandparents' home on weekdays. At the same time, the weekend is also treated as a weekly 'holiday' for the grandparents. Lili said:

I would say I'm free from helping my parents-in-law at the weekend. However, to be honest, I think the weekend is more like free time for the grandparents, which means that they don't need to help with transporting and taking care of the child as well as cooking dinner for us. I believe the current arrangement at weekends is the best choice for all of us, to have a rest and some private time and space.

Figure 7. Lili's weekend journey



In this case, the paternal grandparents' home is the focal point for the family

during the week, rather than Lili's own home. On weekdays, the child has lunch at her grandparents' home and Lili and her husband return to the grandparents' home for dinner in the evening with their daughter and the grandparents. They socialise and interact at mealtimes, which have been viewed as an essential part of family life. In addition, Lili's assistance in preparing dinner and cleaning is also a way of practising filial obligation. Lili's husband is relatively active in helping to take care of the child both on weekdays and at weekends as he fills the gaps that arise in the mornings when the mother has to travel to work.

Summary

More specifically, case study one shows a full-time primary-school teacher's experiences of coordinating paid work and care for her child aged four years, who attends nursery, and her filial obligations. In this case, the father was not involved in the daily journeys for childcare while the grandparents provided essential support for childcare on weekdays. Case study two provides detailed information about a full-time doctor's daily time arrangements for work and education for her primary-school-age child and her filial obligations, which are achieved with assistance from a childminder and the paternal grandparents. Having explored the women's and their family members' daily journeys in two traditional families, I will now turn to three non-traditional cases. Case study three shows the daily journeys of a full-time marketing manager who lives separately from her nine-year-old daughter. Case study four describes the daily journeys for a step-family with two children, one in nursery and one in secondary school. In this case, the mother is a full-time worker in a power company. Case study five presents details of a single mother's daily life; she is a full-time civil servant with a 12-year-old daughter.

Three non-traditional cases

Case study 3: Feifei

Feifei is a full-time marketing manager in a chemical organisation in Changchun. She has a nine-year-old daughter studying in a primary school. Feifei's husband is a senior lecturer at a university. Feifei's family has a different daily arrangement from other respondents in this study. On weekdays, Feifei lives alone with her husband while her daughter lives with the family of her aunt (who is Feifei's younger sister). At weekends, Feifei and her husband pick up their daughter from the aunt's home on Saturday morning and take her back on Sunday evening. Feifei told me:

As a marketing manager, I'm really busy with my work, I can't guarantee the time to pick up my child from school, supervise homework or cook dinner for her. I feel that I'm not able to look after my child well without influencing the commitment to my work, because I'm generally involved in business dinners or extra work out of office hours. And my husband also has a tight schedule for his research and teaching at the university; he often travels to other cities for conferences and events. So we decided to let my daughter live with my sister. My sister is two years younger than me and she is a housewife, her daughter is the same age as mine and they study at the same primary school, so it's convenient for her to take care of these two girls at the same time. I have a close relationship with my sister, and she's happy to help me take care of my child. Her husband, who is a customer-service coordinator in an organisation, also has a positive attitude about having my child in his family, because these two girls can grow up together and accompany each other, which is a good thing for the one-child family. I also give my sister 2500 RMB (£250) every month, it's not like a payment from employer to employee, it's used to cover the daily expenses for

my daughter. When it comes to the main festivals or someone's birthday, I will buy some gifts or give extra money to my sister's family. We're more like a big family, we help and support each other. I enjoy the feeling of being a member of the big family. Another thing is, I trust relatives rather than strange nannies, but my parents passed away many years ago and my parents-in-law live in a city far from here, so the older people are not available to support me. Therefore, I think the current arrangement is the best choice.

As we can see from Figure 8 and Table 8, two separate daily journeys are made by Feifei's extended family to and from home, primary school and workplace. One journey is made by Feifei and her husband to and from their workplace. The other journey is made by the aunt between her home and the primary school. More specifically, Feifei wakes up at 7am; after 20 minutes' washing and making up, she walks to the open market to buy breakfast, then returns home to have breakfast with her husband. Feifei travels to work by car at 7.55am, arriving at her workplace at 8.15am. Officially, she works for 7.5 hours per day and should be finished at 5pm. However, Feifei generally cannot finish her work on time. She explained:

I work long hours, it's really difficult for me to stick to the 7.5 working hour schedule. As a marketing manager, I'm responsible for networking with a range of stakeholders including customers, colleagues and suppliers, so I could say I'm preparing or planning to work at any time. Generally I finish my work at 7pm, sometimes having dinner with colleagues or completing tasks in the office that can't be done during working hours.

After finishing all her work, Feifei goes to the gym for one hour's exercise. As she said:

I've been working for a long time during the day, it's stressful, I want to have

a relaxing time at the end of the day. At the same time, I want to be a healthy and beautiful mom as well as an office lady, so keeping fit is really important.

Feifei leaves the gym to travel home at 8.30pm, then she has one hour of free time to talk with her daughter on the phone and watch TV with her husband. In this case, only four journeys are made by the aunt to and from primary school. At the *morning coordination point*, she walks to the primary school with her daughter and Feifei's daughter at 7.35am and then returns home by herself. There is no *lunchtime coordination point* in this case. Feifei said:

My sister prepares lunch boxes for the two girls in the morning, and the primary school provides facilities to heat them up, so they have lunch at school. For one thing, it saves time and energy for transportation between home and school. And also, the children actually prefer to have lunch at school, so they can join in with lunchtime clubs or sports activities.

At the *post-school coordination point*, the aunt collects the children from school at 4pm, arriving home at 4.20pm. In total, seven journeys are made by Feifei and her husband going to and from work on weekdays. The aunt takes all the responsibility for childcare, involving four journeys between home and primary school each day.

Figure 8. The daily journey made by Feifei's family to and from home, primary school and workplace

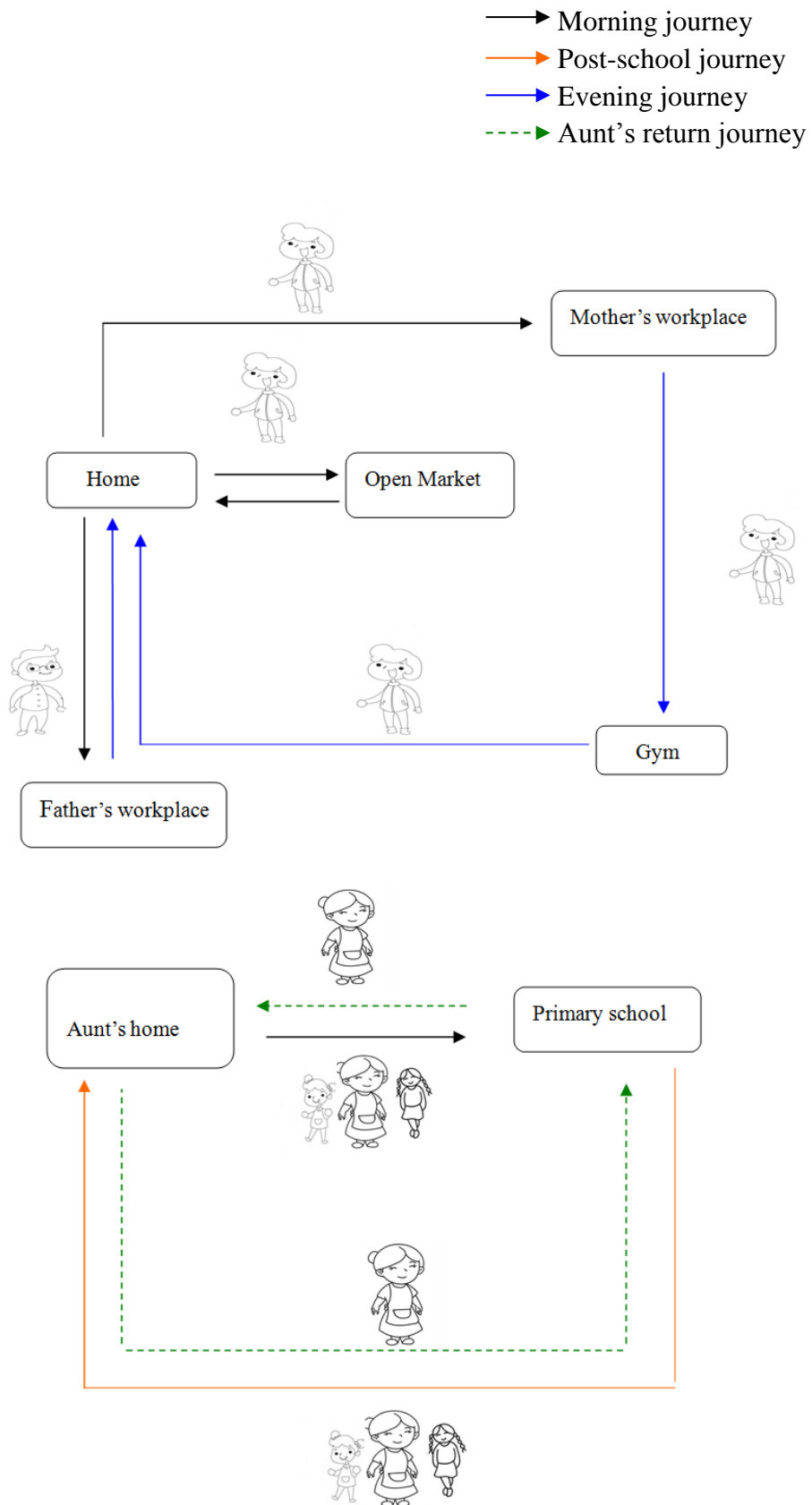


Table 8. Feifei's daily time arrangements

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 7am-7.20am | Get up and wash |
| 7.20am-7.35am | Buy breakfast at open market |
| 7.35am-7.50 am | Breakfast |
| 7.55am-8.15am | Home to workplace (20 minutes driving) |
| 8.30am-11.30am | Working |
| 11.30am-1pm | Lunch break |
| 1pm- 5pm | Working |
| 5pm-7pm | Work overtime/business dinner/Eating out with friends (Flexible) |
| 7pm -8.30pm | Gym |
| 8.30pm-8.40pm | Gym to home (10 minutes driving) |
| 8.50pm-10pm | Call daughter, watching TV, sharing daily life with husband |
| 10.10pm | Sleep |

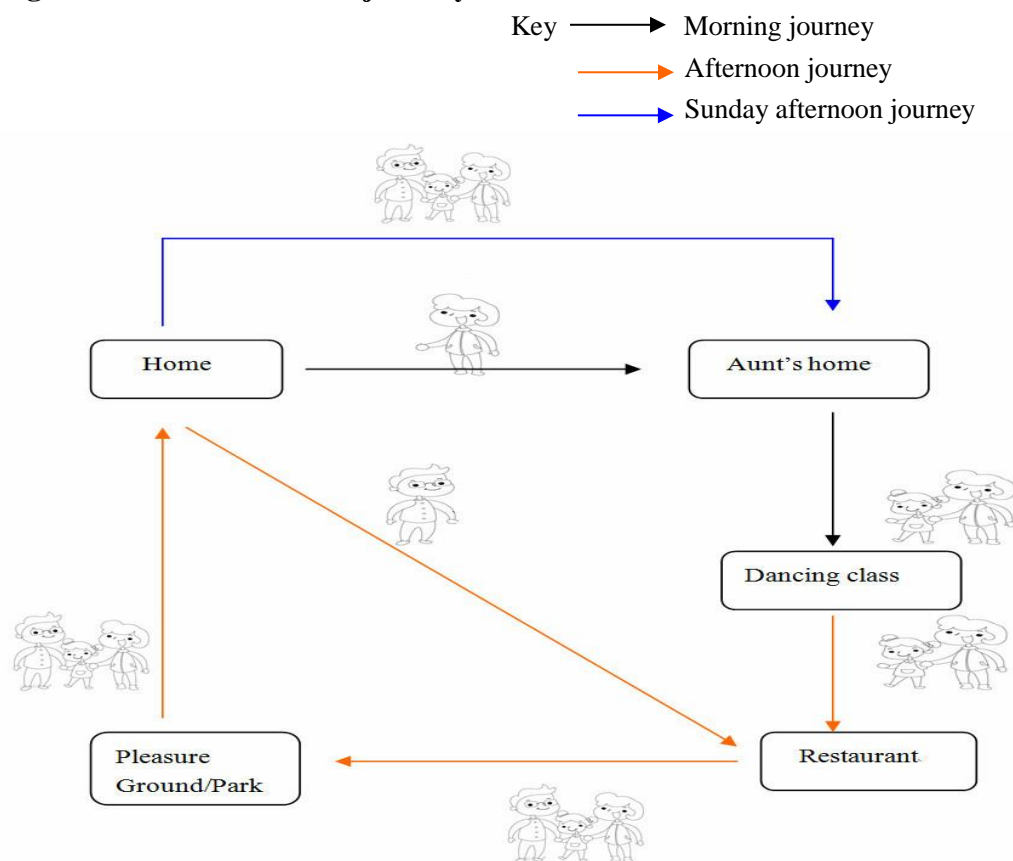
Weekend journeys are described in Figure 9. Altogether, 15 journeys are made by the family members at weekends: six journeys are made by the mother, four by the father and five by the child. On Saturday morning, Feifei makes two journeys, going to the aunt's home to pick up the child and then taking her to a dance class. After the 1.5-hour dance class, she takes the child to a restaurant where they meet the father, then they have a family lunch. In the afternoon, Feifei and her husband take the child to a pleasure ground or park, having around three hours parent-child time. They go to their own home instead of the aunt's home with the child in the evening on Saturday. Feifei's family has a similar arrangement on Sunday, with one extra journey made by Feifei and her husband in the afternoon from their home to the aunt's home. Feifei said:

I try my best to fit in the weekend schedule, if anything happens, generally I will tell my assistant to deal with it, because I only have two days each week

to be with my daughter – to be a mum. Actually, when my daughter is on holiday, my husband is generally also on his holiday (because he works at the university), so at this time, he is responsible for taking care of the child, cooking lunch, supervising homework and travelling to other cities or countries.

Here we see how Feifei protects the weekend as family time, and it seems they do not have any filial obligations at the weekends. But it also shows how responsibility for care of the child shifts across weekdays and weekends and at different times of the year. The father takes responsibility for caring for the child during school holidays. It appears that these parents tend to share the childcare more equally between them at the weekends and during holidays than other parents. In the next example, case study four, the mother is more explicit about the principles of equality she wants to have with her husband.

Figure 9. Feifei’s weekend journey



Case study 4: Yueyue

This example refers to Yueyue, who is a 35-year-old full-time worker in a power company in Jilin. She has a son aged six years and a stepdaughter aged 13 years. Yueyue's husband works full time for a private company as an engineer. Yueyue told me:

My family is different from others, it's maybe a bit complex. My husband is seven years older than me. He got divorced from his ex-wife 10 years ago, and we've been married for eight years. Now there are four members in my family: me, my husband, my son and the stepdaughter. My husband's ex-wife lives in the same city, my husband still has some interactions with her about their daughter's study and life, but I'm not involved in that. Generally, I could say everything is OK in my family; I get along well with my stepdaughter, haven't got any conflicts or trouble with the ex-wife. However, I am still cautious and sensitive about the multi-line relationship in my family, I need to figure out what is my responsibility and when should I provide space for my husband and the stepdaughter to make them more comfortable when connecting with the ex-wife.

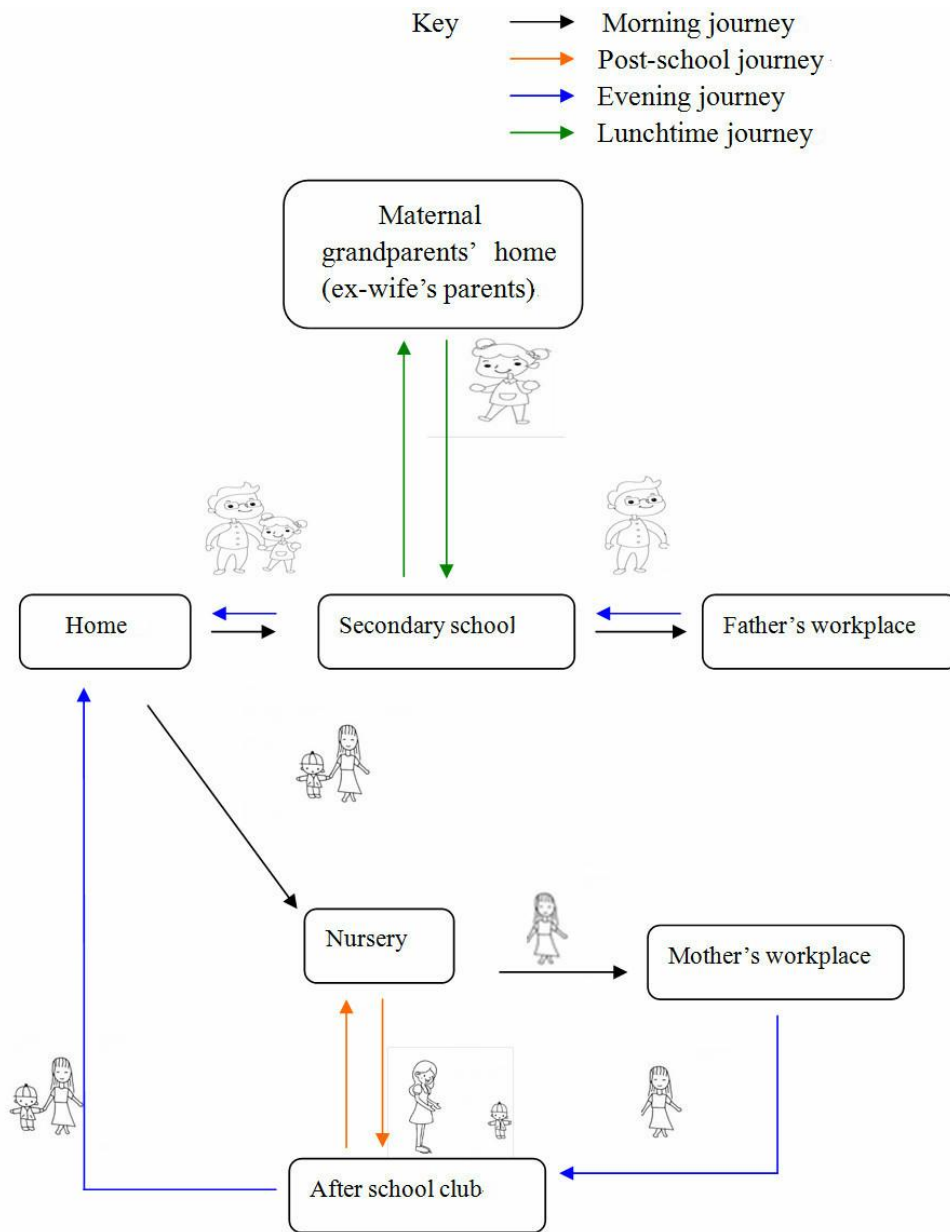
As can be seen in Figure 10, in total, 17 journeys are made by Yueyue's family to and from home, nursery, secondary school and workplace. More specifically, the mother makes four journeys, the father makes four journeys, the after-school club teacher makes two journeys and the numbers for the daughter and the son are four and three, respectively. At the *morning coordination point*, four journeys occur daily; Yueyue takes her son from home to the nursery at 7.45am first and then she walks to her workplace. Her husband makes two journeys in the morning, from home to the secondary school and from the secondary school to his workplace.

At the *lunchtime coordination point*, there is no particular arrangement for the son, because lunch is provided by the nursery. For the daughter, the arrangement is supported by the maternal grandparents, who are the parents of the ex-wife. The daughter walks to the maternal grandparents' home at 11.45am by herself, the journey takes around 10 minutes. After having lunch, she returns to the secondary school by herself at 12.30pm.

The son participates in an after-school club run by the nursery on another campus. At the *post-school coordination point*, he is collected by the club teacher from the nursery at 3.30pm, then has two hours learning, extracurricular training or sports activities until the mother finishes work and picks him up at 5.15pm. When it comes to the *evening coordination point*, Yueyue's husband makes two journeys, from the workplace to the secondary school to pick up his daughter and from the secondary school to home, while Yueyue is responsible for collecting son from the club, then walking home. Yueyue mentioned:

I spend a long time to think about which is the best way to organise our daily arrangements. I have some principles, firstly, I ask my husband to share the responsibility with me, we have two children in the family, I cannot manage all the things by myself, Actually, he understands that and does well, maybe because, to some extent, he feels sorry both for me and for my stepdaughter for putting us in such a situation. Secondly, I make the same amount of effort to take care of both children. For example, for dinner, I usually cook one dish that my son likes and another dish that is my stepdaughter's favourite (laughing). My parents moved to another city to help with childcare for my brother last year, so we don't rely much on older people, my stepdaughter's school is close to her own grandparents' home, so she goes there for lunch.

Figure 10. The daily journey made by Yueyue’s family to and from home, nursery, secondary school and workplace



In addition to the daily journey, Table 9 shows Yueyue’s daily time arrangements; she works for 7.5 hours each day, and spends 40 minutes travelling between home, workplace and after-school club. In addition, it takes 95 minutes for her to do housework, including cooking breakfast and dinner, cleaning and doing the laundry. Yueyue shares the responsibility for cooking dinner with her husband; she generally does four days per week. She spends two hours on supervising the children’s homework every day and one hour watching

TV.

Table 9. Yueyue’s daily time arrangements

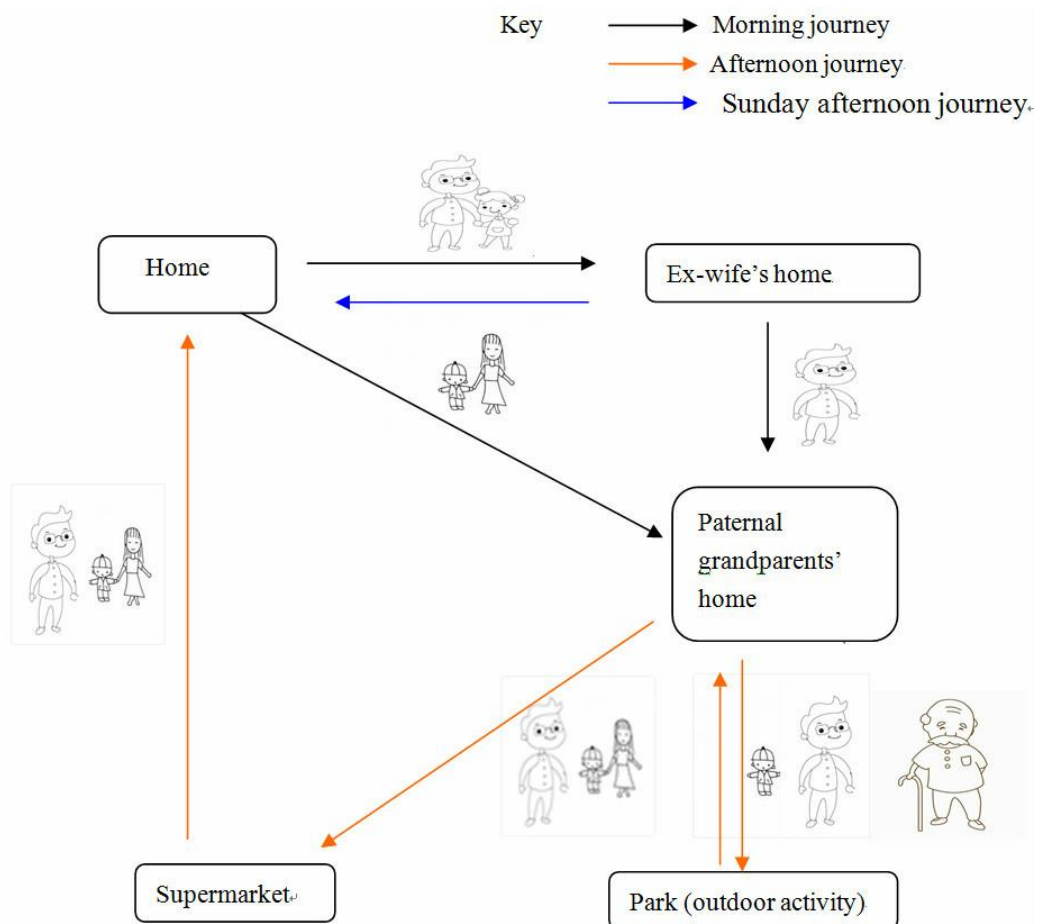
| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 6am-6.20am | Get up and wash |
| 6.20am-6.50am | Cooking breakfast |
| 6.50am-7.10 am | Breakfast |
| 7.45am-8am | Home to nursery (15 minutes walking) |
| 8am-8.10am | Nursery to workplace (10 minutes walking) |
| 8.30am-11.30am | Working |
| 11.30pm-12.30pm | Lunch break |
| 12.30pm-5pm | Working |
| 5pm -5.15pm | Workplace to after-school club (15 minutes walking) |
| 5.15pm-5.45pm | After-school club to home and cooking dinner (shared with husband) |
| 5.45pm-6.15pm | Dinner |
| 6.15pm-6.30pm | Cleaning |
| 6.30pm-8.30pm | Supervising two children’s homework |
| 8.30pm-9.30pm | Watching TV |
| 9.30pm-10pm | Housework |
| 10pm | Sleep |

As we can see from Figure 11, 17 journeys are made by Yueyue’s family at the weekend. In the morning, Yueyue’s husband makes two journeys, taking the daughter from home to the ex-wife’s home, then he visits the paternal grandparents’ home. One journey is made by Yueyue at the same time, going to the paternal grandparents’ home with the son. Yueyue said:

My parents-in-law are 70 years old, they are able to take care of themselves, but sometimes they are not really well or feel uncomfortable, especially my father-in-law, who had surgery last year, so he can’t do any housework, while my mother-in-law cooks food and does all the housework. We visit

them at weekends, because for one thing, we like to have the emotional connection, to see how everything has gone for them this week. Also, I can give a hand physically, doing some housework, such as doing the laundry and cooking lunch. Generally, we arrive at the paternal parents' home at 10am, talk with each other for around one hour, then I cook lunch with my mother-in-law. In the afternoon, my husband takes our son and my father-in-law to a park nearby, just walking or doing some soft exercises. During this time, I stay with my mother-in-law, it's our homely chatting time. We leave from the paternal parents' home to go to the supermarket at 3pm, shopping for food and necessary things for the next week.

Figure 11. Yueyue's weekend journey



When it comes to arrangements for the stepdaughter at the weekend, Yueyue said:

I understand that my stepdaughter may miss her mother and would like to spend some time with her. So I'm happy to let her stay with her mother at the weekend. Actually, my husband and my stepdaughter's mother decided that their daughter would stay with the father and the mother might take her over at weekends when they divorced. In China, it's not really common for the child to stay with the father when the parents are divorced, generally he/she will live with the mother. For my husband, it's because he was in a better economic situation, therefore would be able to provide a better study and living environment for the daughter. However, I think it's also related to the fact that the ex-wife had an affair which led to the final divorce. As such, my husband does not really trust his ex-wife, or her ability to take care of the child. But that's just my personal opinion, my husband hasn't talked to me about that.

This case study shows how a step-family manages childcare for two children of different ages. Due to the complex relationships among the family members, more explicit negotiations and considerations have been made to coordinate childcare, filial obligation and work commitments. Yueyue and her husband have a clear division of labour for the children on weekdays: Yueyue is responsible for their son and her husband is supposed to look after his daughter. This highlights how arrangements are more gender equal in this non-traditional family situation. The next case study describes another non-traditional family, a lone parent whose daily arrangements are much simpler.

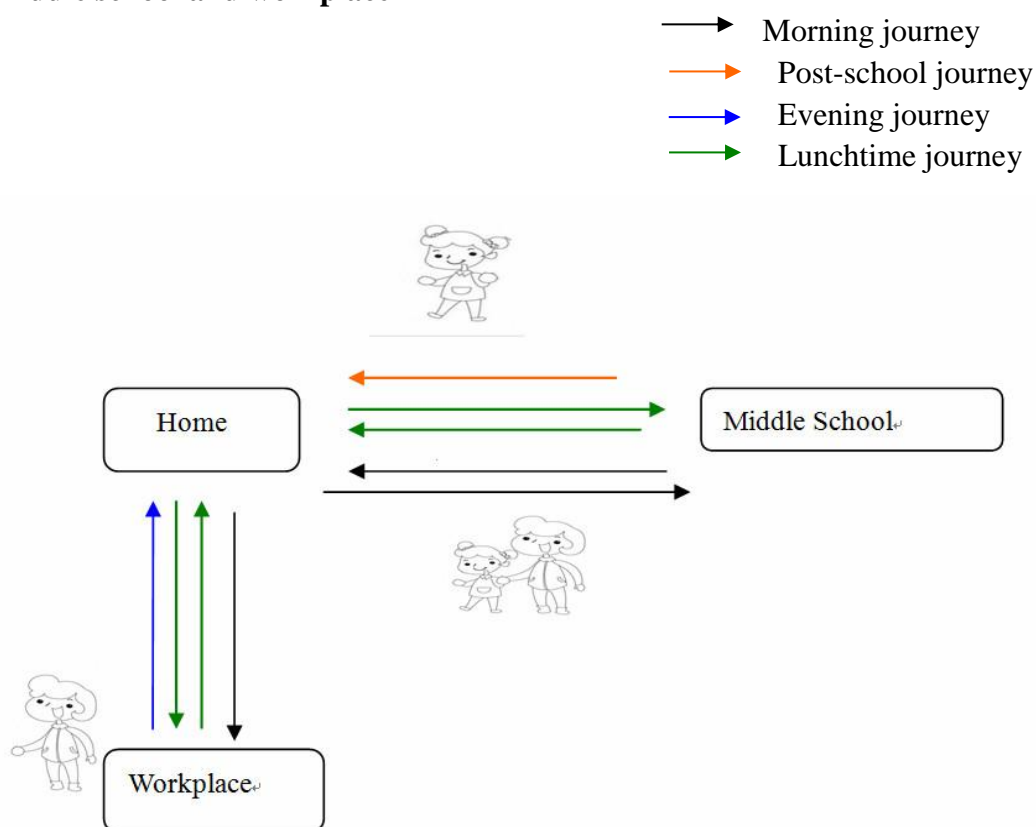
Case Study 5: Xiuxiu

This example refers to Xiuxiu, who is a 34-year-old full-time civil servant in Jiaohe. She is a single mother, living with her 12-year-old daughter. It can be seen in Figure 12 that 10 daily journeys are made by Xiuxiu and her daughter going to and from work and secondary school on weekdays. Xiuxiu is the only adult involved in the daily journeys, which is different from the other cases in

this chapter. Specifically, at the *morning coordination point*, Xiuxiu walks with her daughter to the middle school at 6.30am and then returns home. She leaves home for her workplace at 7.35am, which is a 15-minute walk away. At the *lunchtime coordination point*, Xiuxiu makes two journeys, from her workplace to walk home and from home back to her workplace after lunch. Xiuxiu's daughter walks between the middle school and home by herself at lunchtime. When it comes to the *post-school coordination point*, Xiuxiu's daughter leaves the middle school to walk home alone at 4.45pm, while Xiuxiu returns home from the workplace at 4.30pm. Xiuxiu told me:

It's not easy to be a working single mother. I have to do everything by myself, nobody is there to help you and support you. I divorced my ex-husband six years ago. Now he has remarried, and lives in another city. We don't have any connections now, he transfers the child support money to my bank account every month without visiting us regularly, just once or twice each year. On weekdays, I have kind of simple arrangements, taking my daughter to her school, going to work, coming back to cook lunch... So the three central points in my life are: my daughter's school, my workplace and home. In the morning, I take my daughter to school, actually just 10 minutes' walk from home. She's already 12 years old, she's able to go to and from home independently, but there are so many cars at the morning peak, I feel it's better to accompany her to school in the morning. For the lunchtime journey and post-school journey, my daughter does it by herself."

Figure 12. The daily journey made by Xiuxiu’s family to and from home, middle school and workplace



In addition to the daily journey, Table 10 provides more detailed information on Xiuxiu’s daily time arrangements; she works for seven hours each day, spending 80 minutes on walking between home, middle school and workplace. Xiuxiu takes responsibility for all the housework in her family, including cooking breakfast, lunch, dinner, cleaning and doing laundry, in total for 2.5 hours each day. In addition to that, it takes 1.5 hours for her to supervise the child’s homework and she has the same amount of time to watch TV and relax in the evening. Xiuxiu explained that:

I work in the government, just typical work in an office, no multitasking or extra hours, so I could say my daughter is the most important thing in my life. In other words, I try my best to be a good mum, spending all my time and energy to take care of her, cooking three meals each day at home; supervising homework in the evening. I leave very limited leisure time for

myself, generally watching TV, doing yoga or reading.

Table 10. Xiuxiu’s daily time arrangements

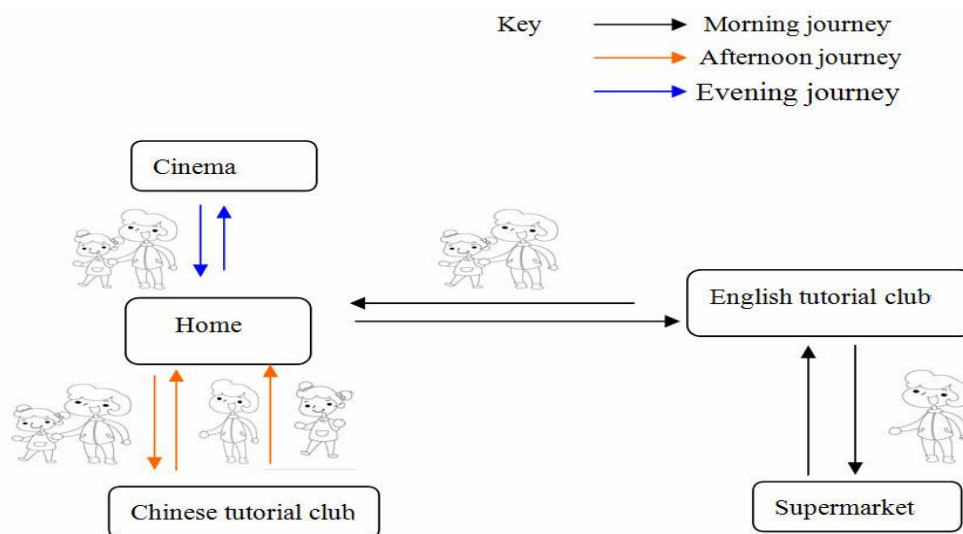
| | |
|------------------|--|
| 5.30am-5.45am | Get up and wash |
| 5.45am-6.05am | Cooking breakfast |
| 6.06am-6.30am | Having breakfast with daughter |
| 6.35am-6.45am | Home to middle school (10 minutes walking) |
| 6.46am-6.55am | Middle school to home (10 minutes walking) |
| 7am-7.30am | Cleaning and housework |
| 7.35am-7.50am | Home to workplace (15 minutes walking) |
| 8am-11.30am | Working |
| 11.31am -11.45am | Workplace to home (15 minutes walking) |
| 11.46am-12.05pm | Cooking lunch |
| 12.06pm-12.25pm | Having lunch with daughter |
| 12.25pm-12.35pm | Cleaning |
| 12.40pm-12.55pm | Home to workplace (15 minutes walking) |
| 1pm-4.30pm | Working |
| 4.31pm-4.45pm | Workplace to home (15 minutes walking) |
| 4.50pm-5.20pm | Cooking dinner |
| 5.21pm-5.50pm | Having dinner with daughter |
| 5.51pm-6.30pm | Housework (cleaning, laundry) |
| 6.31pm-8pm | Supervising daughter’s homework |
| 8pm-9pm | Watching TV |
| 9pm-9.30pm | Relaxing time (Yoga /running/reading) |
| 9.30pm | Sleep |

As shown in Figure 13, 14 journeys are made by Xiuxiu and her daughter at weekends: eight journeys are made by Xiuxiu and six journeys are made by her daughter. In the morning, Xiuxiu takes her daughter to a two-hour English tutorial club from 9 to 11; during this period, she goes to the supermarket,

shopping for food and all the necessary things for the family, then she returns to the English tutorial club to pick up the child and they go back home together. Xiuxiu spends 30 minutes on cooking lunch at weekends; then, after having lunch with her daughter, she takes the child from home to a Chinese tutorial club, returning home herself in the afternoon. In addition, Xiuxiu’s daughter walks back home by herself after the class. Xiuxiu said:

These two study clubs are not far from my home, around 15 minutes walking; actually it’s not necessary for me to take my daughter to these places. For the morning English club, it’s on my way to the supermarket, so we firstly walk together to the place, then I continue my journey to the supermarket. For the afternoon one, I just want to have more time to be with my daughter, we can chat a little bit on the way to the Chinese tutorial club. I choose to come back home and let my daughter return home by herself for two reasons. Firstly, I can use the two hours to have a rest or do whatever I like. Secondly, my daughter has grown up, she prefers to have some private time and space rather than sticking with mum all the time, so she likes to walk with her friends after the class. And my daughter is a star fan, so our entertainment activity is watching movies at the cinema in the evening at weekends.

Figure 13. Xiuxiu’s weekend journey



This case study shows the simplest set of arrangements in the study, involving just one parent and one 12-year-old child. The reason the mother can manage independently is the close proximity of the family home to the school and extracurricular services and to the mother's place of work. Everything is within walking distance. What we do not know from this study is how and whether the mother made decisions about her job and where they lived based on the need for this proximity in order to maintain independence.

Discussion

These five case studies suggest five key points in relation to young mothers' daily journeys in coordinating work, care and education.

- Mothers' working hours and conditions of work act as a hindrance to work-life balance,
- Working conditions and the culture of the workplace lead to changes in residency for children and sometimes grandparents.
- The vital role of grandparents to support childcare and coordination points.
- Filial obligation flowing from grandparents to adult children at this point in the life course.
- Gender inequality and explicit negotiations of gender roles.

The case studies, particularly the three traditional family cases, suggest that young mothers' working hours and conditions of work act as a hindrance to work-life balance. It has been argued that working non-standard hours, for example: flexible working hours, part-time and non-Monday-Friday or non-day shifts are regarded as ways to achieve work-life balance in Western countries (Becker and Moen, 1999). Flexible working arrangements have been touted as key to helping individuals to manage work and non-work responsibilities.

However, in some cases, non-standard working hours make it difficult for young mother to transport their child at the morning coordination point and to accomplish their roles as mothers. In some of these cases, fathers stepped in to help transport children to formal care settings or schools. It should be pointed out that the non-standard work schedule was a requirement of the employer rather than their own choices, which suggests that whether or not a non-standard work schedule facilitates work-family life depends to some extent on the voluntary or involuntary nature of such scheduling. It has been found that flexible working arrangements tend to be arranged in favour of employers in China. For example, a factory worker in my sample has a flexible working arrangement in winter (shorter working hours), which is decided by the employer and is not really by her own choice. This reflects the reality that employees have no choice in terms of the days or times worked, and hence working outside the standard working hours may add to the imbalance between work and family life.

It has been a common trend to work long hours on a global scale (Cha, 2010). The increasing competition and declining job security associated with globalisation is considered to be a factor that contributes to long working hours for managers and professionals throughout the industrialised world (Frenkel et al., 1999). In many managerial and professional jobs, working hours are considered to be a proxy for workers' commitment or professional competence. In one example (case study 3), the unpredictability of the mother's working hours was extreme, leading to the family deciding that their child should live outside the parental home with an aunt on weekdays. Feifei (case study 3) demonstrated her commitment by making work her central focus, at the apparent cost of sacrificing her family life. By contrast, those interviewees who worked in the educational sector considered the summer and winter vacations to be benefits of working as a teacher, enabling them to spend more time with their kids and other family members, thus facilitating work-life balance. For example, according to Biswas and Hassan (2009), women managers felt a strong two-way pull to maintain a

balance between work and family life, because of the long working hours every day. It was also mentioned by other participants, particularly those in lower socio-economic groups, that people are assessed by their 'face time', which means that those who are seen to be present at work for long hours are considered to be more committed. Being visible in the workplace, particularly outside regular office hours, has been considered essential for creating an image of a reliable and dedicated employee. Rosengren (2015) found that certain character traits are linked to specific patterns of behaviour. For example, being at your desk or in meetings makes people feel that you are reliable. In order to be seen as dedicated, employees should come to work early and stay late. For these young working mothers, working arrangements were largely dependent on their labour-market positions; hence, they felt that they had no option but to work for long hours. Overall, long working hours tend to have a negative impact on women's family life, including less involvement in children's activities and frequent disruption to family activities. The demands and pressures of employment might seem, in many cases, to limit the range of options available to working mothers wishing to play more active parenting roles.

Filial obligation is another essential aspect involved in young women's daily journeys. In this chapter, the term filial obligation was used instead of elderly care for two reasons. Firstly, the participants in this study were aged between 25 and 35 and their parents were relatively young, the majority of them aged between 50 and 60. As such, in most cases, no actual and physical care was necessary for the older people which indicated a different meaning from the concept of elderly care. In addition, elderly care generally refers to the services or care for the older people. However, the older people were providing support and help to the working mothers and their families in the form of transporting children and in providing childcare to fit around school and formal childcare arrangements. The flow of practical care exchanges were therefore, at this time in the life course, mainly from grandparents to their adult children rather than the

other way around.

For young working mothers, grandparents are the main source of childcare support on weekdays, they tend to play a more important role than fathers in daily arrangements. Their jobs include: transporting the child between home and schools, helping with preparing lunch and dinner, providing backup support when necessary. More than two-thirds of interviewees indicated that they relied on assistance from grandparents which was practiced in various ways in everyday life. Indeed in Lili's family, the grandparents were not only responsible for transporting the child for the morning and lunchtime journeys, but also cooking and having dinner with the parents and the child in the evening. Hence, the grandparents' home was the central point of Lili's daily life rather than her own home. Three other working mothers in the study with a child under three years old chose to live together with grandparents, thereby making it more convenient for the grandparents to provide whole day support for childcare. One respondent's two year-old son was looked after by the grandparents in their own home on weekdays and spent time with his parents at weekends, which is similar to Feifei's arrangement with her sister in case study three. The main reason for separating the child from living with the parents on weekdays included: long working hours and multiple tasks for mothers, lack of space for three generations to live together, and concerns about the inconvenience of living together. In some other cases, the grandparents migrated to the mother's city and lived with the family in order to help with childcare. It should be noted that both maternal and paternal grandparents are involved in daily childcare. No preference for maternal or paternal grandparents was mentioned by respondents in the interviews. The main principle is 'convenience', which means that the mothers are seeking a coordination strategy that is convenient for the grandparents, the child and themselves. The factors that contribute to 'convenience' include: a short distance between their home, the grandparents' home and school, a good health situation of grandparents, close relationships between the mother and the

grandparents, and even the educational background of grandparents. These factors reflect the complexity of arranging daily coordination points and managing care relationships and filial obligations.

In China, men can currently retire at 60 years of age whilst female workers can retire at 55 from public-sector organisations in cities. Men who work in factories and the private sector can retire at 55, while women can retire at 50. Hence, grandparents are available to help with childcare and some housework because they retire from work at a relatively young age. The early retirement age is one of the factors that contribute to grandparents' involvement in support for daily coordination. In addition, Sheng and Settles (2006) found that 'should do something for children, as retired' and 'reducing the adult children's burden' are two major considerations that influence grandparents' participation in childcare. In China, grandparenting is a crucial form of intergenerational reciprocity, especially under the one-child policy, as the one and only grandchild receives all the resources and attention. Some interviewees mentioned that the grandparents consider themselves to be a way of enjoying family happiness rather than an extra burden of daily life. According to Sheng (1991), grandparenting improves mutual communication and understanding and creates closer emotional ties, thus strengthening intergenerational relationships.

Variations in the practice of filial obligation are reflected in both the daily and the weekend journeys. Among the 34 families in this study, four of them live together with the paternal or maternal grandparents. They are more likely to practise filial obligation in a flexible way, assisting in some daily housework, looking after the elders when necessary and giving money for the family's expenses monthly. The young women who live in the same city as their parents usually visit the elders at weekends, having lunch or dinner together and helping with housework. In addition, the respondents may give money to their parents every month, with some extra gifts on festivals if they are unable to visit and take

care of the elders regularly.

It has been a common trend for grandparents to care for grandchildren in urban China. For example, 90 percent of the young children in Shanghai are looked after by at least one grandparent (Samman, 2016). This trend is a clear divergence from China's traditional cultural pattern of intergenerational exchange. The changes in family life are not only reflected in the intergenerational relationships, but also revealed in the diverse family patterns and negotiable family obligations.

According to the five case studies, mothers take the main responsibility for managing the daily coordination points, which reveals the persistent gender inequality within families. The two non-traditional families (case studies 4 and 5) showed adaption and greater gender equality, which involved an explicit negotiation of gender roles and domestic division of labour. Since the economic reform started in 1978, China has experienced dramatic economic growth and significant social changes, including changes in divorce and remarriage patterns. In the 1970s, the divorce rate was extremely low in China (0.33‰ in 1979) (Wang and Zhou, 2010). However, after 2003, the divorce rate increased continuously for nine years, reaching 2.1‰ in 2011, which was 1.14 millesimal points higher than in 2000 (China N.B.o.S.o., 2012). Although China has a long history of being against divorce and remarriage, society has become more tolerant of divorce in both public attitudes and laws. The lone mother showed her independence in her daily journeys, responsibility for childcare, housework and financial support without any assistance from others. This is an indication that young women tend to be more independent in modern society, which is a development from the traditional view that men dominated Chinese society while women had to be subordinate to their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. In addition, a more equal division of labour was found in the step-family case (case study 5), in which the mother is responsible for the son whilst the father is

responsible for the daughter from his previous marriage. The traditional norm that mothers are the main providers of childcare is not followed here. This revealed that obligation is not given, they are negotiable. According to Finch and Mason (1993), the responsibilities between family members are not the straightforward products of rules of obligation, but the production of negotiation. The fact that the responsibilities which people accept as negotiable rather than the consequence of following rules of obligation explains the variations in the young mothers' daily journeys in practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter, by drawing on five young mothers' daily journeys based on Skinner's (2003) framework, I have explored how working mothers manage to coordinate their care and work commitments with the aim of highlighting the taken-for granted aspects of everyday life involved in organising mothers' paid work. I employed the concept of 'coordination points' to illustrate the ways childcare, filial obligation and work arrangements are dovetailed together in order for children to have seamless care whilst parents (especially mothers) are at work. These daily journeys showed the social-spatial dimensions to family life, the vital role of grandparents to support childcare and coordination points and the impact of mothers working hours and conditions of work on work life balance. In the past half century, economic reforms and revolutionary changes have powerfully shaped family forms in contemporary China. Nonetheless, the traditionally strong relationship between parents and children continued to be central in Chinese family life. Chinese family relationships seem to be close directed both socially and emotionally. The structure of Chinese families still remains mutual dependence rather than independence. Compared with Western adult children, who are encouraged to live independently, Chinese young people are more likely to rely on their parents' support in various forms. Grandparents' substantial involvement in the daily journeys indicates a high level of structural

and functional solidarity between generations. For mothers whose work is more intense (e.g. long working hours), grandparents contribute more to caregiving. Grandparents' support often frees up time for other family members, particularly mothers. Thus, grandparents' support is indeed a family adaptive strategy to maximise the well-being of the whole family, by reducing the amount of time that mothers spend on housework and childcare and enabling them to pursue career opportunities. In these daily journeys, the direction of support is more from the elders to their adult children. However, this does not mean that young parents have no responsibilities for their older parents. As with childcare, the provision of elderly care has also changed during the economic transition. I will explore the practices of filial piety in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six Practising and displaying *Xiao-Young mothers' negotiations of obligations to elders*

Introduction

Filial piety (*xiao*) has long been considered a traditional element of Chinese society, holding together China's system of familial elderly care, determining who is likely to be a care provider and the types and amount of care that should be provided (Zhan, Feng and Luo, 2008; Zhan and Montgomery, 2003). It has been highlighted in a well-known Chinese proverb that *xiao* comes first among the various forms of virtuous conduct. The concept of *xiao* indicated that 'adult children should exert themselves to the utmost in the service of their parents, providing satisfaction of material needs and showing reverence and obedience (Confucius, 2000, p.15). More specifically, *xiao* involves a wide range of behaviours, including respect, obedience, loyalty, financial assistance to and physical care of parents (Confucius, 2000).

According to the Confucian classical work *Li Chi* (Confucius, 1885, p.67), 'for all sons it is the rule: in winter, to warm (the bed for their parents), and to cool it in summer; in the evening, to adjust everything (for their repose), and to inquire (about their health) in the morning; and, when with their companions, not to quarrel'. This indication suggested that physically taking care of one's parents involved providing good food, soft clothes, a warm room, comfort and peace to meet the parents' material needs. Physical support to parents is of essential importance in agricultural Chinese society as most people were farmers and stayed in a particular area and functioned in a stable family-oriented social network. Financial assistance to and physical care of parents are regarded as being central to filial practice. However, what Confucius identified as expectations of a filial child is not only to refer to the fulfilment of obligations to meet parents' physical needs, but also includes respecting parents. The rules of

filial piety presented in traditional Confucian texts exemplify how offspring should repay parents with love and care (Li et al., 2010). These rules refer not only to one's external behavior, but also to a child's inner dispositions towards showing respect for parents. For Confucianism, respecting parents also means treating parents with obedience.

Confucian precepts (*xiao* included) have undergone modification throughout China's long history but nonetheless the basic principles of respect and care for the elderly have survived. According to Holzman (1998), the character *xiao* firstly appeared on a bronze vessel that can be traced back to the late Shang Dynasty or the early Zhou Dynasty, roughly around 1000 BCE. Holzman (1998, p. 185) suggested that 'probably at the very earliest stages in their history, the Chinese gave filial piety an extremely exalted position – treated it as something one might almost call an absolute, a metaphysical entity'. The earliest meaning of *xiao* was associated with providing food to ancestors. Under the tremendous social changes in the Spring and Autumn period, the patriarchal hierarchy of Western Zhou Dynasty has been shaken and the idea of filial piety also faced doubt. In order to rebuild social order, the ancestor worship in Zhou Dynasty was changed by the actual filial piety to living parents by Confucius, therefore making the thought of filial piety public among the public (Chan and Tan, 2004). While the term *xiao* was generally associated with care and obedience for elderly family members, the meaning of it was often subject to change. When it came to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D), Confucianism was established as a state of orthodoxy. The concept of filial piety was promoted officially and unfilial behavior was considered as one of the worst crimes. Moreover, the absolutist ethic of Three Bonds was adopted, which highlights the absolute authority of the ruler over the minister as well as the absolute authority of the father over the son, and of the husband over the wife (Qi, 2015). The familial ethic of filial obligation and the political ethic of loyalty were regarded as two levels of *xiao*, which were based on an absolute ideology rather than an equal and reciprocal one. The

legalization of filial piety ethics was started in the Han Dynasty and completed in the Tang Dynasty (618–907) The Tang law implemented the idea of ruling the country by filial piety in relation to five aspects, including living, support, illness, bereavement and sacrifice (Miao, 2015). The Qing Dynasty (1616–1911) applied filial piety to rule the country and strengthened the crime punishment of violation of filial piety.

During the Mao era (1949–1976), the traditional concept of filial piety lost ideological and institutional ground because of the promotion of the ideology of class struggle, revolution and self-sacrifice to build an ideal communist society. However, the reciprocal obligation of each family member was stressed by the Marriage Law of 1950 and subsequent related legislation, which indicated that family obligation was still regarded as a key characteristic of Chinese society even though the traditional notion of filial piety was undermined during this period. When China moved from the planned and collectivised economy to a more market-based economy in 1978, the mechanism of allocating of goods and labour changed (Cook and Dong, 2011). Under the planned economy, the majority of working-age women and men worked on a full-time basis in state-owned enterprises. The enterprises provided a wide range of social services, including healthcare, childcare and subsidised housing to retirement pensions. When it came to the market-based economy, the decentralisation and privatization of the state-owned enterprise brought an end to the era of lifetime employment, eroding the role of the state and state-owned enterprises as providers of welfare support and services (Cook and Dong, 2011). Instead of accepting the responsibility of the welfare for its elderly citizens, the Chinese government strengthened the family members' responsibility for elderly care through propaganda and constitutional measures. According to the 1996 Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Seniors (which remains in force today), the care-giver has an obligation to provide economic support, life care and moral comfort, and attend to the elderly's special need. The term 'care-giver'

refers to ‘a daughter or son of the elderly, and those others who are legally obliged to provide for their care’ (Qi, 2015, p.150). In the absence of a comprehensive welfare support system, health care has been an issue for both urban and rural aged persons, because the medical costs are only partially covered due to the enterprise reform. Elderly people are left with no option but to rely on their family for care when they become physically dependent (Whyte, 2005). As one researcher notes ‘just under a quarter of the mainland's elderly residents survive on pensions, while more than 40 per cent seemingly rely on family members’ (Ikels, 1993, p.312). Hence, family care has become more necessary due to the breakdown of earlier forms of state-provided welfare.

Moreover, as a result of the one-child policy, for the young generation who are born after 1980, the burden for taking care of elders has been potentially increased, as no siblings’ support is available (Jackson and Liu, 2017). The family structure has been changed to 4-2-1 (four grandparents, two parents and one child), which has been seen as a child-centred family structure, hence the children were deemed to be more likely to be self-focused (Guan, 2003). The living arrangements also changed from the traditional co-residence (in which more than two adult generations resided together) to separate residences (Whyte, 2005). In addition to the new family structure, individualistic ideas have become more prevalent since the Chinese government announced the ‘Open Door Policy’ in 1978. Individualism is generally understood to involve a right to satisfy self-interest without considering the rights or needs of others (Qi, 2015). Yan (2009), for example, suggested that family obligations have weakened under the process of individualisation in China. However, a number of studies have shown that filial piety still plays a significant role in Chinese society, even though the attitudes to and practices of filial obligation have undergone change (Lee and Xiao, 1998; Sun, 2002; Qi, 2015). This chapter adds further to evaluating continued change in Chinese families, arguing that the sense of obligation

persists, albeit in new forms and with actual practices often constrained by the demands of life in modern China.

Although the traditional notion of filial piety has been widely viewed as a key factor influencing elder care, little attention has been given to the young generation, especially to women who are likely to be care providers for elder parents, and their understanding of and beliefs about filial piety. In addition, a number of previous studies focused on describing elder care patterns in China without considering the complexities and varieties of the practices of family obligation in modern China (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003; Zhang, 2004). Given the significant changes mainland China is currently undergoing, through political reform and marketisation, it is pertinent to question how these changes impact on the exercise of familial obligations. The purpose of this chapter is to examine Chinese young women's attitudes to and practice of filial piety within the context of economic reform. Three other important concepts are applied to the analysis: *mianzi*, family practices and displaying family.

In addition to *xiao*, *mianzi* (face) is considered as another significant concept that influences individual's social life in China. Face has been discussed in the Western context by Goffman (1955). He refers it to social behaviours that allow people to enhance their reputation and public images. Although the idea of 'face' can be applied outside China, it has particular importance within Chinese culture and society. Jia (2001) suggested that foreign curiosity in Chinese culture prompted the research interest in 'face'. However, it was not confined to this case. Lin Yutang, a famous Chinese writer and social and cultural critic indicated that 'face', 'fate' and 'favour' were 'three sisters who have always ruled China, and are ruling China still' (Lin, 1977, p.186). A number of studies have been conducted by Chinese scholars to consider how the introduction of 'face' may modify the things identified by the Western social theory and how the theory itself may be used as an explanatory device (Zuo, 1997; Zhai, 2006). According

to Qi (2014), the integration of the Chinese concept of face into mainstream social theory plays a significant role in aiding the process of identifying various aspects of social life.

I also apply the concepts of ‘family practices’ (Morgan, 1996) and ‘displaying family’ (Finch, 2007) to the Chinese context, and extend them through considering the importance of *xiao* and *mianzi*. Finch’s concept of ‘displaying families’ was developed from Morgan’s (1996) discussion of family practices—a research focus on the construction of what a family is and who ‘counts’ as family. The idea of ‘family practices’ is seen as essential for opening up the possibility of movement between the perspectives of the observer and the perspectives of family members, as individuals normally just engage in family or other types of practices, without routinely talking about them (Morgan, 2011). This concept builds a sense of the active doing of family through everyday activities, moving away from the idea of family as a relatively static structure. From this perspective, family actors are not only persons referred to as, for example, mothers and fathers, but also can be seen as ‘doing’ mothering or fathering. Moreover, the term ‘family practices’ conveys a sense of the everyday and routine, highlighting the value of activities which are usually seen as unremarkable and not worth talking about. In using the term, two linked senses of fluidity are constructed. The first is in terms of the boundaries of any one set of family activities as to who is included or excluded (Morgan, 2011). For example, who ‘counts’ as family depends in part on who is asking the question and on the circumstances in which the designation of family membership might be considered to be important. Secondly, it also conveys a sense of the fuzziness of the boundaries between family and non-family which means that family practices might also be described in some other ways, such as ‘gendered practices’ or ‘generational practices’ (Morgan, 2011). The concept of ‘displaying families’ expands the idea of ‘family practices’, because family needs to be ‘displayed’; that is seen to be done as well as be ‘done’. The term display is

defined as ‘the process by which individuals and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute “doing family things” and thereby confirm that these relationships are “family” relationships’ (Finch, 2007, p. 67). Displaying is understood as an activity characteristic of contemporary families as well as an analytical concept.

In discussing these ideas in conjunction with *xiao* and *mainzi*, I bring Chinese and Western concepts together in my analysis, illustrating how concepts can be transformed in transferring them from one cultural or social context to another. According to Qi (2014), such travelling concepts raise the possibility of diverse perspectives on understanding social relations and institutions. In developing this analysis, I draw on Chinese women’s narratives of the practice of filial obligation in modern China. The main ways in which filial piety is practiced will then be outlined before exploring the relationship between *mianzi* and *xiao* in displaying family in China.

The practice of filial piety

Chow (2006, p.32) identifies three levels of the practice of filial piety: ‘providing parents with the necessary materials for the satisfaction of their physical needs and comforts; paying attention to parents’ wishes and obeying their preferences; and behaving in a way that makes parents happy and brings them honour and the respect of the community’. Therefore, filial piety not only involves the idea that children should be submissive to the wishes of their parents, but also includes the diverse forms of actual observance. In China, the elders take pride in their reliance on the care provided by the adult children while in the Western societies, elderly parents are more likely to be proud of their independence from adult children (Qi, 2015). Participants in my study practiced *xiao* through a wide range of activities, including personal care, economic support, gifts in kind and emotional and moral support. These practices varied depending on the situation

of participants and their parents and parents in law. The range of different kinds of support was described in Table 11.

Table 11. Individual circumstances and care for elders

| | Employment status (Women/husband) | Interviewee's place of residence | Parents/ parents –in- law' place of residence | Support for elders | | |
|----------|---|--|--|---|---|-------------------------|
| | | | | Women | Outsider | Government/ employer |
| Chaochao | Teacher in high school/teacher in high school | Jilin | Urban | Giving gifts for birthdays and holidays Weekly visiting | n/a | Pension |
| Chunchun | Marketing manager/ Senior manager in bank | Changchun | Urban | Financial support Gifts in kind | Carer (helping for cooking and cleaning) | Pension |
| Dandan | Teacher in high school/ Teacher in high school | Jilin | Semi-rural | Financial assistance | n/a | Pension |
| Huahua | Teacher in high school/ administrator | Jilin | Semi-rural | Financial assistance | Aunt | Pension |
| Jingjing | Journalist/ Editor | Jilin | Urban | Pay for institutional care fee | Institutional care | Pension |
| Juanjuan | Administrator/ Government employee | Jilin | Urban | personal care (Occasion) | n/a | Pension |
| Lele | Teacher/ Worker in private company | Jiaohe | Rural | Financial assistance | Aunt | No |
| Lili | Doctor/Business manager | Jilin | Rural | Monthly visiting Monthly financial support Providing extra financial and physical support | n/a | No |

| | | | | | | |
|----------|---|-----------|--|--|-------|---|
| | | | | when needed | | |
| Nannan | Worker in power company/ Worker in power company | Jilin | Urban | Personal care (occasional) | n/a | Pension Supplementary medical insurance |
| Qiuqiu | Accountant (divorced) | Changchun | Urban | Gifts in kind | N/A | Pension Supplementary medical insurance |
| Ruirui | Teacher/ accountant | Jiaohe | Urban | Gifts | Carer | Pension |
| Xiaoli | Factory worker/ taxi driver | Jiaohe | Rural | Monthly financial support | n/a | Subsistence allowance (small amount) |
| Yiyi | Doctor/ engineer | Jilin | Co residence (parents)/ Rural (Parents- in-law) | Parents-in-law: Monthly financial support Monthly visiting Extra financial and physical support when need Parents: Gifts Pay for daily expense | n/a | No (parents- in-law) Pension and supplementary medical insurance (parents) |
| Yueyue | Factory worker/ Factory worker | Jilin | Urban | Gifts | n/a | Pension |
| Zhenzhen | Teacher high school/government employee | Jiaohe | Semi-rural | Weekly visiting and giving gifts for both parents and parents-in-law | n/a | Pension |

Table 11 summarises the interviewee's individual circumstances, along with the care or services that were provided by the young women, outsiders, government or employers. It should be noted that the table only includes the information that was provided by participants through the interviews, which may not include all the services and care that the elders received. In addition, taking into account the conciseness of the information, this table provided information for fifteen participants who were quoted or mentioned in this chapter rather than the whole sample. The table shows that for the participants whose parents were living in the rural or semi-rural areas without pensions from the government or employer, more financial support tended to be provided compared with the elderly living in urban cities. It also shows that young women with flexible working hours, such as those who were self-employed or housewives tended to spend more time on personal care and regular visiting.

In this study, the participants were aged between 25 and 35 years old and the majority of their parents were aged between 50 and 60 years old. Most, therefore, had parents who were able to live independently and care for themselves. Only eight interviewees said that a parent or parent in law required personal care. Personal care refers to 'nursing someone who cannot fully look after themselves and/or performing domestic tasks which they are unable to undertake' (Finch, 1989, p.26) (it does not require the care provider and receiver to live together). Different levels of responsibility for providing personal care were required. For example, Juanjuan, a 32 year old college administrator from Jilin, had the experience of providing intensive personal care support for her mother in law. She said:

Last year, my mother-in-law broke her leg, after surgery in the hospital, she returned home to recuperate. My father-in-law's health situation was not really good at that time, he was able to take care of himself, but it was difficult for him to look after my mother in law as well as to do the domestic

work. I was on my winter holiday during that period. So I took responsibility for looking after my mother-in-law, including cooking lunch, doing laundry and other household work, supporting her with my hand when she was walking and helping her to bath. I spent 3 or 4 hours doing these things everyday. This situation lasted for around 3 weeks until I went back to my work. It is not easy to nurse a sick elder parent, but that's the burden I have to undertake as a xiao daughter-in-law.

Situations such as those described by Juanjuan apparently fall within the range of what is regarded appropriate for a daughter-in-law who has a sense of filial duty. Juanjuan displayed *xiao* through nursing her sick mother-in-law and helping with domestic work. In comparison, other participants indicated a lower level of providing personal support: one said she took her father to hospital every two months and another helped to pay bills and read newspaper for her illiterate parents-in-law. Some respondents talked about their experiences of being unable or unwilling to provide personal care due to time availability or geographical distance (see Ruirui and Yueyue's cases). Hence, different kinds and degrees of personal care were provided by the adult children to meet the elders' needs.

Among my participants, women were the main providers of personal care and were more active in displaying personal care than men. According to Zhan and Montgomery's (2003) study on gender and elderly care in China, women spend more time than men performing diverse caregiving duties, with an average of 26.6 hours per week compared with 15.6 hours for men. It has long been considered that women should be more involved in providing caregiving support while men are responsible for providing financial support.

Economic support is regarded as an important aspect of practicing *xiao* in China. Though traditional filial piety emphasised all aspects of support from adult children to their aging parents, it has been noted that financial assistance was the

main one on some occasions the only support actually provided (Miller, 2004). Adult children are expected to provide financial support for their parents, particularly for those from rural areas without old-age pensions. Economic support, in the context of this study, refers to the monetary transfer which passes between one individual and another rather than situations where members of a family share resources from a commonly owned pool, which represents a distinctive type of economic sharing between kin. In previous studies, two approaches have been used to explain how monetary support that adult children provide to their older parents is determined and how it varies (Yang, 1996; Lee and Xiao, 1998). The norm of reciprocity is a cultural universal based on the principle of give and take. The reciprocity approach suggests that financial support given by adult children is a means by which the economic well-being of parents and children can be brought into some kind of balance (Yang, 1996). This might provide a partial explanation for the variance in monetary support, but it ignores the possibility that there are other factors that influence intergenerational transactions in China and that reciprocity within families is not necessarily balanced. Another approach addresses the issue of the distribution of support by gender. The gender difference approach argues that attitudes to gendered responsibilities learned in the socialisation process affects family support of older people. According to my data, monetary support to older parents is influenced not only by reciprocity and gender, but also by whether the provider's parents have a pension and by the number of children the provider's family has. One of my interviewees, Xiaoli, a 34 year old worker in a factory in Jiaohe, provides an example of this. She told me:

My father used to be a farmer and does not have any pension after retiring, relying on the subsistence allowance (around 40 GBP per month) provided by the government. However, the amount of money is not enough for covering my father's living expenses, particular for the cost of recovering from his illness. So I transfer 300 RMB (30 GBP) to my father every month

to support him. My older brother also provides financial support to my father.

Chinese adult children's financial transfers were partly determined by the needs of their parents. By contrast, some interviewees mentioned that they regularly give money to their parents, regardless of whether the latter needed financial support. The majority of participants indicated that they were prepared to help their parents and parents-in-law financially when necessary. However, money was a sensitive topic; some participants shared experiences of giving financial support but were less willing to discuss the amounts given or their own financial situation, whilst others refused to discuss financial support. Even so, nine young women mentioned that they received financial support from the elders rather than providing monetary support to them. For example, Nanan said:

When I married, my husband and I were not able to afford for an apartment. Both my parents and my parents-in-law qualified for pension benefits and they were the kind of middle class in a relatively good financial situation. Hence, they provided monetary assistance, paying the down payment for us. They were not expecting us to repay the money. We are not planning to give money to them every month, but we will definitely provide financial support when they need it.

Such accounts show that economic support between Chinese adult children and the elders were not only passed from the children to their parents, but also from the elders to their adult children. In addition, for those parents, like Nanan's, who were financially secure, monetary support was less of a key factor in fulfilling filial obligation. For instance, Qiuqiu, a 35 year old accountant from Changchun, said:

I do not provide any financial support for my parents. Their pensions and savings enable them to enjoy their life. They would like to give me some financial assistance, but I do not accept. We do give gifts to each other for birthdays and holidays. Other than that, we try to be independent financially.

While strong emphasis on the independence of nuclear family, which broke from the traditional Chinese value was made by Qiuqiu here, she demonstrated considerable commitment maintaining the tradition of filial piety in other respects (discussed below).

Gifts in kind are no less important in family exchanges. In addition to personal care and economic support, giving gifts is considered as another aspect of practicing filial obligation. Giving gifts is not only an economic exchange, but also a process of high context communication that conveys rich, symbolic meanings (Yue and Ng, 1999). For Chinese adult children, giving gifts is a way to express emotions, to show their care to their parents and can be considered as a more informal way to practice filial obligation than giving money. The majority of participants had experiences of giving gifts to the elders and sometimes these were quite extravagant. Chaochao, a high school teacher from Jilin said:

I buy gifts for my parents and parents-in-law for their birthdays and anniversaries. The type of gifts varies, including clothes, home appliances, gift cards, small leather goods or even services, like package tours and massages appointments. It does not really matter what the gift is. I will buy the things they need or they like, so they would feel happy with my xiaoxin (caring for parents). I think giving money is too formal and I prefer to do it in a more flexible and relaxed way of giving gifts.

The practice of giving gifts was also said to have a positive effect on strengthening relationships between adult children and their parents. Gifts are one way of demonstrating care for others, but there are less tangible ways of doing this that might be considered as practices of intimacy related to filial piety. One example is emotional and moral support.

Emotional and moral support includes listening, talking, giving advice and helping people to put their own lives in perspective (Finch, 1989). Within the Chinese context, emotional and moral support are more about following the advice of the parents, therefore making the parents happy. Some interviewees mentioned that their parents had looked forward to conversations about finding jobs and getting married. Letting parents know about their lives and listening to the parents words have been considered as part of *xiao*. The majority of participants said that they would try to make their parents happy and not bring them disgrace. However, some of them did not think that seeking their parents' advice was necessary. Filial piety was not regarded as a significant factor for decision making, rather practicing filial piety was mainly confined to satisfying parents' physical needs and comforts.

In addition, gender is an essential dimension in the practice of filial piety. In contemporary China, with the dramatic economic development, wider acceptance of Western beliefs and the implementation of the one-child policy, young women tend to have a better experience of gender equality than the older generation. Under the combined effects of the one-child policy, increasingly diverse employment opportunities and good educational opportunities, parents invest in their daughters' education as they did in their sons (Evans, 2008). A more matrifocal pattern of care and support (of daughters for their mothers) was reflected in Jackson, Ho and Na's (2013) sample from Hong Kong, which was considered as a reshaping of the tradition within modernity. Moreover, in rural families, the daughters' significant role in supporting their ageing parents was

one of the concerns for parents in investing resources in daughters as well as maintaining a good relationship with daughters both before and after marriage. The close relationship between daughters and their natal families suggested that the traditional stereotype of a married daughter as 'spilt water' has changed (Yan, 2009). My respondents did not say there were any differences in patterns of caring for their own parents and parents in law. In what follows I explore how the notion of *mianzi* influences women's practices of and attitudes to filial piety.

***Mianzi* and filial piety**

The interview data revealed that '*mianzi*' or 'face' was an essential cultural concept that influenced the practice of filial obligation.

Yiyi is a 31 year old doctor in Jilin who expressed her concern about *mianzi* in relation to her practice of taking care of older parents. Yiyi said:

I am the only child in my family. I live with my own parents, so that my mum could help for taking care of my little daughter. My husband is also the only child in his family, my parents-in-law are farmers and live in the rural area of Jilin. For my parents-in-law, we give them around 1500RMB (170GBP) every month, visiting them once a month and provide extra financial and physical support when they need. For my own parents, as we live together, I cover all their daily expenses and give some gifts on festivals. Generally, my husband and I would arrange a trip with the four older people annually and we pay for all the travelling expenses. As my parents and my parents-in-law are in good health, they do not need intensive physical care, hence, we do more for financial assistance and enhancing the quality of their life. To be honest, mianzi is a big concern in how I practice my obligation to the elders. I would say mianzi motivates me to do a good job on taking care of the

elders. I don't want to be seen as a mean person and feel embarrassed when taking about what I have done for my parents and parents-in law.

Yiyi's account reflected that the notion of *mianzi* was an element that impacted on her practice of filial piety. An explicit concern about *mianzi* was indicated by Yiyi, which was a factor motivating her actions and attitudes to elderly care. In this case, *mianzi* was understood as a thing that can be achieved, lost, saved or at least required to be maintained, which she explained in detail.

In our social network, we would be judged on how we treat the elders in our family. For example, I may lose mianzi if I fail to take the responsibility for taking care of the elders. Now I am considered by my colleagues and friends that as a xiao person – the image of a good daughter, daughter-in-law and wife which gains face for me. I am proud and feel happy with that. I think it's important to act properly to maintain face in the modern society.

Yiyi's expression indicated that a person's fulfillment of filial obligation was considered as a means of gaining face. Conversely, it could be considered as way of losing face if those obligations were not seen to be fulfilled. According to Qi's (2011) study on face and Chinese culture, face or *mianzi* is what a person feels about his or her image as it is seen through the eyes of others in the person's community, social group or wider public. Therefore, face is infused with various emotions. For example, the feeling of pride, honour and dignity is related to gaining face. In maintaining face, persons experience feelings associated with confidence and assurance. When someone loses face, they feel ashamed (Goffman, 1955). In this case, Yiyi intended to maintain her face through fulfilling her filial obligation, which was expected by her social group and the wider public. Yiyi gained a sense of happiness, pride and satisfaction through doing the elderly care activities which met the social expectations of an adult child. She seemed to regard her parents and parents-in-law in equal terms in this

regard. Moreover, Yiyi's experiences of *mianzi* and filial piety reflected two interrelated forms of face as a self-image conceptualised by Qi (2011). Firstly, face is an image possessed by a person through their interests in how they are considered or judged by others. In addition, face is a social representation of a person, reflecting the confidence, regard or respect others have for them (Qi, 2011). On the one hand, Yiyi's self image was built and shaped through her interactions with others and how she was viewed by others. On the other hand, Yiyi's self image was also a reflection of other's opinions of her.

As the concept of *mianzi* plays a significant role in social interaction and the operation of each person's social network, a person is not only expected to look after their own face, but also to maintain the face of others. For example, Zhenzhen, a teacher from Jiaohe, said:

My parents and my parents-in-law live in a same city as me. My mother asks me to come to see her at least once a week, otherwise she would be mei mianzi (losing face), because her friends in the community would think that she was abandoned by her adult child and regard me as a buxiao zi (unfilial children) if I do not visit her for a long time which resulted in her losing face. The similar things happened for my parents-in-law, they always mention the clothes, food, cooking devices, nearly all the things that I bought for them to their friends and relatives to show that they have a xiao daughter-in-law which would gain face for them. So I get a feeling that filial piety was not only a thing for me, but also an important aspect of the elders' mianzi and their social life. I am happy to do the things that would maintain or enhance their mianzi. Personally, I think it may also help with keeping a good relationship with elders.

Zhenzhen's words show how filial obligation includes the social obligation of giving face to their elders to enable them maintain their own positions in their

social circle. Again, like Yiyi, Zhenzhen seemed to treat her relatives equally. Thus, the achievement of face not only included what society provided to an individual, but also involved what that person offers to others in the society. These two sides of face were both accomplished through emotionally inflected social interactions within and beyond families.

In addition, the one-child policy has changed the tradition of multiple caregivers being available for the elder parents. It is common for a married couple (each of whom was an only child) to be responsible for looking after four parents in a family. Consequently, the young generation is more likely to experience conflicts between practicing filial obligation and other aspects of their life, such as paid work commitments and raising young children. Placing elderly parents in institutions, which might be seen as a solution to this problem, was a key theme discussed in the interviews with the young women in Jilin and was considered by most of them as a practice that would result in losing face. To explain this further I first need to provide some information on China's institutional care, before discussing young women's attitudes to and experiences of placing old parents in welfare institutions in relation to the concept of *mianzi*.

Institutional care as a challenge for *mianzi*

In China, it has long been accepted that family members are responsible for caring for elders rather than the wider society or the government. Compared with Western countries, in which care for elderly can be regarded as a state responsibility to some extent, no comprehensive welfare infrastructure or system of state provision for elderly care has been proposed in China. Specifically, in 1988, there were only 870 welfare institutions for elders, caring for 46,837 individuals in all of China, out of a population already exceeding 1 billion (Chen, 1996, p.115). At that time, Chinese institutional care was generally only provided for elders with 'Three-Nos' – with no children, no income and no relatives –

which meant that the vast majority of elders could only rely on their children for care (Zhan, Feng and Luo, 2008). By the 1990s, the economic reforms led to dramatic structural changes to welfare institutions. The government budget for social welfare services dropped from 0.58 percent of GDP in 1979 to 0.19 percent in 1997 (Shang, 2001). Some institutions had to find their own resources to support their budget, such as business donations and fees paid by individuals.

Over the last decade however, institutional care for the elderly has slowly increased in China, and multi-functional care institutions and nursing homes have emerged throughout China, particularly in metropolitan areas (Zhang, Feng and Luo, 2008). These institutions include both privately operated and public owned sectors. According to research conducted by the China National Research Centre in 2003, the percentage of institutionalisation among the elderly aged 65 and over was less than 2 percent. The cost of admission, boarding and services was covered by the government for the 'Three-Nos' elders. For the 85 percent of the institutionalised residents who were not considered as Three-Nos elders, admission and service fees were charged which varied depending upon the services provided and the regional location of the facility (Gu, Dupre and Liu, 2007).

I wanted to find out how young women reflected on these changes in institutional care in modern China? To what extent do they see it as an option for their own elders? The interviewees provide different perspectives and opinions.

Approximately ten interviewees indicated that familial elder care was an essential component of filial piety; taking care of parents in old age was a significant way to show respect to them. Conversely, to have no adult children to care for one in one's old age meant a loss of face. And placing elders in institutions has been considered *buxiao* behaviour, or being unfilial which

resulted in losing face for both the elders and their adult children. For example, Xiaoli, a factory worker from Jiaohe said:

My mother passed away five years ago. My father is 65 years old now, living alone in a same city as me. I have a brother who is 4 years older than me, because I am from the rural area of Jilin, where the one-child policy was not strictly implemented in the 1980s. I haven't thought about sending my father to any institutions or welfare centres. Currently my father and my parents-in-law still have the ability to take care of themselves. In the future, if they were sick or need some assistance on a daily basis, I would consider hiring a living in baomu (carer) rather than leaving them in an institution. From my perspective, your parents raised you up, it is taken for granted that you should take care of them when they get old. Placing elderly parents in institutions gives me a sense of abandoning my parents and destroying the concept of filial piety. It may also be seen as buxiao (unfilial) and I would feel 'meimianzi' (losing face) about that.

Xiaoli's expression not only reflected her attitudes to the traditional norm of filial piety, but also reflected the social mechanisms of the practice of familial obligation. She echoes the traditional Chinese saying: 'Your parents raised you up, no matter what you do, you would not be able to repay what your parents did for you'. In this sense, Chinese children experience a familial and social milieu in which the sense of obligation to return their parents' love and sacrifice is deeply rooted and has become part of their mentality (Qi, 2015). In other words, a sense of obligation for elderly parents has been considered as 'natural' and an inescapable component of parent-child relations (Ikels, 1993). Yet, even so another interviewee, Yanyan held more neutral attitudes to placing elderly parents in institutions and indicated that she would make arrangements based on the elders' own choices.

About institutional care, personally I do not have any preferences or comments on it. I would respect my parents or my parents-in-law's own choices. If they prefer to go to the welfare centre, I will try to find the place with good facilities and services and would like to pay for all the costs. If they express their preference for living at home, I will try to balance my life between working outside and looking after the elders and my child, because I am self-employed (working with my husband for our private owned dental care centre), therefore I am kind of flexible on my time arrangement. In addition, it would not really influence our financial situation if I choose to stay at home to take care of the elders and the family.

Yanyan has resources of both time and money for taking care of the elders and indicated that she could be there to take care of them if needed. Yanyan also mentioned her conversation with the elders on the choice of living in institutions which showed an acceptance of institutional care instead of reliance on adult children's care:

My husband and I already had a conversation about the arrangements for elderly care in my family. Actually, the four elderly parents highlighted the quality of their life rather than emphasised adult children's xiao behaviour. For example, my father-in-law said: "care institutions may provide better and more professional care than family members could, especially for those elders with serious health problems." Similarly, my mother also expressed her concern about the limitations of familial care provided at home when elders have to be alone during the working day. She said: "It would be good to stay in an institution where you have the chance to communicate with other older adults, sharing similar life experiences. The elders in my family are not that traditional people, they do understand our situation as the

“sandwich generation” and therefore do not expect us to provide assistance in daily activities and medical care. From their perspective, xiao can be practiced in different ways, including both providing proper care at home and placing elders in institutions.

As we can see from the conservation Yanyan reports, from her mother and father-in-law’s perspectives, being placed in elder care institutions was not treated as reneging on the obligations of filial piety. Moreover, recognising the time constraints on the adult children has been a factor that reduced the level of elders’ expectations for elderly care and widened the understanding of *xiao*. As we can see from Yanyan’s account, on the one hand, she has the resources and shows her willingness to care for her elders. On the other hand, she assumed that she will never actually be called upon to do elderly care. Yanyan’s flexibility and her parent’s acceptance of institutional care were not common among the interviewees. Only four participants indicated that they saw either home or institutional care as equally acceptable (depending on choices of the elders) three of them were, or used to be, housewives or self-employed. The majority of participants said that the elders in their families expressed their preference for being cared for at home in various ways rather than in institutions.

Jingjing, a journalist from Jilin was the only interviewee who had an elder in an institution. Her mother-in-law was in an elder care centre because, Jingjing said, she was not able to provide physical care due to her paid work commitments and childcare responsibility. She explained:

I am the only child in my family and it is the same for my husband. I have four elderly parents above, one young child below. My mother-in-law had been placed in an elder care centre for more than two years. She had a stroke three years ago, then had limited ability for everyday activities. The fact was that neither my husband nor I could take the responsibility for

looking after my mother-in-law by abandoning our job, because we both have to earn money to support the whole family, paying for the electricity bill, laundry, food, my child's study and the services fee for my mother-in-law's care in the centre. As a mother, it is also my responsibility to take care of my young child, paying attention to his study and development. In such a situation, I really have no possibility of taking care of her at home. Putting her in the elder care centre does not mean we are not xiao, rather, leaving her at home, we are not able to provide proper care...we have to work; work is very busy and stressful. I am thinking that placing my mother-in-law there is better than leaving her alone at home.

In giving this account Jingjing was in the process of saving face by explaining the reasons for choosing institutional care and the constraints and difficulties that prevented her from taking care of her mother in law by herself. In other words, Jingjing was making a legitimate excuse to highlight her inability to provide support for her mother in law, rather than being unwilling to do so. As Finch and Mason (1993) suggested, the concept of ability or inability to provide support is essential in constructing public norms of justificatory accounts of one's own actions or other people's. In this case, legitimacy matters very much to Jingjing personally, in terms of her own reputation and personal identity. Jingjing's words also summarised the situation of China's sandwich generation of adult children, caught between work commitment, childcare responsibility and elderly care responsibility. Work and childcare responsibilities were found to be two main reasons for adult children to consider placing elders in institutions. It should be noted that the majority of interviewees expressed nervousness and pressure about placing elders in institutions when their work and family responsibilities did not allow them to carry out proper physical care for parents as required by *xiao*. Their responses suggested that, in general, placing older parents in an institution is not widely acceptable for the elders and their adult children.

In addition to familial care by adult children or nannies and institutional care, being cared for by siblings or living with siblings to take care of each other were other choices mentioned by two interviewees. Huahua from Jilin mentioned that her father-in-law was cared for by his older sister. Another respondent, Lele, a teacher from Jiaohe, said:

My parents separated when I was a little girl, my mother had moved to Korea and remarried, my father was now alone in Liaoning (another province in northeast part of China), it takes around 5.5 hours driving from my city to my father's place. I have a 6 months daughter and work full-time in a high school, so actually I can do really limited physical care for my father. He has high blood pressure, sometimes feeling uncomfortable, therefore requiring assistance for cooking and cleaning. Taking into account of my unavailability (I am the only child), the geographical distance and my father's health situation, we have discussed about asking my aunt to move to my father's house to live together, so they could take care of each other. My aunt was my father's sister, five years younger than him. She lives in the same city with my father and has no partner or children besides. This idea was resulted from the fact that my father cannot accept the arrangement of being cared in institutions or being helped by nannies who he would treat as strangers and not reliable. So he proposed the idea of living together with his sister. However, it is a complex thing, I have to think a lot about it, for example, do I need to give money to my aunt, because she is kind of helping me to practice familial obligation? If my aunt was sick, what extent of financial support should I provide? It's not as simple as just two old siblings living together.

Lele's words illustrated that providing elderly care was not limited only to adult children and nannies, but also could involve the elders' siblings. However, a dilemma arose from such an arrangement, for example, Lele felt confused about

her obligation to her aunt, as the moral responsibility was not clear. The aunt would be taking on the daughter's filial obligation, rather than fulfilling her own obligation as a sibling to care. She is therefore a proxy provider of *xiao*, which seems to mean the father's daughter has a filial obligation to the aunt on that basis, and not on the basis of the relationship between aunt and niece. Before moving to the concluding discussion, I will explore the importance of displaying *xiao* to young women's own and the elders' face and establishing themselves as good, filial daughters and daughters-in-law.

Displaying *xiao*

The concept of *xiao* has historically developed and is generally discussed in the Confucian context. The mobility of social science concepts from one cultural or social context to another has recently been considered as a significant contribution to the development of social science 'on a world scale' (Connell, 2007). For example, Goffman's (1955) argument relied on the Chinese conception of face. Having discussed filial piety in relation to the concept of '*mianzi*', it becomes clear that it is not enough for a daughter or daughter in law to be filial, she has to be seen to be fulfilling her obligations in order to maintain her own and her elders' *mianzi*. In other words, because of the need to gain and the fear of losing face, *xiao* needs to be displayed. This resonates with the concept of 'displaying families', which was introduced by Janet Finch (2007). The concept of 'displaying families' was developed within the Western cultural and social context. Applying it to the Chinese context, incorporating the relevant Chinese concepts, '*xiao*' and '*mianzi*', may aid in understanding the ways the women in my sample practiced filial piety.

Finch's concept of 'displaying families' and Morgan's (1996) of 'doing family' highlighted the importance of understanding family through social and relational practices. Which means that a family is defined more in relation to family

activities, rather than just referring to blood or legal ties (Heaphy, 2011). The ‘doing family’ perspective considers families as social projects or achievements. It aims at exploring how families are actually lived. The practice of *xiao* can therefore be seen as integral to ‘doing family’ in Chinese contexts. The notion of displaying family was defined as ‘the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute “doing family things” and thereby confirm that these relationships are “family” relationships’ (Finch, 2007, p. 67). Moreover, the need to display is also related to the nature of contemporary family dynamism and contingency. Within the context of the increasing fluidity, diversity and multi-facetedness of family, displaying has become a significant aspect of family life (Heaphy, 2011).

Finch’s (2007) emphasis on social interaction is central to the idea of display. She indicated that display is ‘the conveying of meanings through social interaction and the acknowledgment of this by relevant others’ (Finch, 2007, p. 77). The concept of displaying therefore, not only focuses on embodied or visual practices, but also includes family narratives. Three key questions were addressed in the development of the concept of displaying families: Why is display important in contemporary families? How is displaying done? To whom do ‘my family relationships’ need to be displayed? Hence, when it comes to experiencing and negotiating obligations within families, the concept of display provides a particular emphasis on who matters, that is the audience involved in displaying. According to my qualitative data, the practice of filial obligation is treated as a process of displaying *xiao* to multiple audiences, such as parents, relatives, friends and colleagues and is closely bound up with maintaining *mianzi*. For example, Jingjing (whose mother in law was in an institution) was displaying *xiao* to me as an interviewer through her narrative account which emphasised that she was not *buxiao* because being in a care home was actually a good arrangement for her mother in law. She was therefore showing and seeking to

convince me that she was a good daughter in law who has fulfilled her filial obligation, and thereby saved face.

The audience for display does not necessarily have to be immediately present in the women's social milieu. Therefore, it is also important to propose the notion of future audience when thinking about displaying. As *xiao* is considered as inheritable through generations, it is the case that aspects of the meaning of filial piety are displayed for future audiences or the imagined audience constituted by individual social actors. For example, Qiuqiu, who stated that she and her parents live independently and in this respect were not traditional, nonetheless when considering the next generation as the potential audience, went out of her way to instill traditional practices in her son. Whilst she has been released from certain obligations by her elders, she was not releasing her son from his obligation to her in her old age. Qiuqiu said:

I try to do my best to take responsibility for looking after the elders in my family, not only for fulfill my obligation as an adult child, but also for being a moral model for my son and future my daughter in law. My son is 8 years old, he has been at the age to start to observe and to imitate others. One day, he said: "Mum, you treat my grandma well, you bought some beautiful clothes for her. I will do that for you when I grow up". Then I am thinking that what I am doing actually impacts on my son's behaviour and views on xiao. I am also intending to build a good reputation for my family through practicing filial obligations. Therefore, in the future, it would show my daughter-in-law the tradition of good care for the elders in our family, then hopefully she would do a good job in elderly care as well.

In this case, Qiuqiu not only regarded her son as an audience, but also imagined the presence of a daughter-in-law as a future audience. We can see that the caring for parents has future ongoing display implications, even though some

audience members for such a display may not yet be known. The process of practicing filial obligation provided a moment for Qiuqiu to convey a family identity – and reputation – reflecting one aspect of the parents’ background.

In addition, audiences are not simply passive observers of displays of family practices, but could also determine display. According to Finch (2007) family practices are constituted by the actions performed and the decisions made by family members. Hence, this suggests that individuals involved in family practices play a significant role in controlling family displaying. For example, one of my interviewees, Dandan shared her experience of negotiating responsibilities for elderly care with her sister:

I am from a small village in Shandong (a province in Northern China). I moved to Jilin for my undergraduate study, settling down and getting married when I graduated, now I am a teacher in a primary school. My parents used to do some small business in the village, but now they have retired, mostly relying on the financial support from me and my sister. My sister is four years younger than me, she is unemployed and lives in the same village with my parents. When it comes to the question of how we should divide the responsibility for taking care of the parents? My sister said: “I am hoping that you could do a bit more for the elderly, especially for the financial support. You have a stable job and are in a much better financial situation than me, also you are the older sister in the family”. Then I feel that I have to give money to my parents, otherwise I am buxiao and I am not a good sister.

As we can see from Dandan’s experience, asking and offering assistance in families involves not only the exchange of services, money and goods, but also negotiations about family responsibilities. In this case, Dandan’s sister was putting forward a lack of resources specifically as an explanation of inability to

provide support and as a reason to expect Dandan's help in financial aspect. Through the process of negotiation, she explored what kind of responsibility was reasonable for herself and her sister. Here the interaction could be considered as a meaning making-activity by family members showing how the decisions and practices of displaying could be controlled and shaped by family members.

One of the key practices of displaying *xiao* is to 'be there' with and for the elders, which might be regarded as an 'embodied' form of display. 'Being there' emerged as a central theme in relation to filial piety in my study. For a number of my participants, a key problem for practicing filial obligation was not 'being there' because of a lack of time to spend with elders and the physical distances meant withdrawing from emotional care and family activities. Geographical distance and time availability were considered as two main reasons which led to the adult children's absence from displaying *xiao*. For example, Ruirui, a 32 year old teacher said:

I am in Jilin, my parents are in Tianjin. It takes me at least 6 hours for a single journey from Jilin to Tianjin by train. As such, it's impossible for me to visit my parents regularly. I could only return to my hometown during the national holiday, generally once or twice a year.

Another participant, Yueyue who is a factory worker, told me:

There are two children in my family, my son is 6 year old and my step daughter is studying in a secondary school. I have been struggling with being a working mother, taking care of two children as well as my husband and being a competent employee in the company. I feel that I have made use of every minute in my life. I want to spend more time with my parents, having family dinner and travelling with them, but I just have no time for it.

Yet, respondents recognised that the elders gained a sense of satisfaction and security through time spent with their adult children. An example was given by Chaochao, a teacher from Jilin:

I live in a same city as my mother (my parents separated several years ago and now my mother lives alone). Generally, I take my child to her home on weekends. My mother said: "I am looking forward to the weekend during weekdays, because you will come to see me, that's the time for me to enjoy tianlunzhile (the happiness of a family reunion). I feel happy everytime I see you. And I know you are not far from me, if I am sick or anything happens, you would be here with me". Then I recognize that my presence is really important for my mother. I am the person who inspires her and I am her back-up.

By contrast, for those interviewees who were "not there" to display families, a wide range of ways are considered to fulfill their filial obligation, including communication by phone, giving gifts and money.

Concluding discussion

This chapter discussed Chinese young women's practicing of filial obligation in relation to the concepts of displaying family and *mianzi* in the context of a new family configuration and the inadequate social welfare. It has been found that filial obligation to provide care and support for the elders continues to play a significant role in contemporary China. A number of factors seem to support filial piety in China, including the Confucian family ideology, the absence of state-provision of welfare and the continuing inter-generational interdependency of family members. What has changed, however, is the way in which filial obligation is performed and the attitudes and emotions associated with family obligation. The practice of *xiao* is constrained by the resources that the adult

children have, including time availability, financial situation and the geographical distance. The providing of personal care, economic support, gifts in kind and emotional and moral support is also determined by the elders' needs. For example, the sample includes wealthier families where aged persons do not need economic support, but also those with parents in rural areas who are left with no option but to rely on their adult children's economic support. In addition, fulfilling filial obligation and also being seen to be fulfilling this obligation by others, is considered as an activity to gain face for both the adult children and their older parents. Display occurred in different ways from embodied elements like 'being there' and visiting parents, and spending time together. But it also occurred through narrative accounts where the respondents said their elderly family members talked about things that were bought for them by their adult children. Conversely, placing the elders in institutions reduced the opportunities for display and was regarded by some respondents as *buxiao* (unfilial), which could lead to losing face.

In this study, the data adds to the evidence of display as a means through which family identities are constituted and reinforced in social networks. The data suggests that display is something that is self-determined but can also be controlled by others and in both cases involves concerns about *mianzi*. With this focus on *mianzi*, the analysis has shown how the absence of opportunities for display has its own meaning in the family life and highlights how aspects of non-display add to the concept of display. For example, for a large section of my participant sample, being present was crucial to fulfilling their obligations to take care of the older parents and maintain familial relationships. Conversely, in terms of potential threats or destabilisation of *xiao*, it seemed that when respondents could not 'be there', it does not mean that they have let go of the traditional practice of *xiao*, but rather may be trapped in a dilemma and must find alternative ways to display *xiao* through money, or through seeking a proxy *xiao* provider, such as the aunt and/or by constructing alternative narrative accounts.

In addition, even if the older parents do not express a need for support and live independently, the practice of *xiao* may still be transferred to the young generation.

By applying the Western concept of ‘displaying family’ to the Chinese context, I considered that wider relationships and negotiations were involved in the concept and in filial practices. In Goffman’s (1955) definition, ‘face’ refers to individualised identities, everybody has a unique and self-defined face through performance of self in others’ presence. However, the self-oriented and individual-based definition does not fully capture the meaning of *mianzi* in Chinese context. My data reveals that the young women define and put themselves in relation to others when practicing filial obligation and they cultivate morality so that their conduct will not lose others’ face. Hence, Chinese *mianzi* is not just an individual’s behaviour, but shared by others in the relational network. For example, not only the elder’s own actions affect their face, but others, such as the daughter and daughter-in-law may affect the elder’s face through their actions. In addition, my data suggests that emotional feeling was another aspect of *mianzi*. It included individuals’ desire to satisfy the other’s expectation as well as their own, to give face.

The necessity of engaging in particular forms of display is a response to wider societal expectations of being a *xiao* daughter or daughter-in-law (Haynes and Dermott, 2011), and in the Chinese case, this can be explicitly understood in terms of *mianzi*. Thus the display of family is frequently prompted by outsiders and may be imposed on family members. The interviewees’ experiences in this study revealed that the traditional Confucian ideology and concept of *xiao* were considered important when thinking about how to practice their filial obligations, and be seen to be practicing them. However, arguably, the practice of *xiao* is under threat due to processes of urbanisation and the changes in family demographics following the one-child-policy which leaves many families with

only one child to provide elder care as there are no siblings to share the burden. Conceivably, it makes it harder to practice *xiao*, but also to indulge in forms of family display. The data suggests that there may be subtle differences occurring in the forms of display with a shift from more embodied practices (like ‘being there’ or providing direct care) to more visual and narrative accounts that make the financial contributions given by children more visible (talking about the clothes and holidays that were provided by the adult children for example). But there was insufficient data to explore these more subtle differences in any depth. Still this is worthy of further investigation to understand the adjustments that are being made in traditional filial practices, how the treatment of parents and parents-in-law might be manifest differently and the implications this raises for family relationships in modern China and for policy. My participants’ accounts indicate the importance of acknowledging the wider social implications of the meanings attached to ‘doing family’ and thus how the concept of display can be usefully applied to various aspects of family life. I bring Western and Chinese concepts into dialogue with each other in my analysis, thereby illustrating how concepts can be transformed from one cultural or social context to another and make a new contribution to the understanding of filial piety practices in contemporary China.

Chapter Seven Concluding discussion

Introduction

In this thesis, I have explored young Chinese women's views on and experiences of balancing working life and family life in northern China. As previous literature suggests (Ling and Powell, 2001; Yang et al., 2000), it is necessary to examine the social, cultural and economic factors relevant to how the Chinese women balance work and family. By examining a population who grown up under the one-child policy, the economic reform and the rapid social changes, this study contributes to the work-family literature by expanding our understanding of work-family issues in this broader social context.

Drawing upon semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 34 young mothers, I focused on three main issues. Firstly, I discussed the meanings and practices of domestic labour in contemporary China. Secondly, I examined young mothers' daily journeys and those of their family members while coordinating work, care and education, by providing contrasting examples of the daily journeys made in five families. Thirdly, I explored young Chinese women's attitudes to and practices of filial piety, applying the concept of 'family practices' and 'displaying family' to the Chinese context through the link between *xiao* and *mianzi*. In this conclusion, I will start with a self-reflection on the whole process of my PhD journey and will revisit my motivations for researching this topic. Then, I will move on to discuss change and continuity in gender relations and family practices as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder the finding of a balance between working life and family life, followed by an outline of the research limitations, suggestions for future research and contributions.

Self-reflection

I recall the moment when I attended the PhD introduction day at the Centre for

Women's Studies nearly four years ago. I was listening to the other students' research topics and experiences, feeling excited and dreaming of my own research. Now the time has finally come for me to conclude my four-year-long journey of conducting this research. As I reflect upon the years I have invested in this project, I could say that every aspect of the study has taken me into different but challenging experiences. The first challenge started while I was reading through the literature, identifying the research questions and developing an appropriate research methodology. As I did my undergraduate degree in Journalism and my Master's in Corporate Communication and Reputation Management, I had little knowledge about gender studies and initially understood work-family issues from a more managerial perspective. Through reading the suggested literature and discussing the subject with my supervisors, I became more familiar with the theoretical background of work-family balance and gradually built up the blueprint for the rest of my journey. The foundation stage was especially helpful as it allowed me to decide on the methodological approach to use in this study. Although my journey of approaching participants and conducting interviews was complicated by the culture of caution and interviewees' unfamiliarity with qualitative research, I gained access to 34 respondents from various segments of Chinese society by snowballing techniques. On reflection, I found that it was most rewarding to consider myself as both an insider and an outsider in the process of conducting interviews, therefore able to adequately represent the interviewees' experiences, but at the same time keeping a critical distance from the population and thus increasing the veracity of the data gathered.

When I finished my fieldwork in China and returned to the UK in September 2014, I started analysing my data and drafting the data analysis chapters. In retrospect, the shaping of these chapters was a slow process, which was partly due to the fact that I was struggling to connect my data with the theoretical framework. From this experience, I learned that it is easier and more effective to

start from the data, connecting my findings to earlier research and the points of my research questions, rather than using an existing framework to direct my analysis. In addition, I have applied Western concepts, such as ‘coordination points’ (Skinner, 2003) and ‘displaying family’ (Finch, 2007) to facilitate my discussion on Chinese women’s attitudes towards work-family balance, which created new connections between theory and data.

Throughout the process of conducting this project, I realised that I was also having to find a way to combine my studies with other parts of my life, although I had initially believed that I would not encounter the ‘balance’ issue as I did not have a paid job and was not married. Indeed, I found that I was always managing multiple roles in my life, as a PhD student, a part-time worker, a daughter and a friend, which drove me to think about the nature of balance and contributed to my thinking and the development of this project. Therefore, this thesis not only helped to develop me as a researcher, but also enabled me to reflect on myself as an individual. Having reflected on the process of conducting this project, I will now turn to my conclusions on the main findings emerging from this research.

Gender relations and family practices in China: change and continuity

Discussions about work-family balance are centrally about gender from the outset. This study places its emphasis on young women’s experiences and attitudes to work-family balance, providing empirical data that assisted in re-evaluating the implications of the relationship between work and family for gender equality in contemporary China. According to my data, women retain the primary responsibility for housework, childcare and filial obligation, which reveals the persistent gender inequality within families. Specifically, women practise their symbolic gender roles through the amount and type of housework they perform and provide personal services according to men’s requirements and

preferences, freeing men from housework and prioritising men's careers. My findings suggest that a variety of work was done by wives, ranging from undertaking the general household chores, such as cooking and cleaning, to making direct contributions to the men's occupations and giving moral support. By drawing on a gender perspective, I argue that women's participation in domestic labour is less about what women do in families, and is far more about the meaning of their participation and their attitudes towards and practices of domestic labour. The traditional gender ideology of 'male breadwinner, female carer' has been found to be an essential factor that influences the gendered division of labour, which partly explains the fact that the majority of participants did not consider the dual burden that was placed on women to be problematic or unfair.

However, now in the 21st century, the promotion of gender equality of the Mao era seems to have been forgotten and the traditional gender ideology and gender inequality persists, which has resulted in a double burden of work, in both the domestic and external spheres. The reverse trend of gender equality in post Mao China has been stressed by a number of scholars. For example, it was pointed out that the Maoist gender ideology which emphasises erasing gender differences in order to enhance women's labour participation has been transformed to the post Maoist ideology which essentializes gender differences so as to meet the demands of labour reduction for a market economy (Rofel, 1999; Jacka, 1997). This is not to say that Maoist gender ideology has been completely forgotten or replaced in contemporary China, but it hints the fact that gender equality might have stagnated or perhaps declined in certain areas due to the post Mao economic and social transformation. In the Mao Era, women's participation in the economy and society was considered essential for the sake of economic development. Women's job security was guaranteed for a life time and collectivization made it possible to improve women's pay. While women still undertook the majority of domestic work, a wide range of welfare services was provided for urban women

in *danwei*, such as the provision of housing, dining halls, free medical care and kindergartens. While these provisions varied according to regions and the size of the enterprises, they are generally considered to have facilitated women's participation in the labour market as well as work-life balance. For example, dining halls enable people to eat together, therefore making it easier for women to manage cooking activities within families. In addition, the childcare services reduced women's burden of childcare and reduced barriers for them to enter the labour market. Home-work balance has been recognised as one of the most important positive features of the *danwei* system (Chai, 2014). However, by introducing the economic reform and abandoning the egalitarian ideal behind collectivization, certain functions of *danwei* in the pre-reform China have been displaced or at least weakened by the market. For instance, the majority of enterprises stopped providing childcare services to their employees due to the increasing pressure for profits. Gender discrimination and pay inequality in the labour force is rising.

In terms of how the young generation give meanings to their parents' and their own experience of gender equality, a 'structured forgetting' has been noted in young women's identity, whereby young women equate consumption and the pursuit of wealth with freedom and politics with constraint, therefore forgetting that the older generation 'who came of age under Maoism felt empowered by the transgression of gender boundaries enabled by calls for women to participate fully in socialist construction' (Rofel, 2007, p.125). For the older generation, politics was not a constraint, but rather an inspiration which gave meaning to their whole lives and to the tasks they engaged in. In line with this, the traditional patriarchal ideology and gender disparity have found to be factors that continue to influence young women's attitudes to and practices of domestic work and filial obligation.

As with domestic labour, women in this study practised filial obligation through

a wide range of activities, including personal care, economic support, gifts in kind and emotional and moral support. It has been found that filial obligation to provide care and support for elders continues to play a significant role in contemporary China. The factors that contribute to supporting filial piety include Confucian family ideology, the absence of any state provision of welfare and the continuing inter-generational interdependency of family. What has changed is the way in which filial obligation is performed and the attitudes and emotions associated with family obligations. By drawing on the Western concept of 'displaying family', the findings indicate substantial differences occurring in the forms of displaying 'xiao', with a shift from more embodied practices, such as 'being there', visiting elders and spending time together, to narrative accounts in which the respondents said their elderly family members talked about things that were bought for them by their adult children. Conversely, placing elders in institutions reduced the opportunity for display and was regarded by some respondents as unfilial, which could lead to losing face. This data adds to the evidence of display as a means through which family identities are constituted and reinforced in social networks. It suggests that display is self-determined but can also be controlled by others and involves concerns about *mianzi*.

Just as women take most of the responsibility for housework and childcare, they are also most likely to be the ones involved in arranging and coordinating family activities and their use of services. One of the most striking and unexpected aspects of the interviews with the young working mothers was the complexity and difficulty of managing their daily journeys, as they are not only transporting their child around, but also sourcing the necessary formal and informal support as well as coordinating these together into a package for the whole family.

While the gendered division of labour seems to be persistent across daily arrangements, housework, childcare and filial obligation, my findings also suggest that obligations between women and men are negotiable. There are cases

showing adaptation and greater gender equality, which involved an explicit negotiation of gender roles and care responsibilities, but the results of these negotiations varied. This also reflected gender as a process, a question of doing rather than being. Therefore, gender is not something that is fixed prior to particular strategies of work-family balance, but gender identities can also be constructed in the process of balancing work and family and understood as in part emerging out of the negotiations and strategies.

To sum up, despite their active involvement in paid work, women still undertake a greater share of domestic work and caring. While the changes in attitudes and practices have been seen in terms of the division of domestic labour and filial piety, the gender gap in unpaid work is still considerable, which presents challenges for women in balancing paid and unpaid work. Hence, in what follows, I will discuss the factors that facilitate or hinder a balance between work and family.

Factors that facilitate or hinder a balance between work life and family life

Grandparents – a double-edged sword

Grandparents have been found to be particularly important in the Chinese context in supporting working mothers by helping with childcare and housework. In this study, the data showed a trend consistent with other research on grandparenting in China (Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Goh, 2009), which indicated that grandparents were an important resource and an integral part of young families. Through exploring young mothers' and their family members' daily journeys, I found that grandparents were the main source of childcare support on weekdays; they were involved in transporting the child between home and school, helping with preparing lunch and dinner and providing backup support when necessary. In some cases, the grandparents' home was the central point of the interviewee's

daily life, while it also happened that grandparents migrated to the mother's city and lived with the family to provide support for coordinating work, care and education on a daily basis. In addition to childcare support, grandparents also assisted in household chores, such as cooking meals and doing grocery shopping. They were not only physically engaged in childcare and household tasks, but also influenced the young couple's attitudes towards the domestic division of labour within families.

The data revealed that the traditional expectation of being a 'virtuous wife and good mother' has not relaxed among the older generation of women, which was reflected in the way that maternal grandparents taught their daughters to respect their husbands and to take responsibility for the 'inside' issue, while paternal grandparents supported their sons' neglect of housework. As such, grandparents act as doubled-edged swords in balancing work and family. On the one hand, they help the women and provide support for childcare and housework, therefore filling in the gaps of daily coordination and reducing women's burden of childcare and housework, which was an important factor in facilitating work-family balance. On the other hand, they tend to have a negative impact on the equal division of household labour within the family due to their traditional gender expectations, which hinders the achievement of work-family balance. When it came to the reason for grandparents' heavy involvement in support for adult children and their families, one factor was China's early retirement age, which is expected to undergo changes over the next few years.

As I have revealed in this study, grandparents' support in the form of childcare and housework is closely related to the fact that China has a relatively early mandatory retirement age. Currently, China's retirement age is 60 for men and 55 for women who are public servants, and 50 for female blue-collar employees, with some exceptions for people with a certain standing in the hierarchy. In December 2015, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security

announced that China will gradually raise its statutory retirement age; the plan will be set up in 2017 and implemented in 2022 after a five-year transitional period (Xinhua Net, 2016). The green paper on population and labour published by the Institute of Population and Labour Economics and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences suggested that, from 2018, the retirement age for women should be raised by one year every three years and one year every six years for men, which means that the retirement age would be 65 for both men and women by 2045. The government's plan to raise the retirement age is a response to China's shrinking workforce and ageing population, which has begun to put pressure on the country's labour market and pension system. The current retirement system was formulated in 1953, at a time when the average life expectancy was 45, while it had reached 76.3 by the end of 2015 (China Statistical Yearbook, 2016). Accordingly, in combination with the one-child policy, the number of working-age people in China fell by 4.9 million in 2015 and 3.71 million in 2014, which illustrates that fewer young workers are entering the labour force while the number of retirees is growing (Zheng, 2016). Taking into account the need both to balance population development and to address the challenge of an ageing population, China has announced the end of the one-child policy and is now promoting a two-child policy, allowing each couple to have two children. Although the two-child policy applies nationwide, it will mostly affect the urban population because the one-child policy was never fully implemented in rural areas (Liu, 2017).

These two recent changes, of easing family planning restrictions and postponing the retirement age, have attracted attention and controversy in China. It has been argued that the later retirement age may undermine the government's efforts to encourage families to have a second child, because Chinese families have traditionally relied on grandparents for support with childcare (Zhang and Li, 2017). In addition, the fact that the grandparents would no longer be available to help with childcare due to the change in retirement age would make it more

difficult for women to combine paid work and family life, which in turn may result in their withdrawal from the labour force. My data shows that the majority of participants relied heavily on grandparents for support with daily arrangements, particularly for transporting the children between school and home on a daily basis. While the exact ages of the grandparents is unknown in this study, it generally ranged between 50 and 60. Then the question arises: how would the mothers manage to coordinate work, care and education without the support from retired grandparents? And how would this influence the gendered division of labour within families? Importantly, how would it influence the current work-family balance situation in China? These questions provide directions for future research.

Long working hours and employer-determined flexible arrangements act as a hindrance to work-family balance

Long working hours have been found to have a significant impact on women's care commitments. In many contexts, ideal workers are regarded as those who demonstrate 'commitment' to long working hours. In the case of a manager in this study, the long working hours and unpredictability of work schedules led to the family's arrangement of letting the child live outside the parental home with an aunt on weekdays. Therefore, the working mother's commitment to paid work was achieved at the cost of sacrificing her family life. It was also mentioned by other participants, particularly those in lower socio-economic groups, that they were assessed by their 'face time', which illustrated the expectation of being visible in the workplace and the management practice of encouraging and manipulating employees to put in extra voluntary effort to improve performance. Apart from the long working hours, flexible working arrangements, which were organised in favour of employers, were also factors that worked against achieving a balance between work and family roles.

While flexible working arrangements have been considered helpful in facilitating work-family balance by a number of scholars (Den Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes, 2007; Allen et al., 2013), I argue that whether flexible working arrangements increase the time bind or unbind time depends to some extent on the voluntary or compulsory nature of such scheduling. For example, it has been found that non-standard working hours that are a requirement of the employer rather than the young working mother's own choice, make it difficult for women to transport their child in the morning and to accomplish their roles as mothers. Flexible working arrangements tend to be organised in favour of the employer in China. For the young working mothers in my sample, control over working arrangements depended largely on their labour-market position; hence, they felt that they had no option but to work long hours, which acted as a hindrance to work-family balance.

Overall, the negative impact of long working hours and employer-controlled flexible arrangements on families emerged very clearly, including less involvement in children's activities and frequent disruption to family activities. The demands and pressures of employment might seem, in many cases, to limit the range of options available to working mothers wishing to play more active parenting roles.

Welfare and policy

The one-child policy has been found to be a factor that is related to young women's experiences of work-family balance. On the one hand, the implementation of the one-child policy and the dramatic economic development that followed has enhanced women's overall educational achievement, which enables them to live more independently and to have a better experience of gender equality than the older generation. On the other hand, this policy has ended the tradition of multiple caregivers being available for elderly parents. As

a result, the burden for taking care of elders has potentially been increased, as no sibling support is available. Consequently, for the young generation who were born after 1980, the practice of filial obligation is under threat due to processes of urbanisation and the changes in family demographics following the one-child policy, and they are more likely to experience conflicts between practising *xiao* and other aspects of their life, such as paid work commitments and raising young children.

Apart from the one-child policy, the absence of state-provided welfare and the continuing inter-generational interdependency of family members also seem to support filial piety in China. The changes in the care economy resulting from policy reforms, alongside a demographic transition to families with more elders, have intensified the tensions between women's dual roles as income earners and caregivers. For young working mothers, the absence of public childcare services for children under three years old has led to a heavy reliance on grandparents for support and makes it more complex and difficult for families to coordinate work, care and education.

To sum up, long working hours and employer-imposed flexible working arrangements, alongside the absence of any state provision of welfare, have been found to be factors that hinder the balance between working life and family life. Grandparents act as a double-edged sword, facilitating work-family balance by providing support for childcare and housework, but negatively influencing the equal division of household labour due to traditional gendered expectations. Having summarised the factors that facilitate or hinder the balance between working life and family life, I will now turn to discussing the limitations of this research, suggestions for future studies and the contributions of this work.

Limitations, suggestions for future research and

contributions

Although this study contributes to the empirical literature on work-family balance for the young generation of women in China, there are methodological limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the results. While the snowball sampling technique is considered particularly useful in recruiting participants in the East Asian context, it is possible that the sample may include an over-representation of individuals with social connections who share similar characteristics (Salter et al., 2010). In order to overcome this limitation, I recruited participants with various occupations in four locations in Jilin Province. However, the fact that the sample is made up of women from a specific age group and that most women are in marital relationships with children makes it clear that this sample has particular characteristics, therefore limiting the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, it should be noted that the interviews in this study were only conducted with women. The men and the grandparents' voices are not heard, even though they play essential roles in the work-family balance issue and influence women's experiences of and attitudes to balancing paid work and family responsibilities in different ways. Therefore, the findings must be regarded with caution as they only represent women's perspectives and experiences. This limitation also provides some insights into possible directions for future research.

Although increasing attention has been paid to the management of work-family balance in China, given that the Chinese government recently relaxed the one-child policy and proposed a plan to increase the retirement age, future research should examine how these changes affect work-family issues and how individuals adapt to these wider social changes. In addition, substantial differences among interviewees in terms of their attitudes to and practices of domestic labour, filial obligation and coordination of paid work and care responsibility have been observed in my interview data. This finding underscores

the importance of increasing research attention to expand on the relationship between individual circumstances (e.g. employment status and educational background) and gender-role attitudes and the strategies employed in combining work and family. Thirdly, this study reveals that the ways of displaying *xiao* have transferred from more embodied practices (such as ‘being there’ and providing direct care) to more visual and narrative accounts that make the financial support from children more visible (e.g. talking about the clothes that were given by the adult children). Hence, as suggested in Chapter Five, future research could investigate the adjustments that are being made in traditional filial practices, how the treatment of parents and parents-in-law might be manifested differently and the implications of this for family relationships in modern China and for government policy.

Work-family balance has received increasing attention from scholars and policy makers in recent years. However, prior studies have been primarily focused on Western countries. This study contributes to addressing a gap in the studies analysing work-family conflict in China by examining subjective experiences of coordinating work and care on a daily basis, reflecting the diversity of young-generation women’s attitudes to and practices of domestic labour and filial piety and providing a more comprehensive understanding of how young mothers integrate their work and family roles. More specifically, work-family balance seems to be synonymous with gender issues within the Chinese context, which is consistent with Western scholars’ consideration of work-life balance as an issue which is fundamentally linked with gender justice (Morgan, 2011; McKie and Callan, 2012). While the challenges and difficulties of balancing work life and family life for women have been more widely seen as a global issue in literature, this study reveals the difference in terms of the social and cultural context that influence the nature of work-family balance as well as women’s interpretation of their gender divisions and the coping strategies employed in daily practice in the East and West. In this study, women are found to be those who take main

responsibilities for childcare, housework and filial obligation, as well prioritising their husbands' careers. Despite the fact that the one-child policy has led to a reduction in childcare work for married couples, childcare and elderly care responsibilities continue to fall upon women disproportionately, in spite of the fact that most of them work full time. In line with previous studies, the Confucian ideology and traditional gender expectation of 'men outside and women inside' continue to be important factors that contribute to the gendered division of labour. Compared with many Western countries in which individuals, government, employers and policy makers are all involved in facilitating work-family balance, the negotiation between work commitment and care responsibilities is perceived to be in the realm of personal domain in China, hence, coping strategies are also more individual driven. The majority of participants rely on family networks, primarily grandparents for supporting their daily journeys and childcare activities. Apart from maternity leave, they did not expect their employers to provide provisions for facilitating work-family balance or express a need for 'family friendly' policies.

By employing qualitative research methods, it provided detailed information about how young mothers perceive and give meaning to their work and family situations. Moreover, I bring Western and Chinese concepts into dialogue with each other in my analysis, thereby illustrating how concepts can be transposed from one cultural or social context to another and make a new contribution to our understanding of the continued family changes and distinctive context of work and family in China. Recognition of the importance of gender, work and family factors in forming women's attitudes and practices related to work-family issues could play a role in the construction of policies aimed at improving work-family balance.

Appendix I Interview schedule

A. Personal characteristics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your employment status and occupation? (e.g. self-employed, unemployed and seeking work, full-time)
3. What is your occupation?
4. What is your husband's employment status and occupation?
5. How many hours per day do you usually work?
6. What is your marital status?
7. Are you the only child in your family?

B. Daily life

1. What is your typical day? Take today, for instance, what did you do?
2. What is your day routine on weekends?
3. What is your day routine when your child is on holiday?
4. How do you feel about doing housework?
5. What housework do you and your husband do?
6. How do you feel about the current housework distribution in your family?
7. What do you think of gender equality in your family?

C. Filial obligation

1. Tell me about your family.
2. Who lives with you?
3. How do you get on with your parents and parents in law?
4. What about your parents when they get old?

D. Childcare

1. How old is your child?
2. What things you enjoy do with children?

3. Who is the caregiver for your children? What do you like about it?
4. What is the physical arrangement for your child? Who takes the child to school?
Who picks the child from school?
5. How do the physical arrangements fit in your work?
6. How your husband helps with the childcare?
7. What do you think of having another child?

E. Work-family conflict

1. What is like being a working mother?
2. What thing you enjoy of being a working mother?
3. How your job fit in the domestic responsibility?
4. What support and help would like from your husband and employer?
5. How do you feel about the gender equality in China?

Appendix II Consent form for participants

Research project: How to balance work life and family life: the effect of work-family conflict for young generation women in contemporary China

Researcher: YI ZHANG PhD in Centre for Women's Studies

The University of York

Consent form for participants

This form is for you to state whether or not you agree to take part in the study. Please read and answer every question. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

Have you read and understood the information leaflet about the study? Yes No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the study? Yes No

Do you understand that the information you provide will be held in confidence by the research team? Yes No

Do you understand that you may withdraw from the study for any reason, without affecting any services you receive? Yes No

Do you understand that the information you provide may be used in future research? Yes No

Do you agree to take part in the study? Yes No

If yes, do you agree to your interviews being recorded? Yes No

(You may take part in the study without agreeing to this).

All data is held by SPRU in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Your name (in BLOCK letters):

Your signature:

Interviewer's name:

Date:

Appendix III Consent form for participants

(Chinese version)

知情同意书

研究题目：如何平衡家庭生活与工作生活： 工作家庭冲突对中国年轻女性的影响

研究者： 张一 约克大学女性研究中心博士

研究参与者知情同意书

请仔细阅读并回答下表中的每个问题，并决定是否参与此项研究。 如果有任何疑问或者需要其他信息， 请询问研究者。

您是否阅读并理解这项研究的说明？ 是 否

您是否有机会就这项研究提问？ 是 否

您是否知道您提供的信息会被保密？ 是 否

您是否知道您可以以任何理由退出此项研究， 并不会影响您的其他权利和服务？ 是 否

您是否知道您提供的信息可能被用于今后的研究？ 是 否

您是否愿意参与此项研究？ 是 否

如果愿意， 您是否同意采访过程被录音？
(如您不同意， 仍可参与这项研究) 是 否

所有信息会受到约克大学科学政策研究中心和英国数据保护法的保护

您的姓名: _____

您的签名: _____

采访者姓名: _____

日期: _____

Appendix IV Information sheet for participants

1. Research project title

How to balance work life and family life: the effect of work-family conflict on young generation women in contemporary China

2. Invitation

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

Work-family conflict has been the subject of considerable research in recent years. This three-year project aims at exploring how young generation women manage childcare, paid work and filial obligation in China and what factors facilitate or hinder the coordination between work life and family life. I would like to ask questions about your daily life routine and the experience of work life and family life.

4. Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part in this study, as this study focuses on women aged between 25 and 35 in Jilin Province in China, as this group is in a good position to offer insight into work-family conflict which has not been examined in Jilin Province before. In addition, 24 other participants will be recruited in this study.

5. Who is organising the research?

The research is organised by YI ZHANG, PhD candidate in the Centre for Women's Studies in The University of York.

6. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. I will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which I will give to you. I will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. If you do not want to sign the form, you may give your consent verbally. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study all data will be withdrawn and destroyed.

7. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved by the ELMPS Ethic Committee in The University of York. The contact information for the chair of the ELMPS is:

Lucia Quaglia

Department of Politics

Derwent College, University of York, York YO10 5DD

8. What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help to increase the understanding of the effect of work-family conflict on generation women in China. Then the information we get from the study may have implications for young women to balance their work life and family life as well as guidelines for the government to design potential work- family friendly policies.

The interview will take up some of your time. I will try to reduce inconvenience by arranging time and place that suits you. Then the topic of work-family conflict may lead some respondents to express their unhappy experience in work and family life which may provoke anxiety in participants. The efforts will be made to minimize such influence on participants, such as turn off the record

9. What will participation involve?

The respondents will be involved in a conversational interview with the researcher. The interview will take approximately one hour. It is intended as an opportunity for you to express your daily life routine and experiences toward work life and family life. The interview can be carried out in your work place or home wherever would be more convenient for you. The date and time of the

interview would be set based on your preference. If you agree, the interview will be tape recorded, and later transcribed into text form. Recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription.

10. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

11. What will happen to the interview data?

The data will be used for researcher's PhD thesis and publication. You would be very welcome to a copy of the final report. You will not be identified in the thesis. Your comment will be quoted, but you will remain anonymited. The data may be used for future research.

12. Contact for further information

If you wish to obtain further information about this project, please contact the researcher and supervisor.

Researcher:

Name: YI ZHANG

Address: Flat 4 Block D1, Wentworth College, Heslington, York, YO10 5NG,
UK

Email: yz1699@york.ac.uk

Tel: +447935782473

Supervisor:

Name: Professor Stevi Jackson

Address: Centre for Women's Studies, Grimston House, University of York
York, YO10 5DD, UK

Email: stevi.jackson@york.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part in this project

Appendix V Information sheet for participants (Chinese version)

项目信息表

1. 研究题目

如何平衡家庭生活与工作生活： 工作家庭冲突对中国年轻女性的影响

2. 邀请

您已受邀参与此项研究项目，此表包括了研究项目的基本信息与您将如何参与此项研究。请仔细阅读下列信息，并决定是否愿意参加此研究项目。如您有任何疑问或需要其他信息，请联系我。

3. 此项目的研究目的是什么？

工作家庭冲突已成为近来社会问题的热点，此项目为期三年，旨在调查研究中国年轻女性的工作家庭冲突现状，她们是如何平衡工作与家庭生活，哪些因素促进或阻碍了她们的的工作家庭关系？

4. 为什么我被受邀参与此项研究？

此项研究的研究群体为年龄在 25 岁到 35 岁之间的居住于中国吉林省的女性。共有 25 名受访者会参与此项研究。

5. 谁是这个项目的研究者？

这个项目的研究者是张一，英国约克大学女性研究中心博士。

6. 我是否必须参加此项研究？

您可以自由选择是否参加。此表介绍了该项目的各项基本信息，如您同意参加，我会请您签署知情同意书。您可以在任何时候退出此项研究，并不需说明理由。如果您退出研究，所有您提供的数据都会被销毁。

7. 谁参与了此项目的道德伦理审核？

英国约克大学 ELMPS 道德委员会审核通过了此项。下面列出了 ELMPS 主席的联系方式：

Lucia Quaglia

Department of Politics

Derwent College, University of York, York YO10 5DD

8. 参与此项研究的益处与风险有哪些？

尽管参与者不会马上从此项研究中受益，此项研究会帮助了解工作家庭冲突对年轻女性的影响，从而对年轻女性及国家政策制定者提供参考。

参与者将会参加约为一个小时的采访，参与者可能需要自行前往采访地点（采访地点可由受访者决定）。采访内容涉及工作家庭冲突，受访者可能会讲述在家庭与工作生活中不愉快的经历，因此可能会有焦虑或低落的情绪。

9. 参与者将如何参加此项研究？

参与者将会参加一个小时的与研究者的面对面的采访，研究者会首先询问受访者工作日的行程安排，然后询问受访者是否经历过工作家庭冲突，她们是如何平衡工作与家庭（主要包括家务劳动，抚养孩子以及赡养老人）。采访地点可以在您的工作单位，家或其他您认为适合的地点。采访日期与时间可由受访者决定。如果您同意，采访过程将会被录音，采访结束后，录音将会被记录为文本形式副本。在论文完成后，采访录音及副本会被删。

10. 参与此项研究是否有报酬，或其他补助？

您志愿参加此项研究，不会收到报酬或其他形式的补助。

11. 参与此项研究是否会被保密？

所有在采访过程中收集到的数据都会被严格保密。您的个人信息不会在任何论文与报告中泄露。

12. 采访数据将会怎样处理？

数据将会用于研究者的博士毕业论文。您的个人信息会被保护，避免泄露于论文中。采访过程中收集的数据可能会用于今后的研究。欢迎您索取此项目的研究报。

13. 联系方式

如您需要关于此项目的详细信息，请联系研究者及其导师。

研究者

姓名： 张一

地址: Flat 4 Block D1, Wentworth College, Heslington, York, YO10 5NG, UK

邮箱: yz1699@york.ac.uk

电话: +447935782473

导师

姓名: Stevi Jackson

地址: Centre for Women's Studies, Grimston House, University of York

York, YO10 5DD, UK

邮箱: stevi.jackson@york.ac.uk

非常感谢您阅读此项目信息表

Bibliography

Adam, D. 2014. UK: Right to request 'flexible working' comes into operation.

Available at:

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/working-conditions-industrial-relations-law-and-regulation/uk-right-to-request-flexible-working-comes-into-operation> Accessed on 16 June 2017.

Adema, W. and Whiteford, P. 2007. *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life: A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries*. Paris: Publications de l'OCDE.

Adema, W., Clarke, C. and Theveon, O. 2016. *Background brief on fathers' leave and its use*. OECD Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.

Available at:

<https://www.oecd.org/els/family/Backgrounder-fathers-use-of-leave.pdf> Accessed 7 June 2017.

Al éx, L. and Hammarström, A. 2008. Shift in power during an interview situation: Methodological reflections inspired by Foucault and Bourdieu. *Nursing Inquiry* 15(2): 169-176.

All-China Women's Federation, 2011. *Report on major results of the third wave survey on the Social Status of Women in China*. Women Watch-China. Retrieved from <http://www.womenwatch-china.org/en/newsdetail.aspx?id=9607> .

Allen, A. 2005. *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890–1970: The Maternal Dilemma*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Allen, T.D. and Finkelstein, L.M. 2014. Work–family conflict among members of full-time dual-earner couples: An examination of family life stage, gender, and age. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 19(3): 376-384.

Allen, T.D., Herst, D.E., Bruck, C.S. and Sutton, M. 2000. Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: a review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 5(2): 278-308.

- Allen, T.D., Johnson, R.C., Kiburz, K.M. and Shockley, K.M., 2013. Work–family conflict and flexible work arrangements: Deconstructing flexibility. *Personnel Psychology* 66(2): 345-376.
- Anderson, B. 2000. *Doing the Dirty Work?: The global Politics of Domestic Labour*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Asbury, J. E. 1995. Overview of focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research* 5(4): 414-420.
- Asselin, M. E. 2003. Insider research: Issues to consider when doing qualitative research in your own setting. *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development* 19(2): 99-103.
- Available at:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/why-are-only-1-in-100-men-taking-up-shared-parental-leave/> Accessed 12th June 2017.
- Ba', S. 2017. Critical theory and the work–family articulation. *Capital & Class*: 1-18.
- Barlow, T. E. 1994. 'Theorizing woman: Funu, guojia, jiating (Chinese women, Chinese state, Chinese families)'. In Zito, A. and Barlow, T. E. (Eds.) *Body, Subject and Power in China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 253-289.
- Beaujot, R. 2000. *Earning and Caring in Canadian Families*. Toronto: Broadview Press.
- Beck, U., Giddens, A. and Lash, S. 1994. *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Becker, G. 1991. *A Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Becker, P. E., and Moen, P. 1999. Scaling back: Dual-earner couples' work-family strategies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61(4): 995–1007.
- Benatar, S. R., and Singer, P. A. 2000. A new look at international research ethics. *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 321(7264): 824-826.
- Berg, B. L. 2007. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston: Pearson.

- Bian, Y., 1994. *Work and Inequality in Urban China*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Bianchi, S. M., Milkie, M. A., Sayer, L. C. and Robinson, J. P. 2000. Is anyone doing the housework? Trends in the gender division of household labor. *Social Forces* 79(1): 191-228.
- Bianchi, S. M., Sayer, L. C., Milkie, M. A. and Robinson, J. P. 2012. Housework: Who did, does or will do it, and how much does it matter?. *Social Forces* 91(1): 55-63.
- Bianchi, S. M. and Milkie, M. A. 2010. Work and family research in the first decade of the 21st century. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72(3): 705-725.
- Biernacki, P. and Waldorf, D. 1981. Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological methods & research* 10(2): 141-163.
- Biswas, K., and Hassan, K. 2009. A test of association between working hour and work family conflict: A glimpse on Dhaka's female white collar professionals. *International Journal of Business and Management* 4(5): 27-35.
- Bittman, M., Rice, J. M., and Wajcman, J. 2004. Appliances and their impact: the ownership of domestic technology and time spent on household work. *The British Journal of Sociology* 55(3): 401-423.
- Blair, S. L. 1992. The sex-typing of children's household labor: Parental influence on daughters' and sons' housework. *Youth & Society* 24(2): 178-203.
- Bonnin, M. 2014. The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968–1980). *The China Quarterly* 218: 551-589.
- Bose, C. E., Bereano, P. L. and Malloy, M. 1984. Household technology and the social construction of housework. *Technology and Culture* 25(1): 53-82.
- Bray, D. 2005. *Social space and governance in urban China: The danwei system from origins to reform*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Brines, J. 1993. The exchange value of housework. *Rationality and Society* 5(3): 302-340.
- Barnett, R.C. and Baruch, G.K. 1985. Women's involvement in multiple roles and psychological distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 49(1):

135-145.

Brown, G. W. and Rutter, M. 1966. The measurement of family activities and relationships: a methodological study. *Human Relations* 19(3): 241-263.

Brown, J. 2012. City versus Countryside in Mao's China: Negotiating the Divide. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bruegel, I. 1996. Whose myths are they anyway?: a comment. *The British Journal of Sociology* 47(1): 175-177.

Budlender, D. 2007. 'A critical review of selected time use surveys'. *Gender and Development Programme Paper 2*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Available at:

[http://unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/ab82a6805797760f80256b4f005da1ab/169a34eddf90d43dc12573240034e24e/\\$FILE/Budlender-paper.pdf](http://unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/ab82a6805797760f80256b4f005da1ab/169a34eddf90d43dc12573240034e24e/$FILE/Budlender-paper.pdf) Accessed 10 May 2016.

Burgess, S., Gregg, P., Propper, C. and Washbrook, E. 2008. Maternity rights and mothers' return to work. *Labour Economics* 15(2): 168-201.

Byron, K. 2005. A meta-analytic review of work–family conflict and its antecedents. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67(2): 169-198.

Cha, Y. 2010. Reinforcing separate spheres the effect of spousal overwork on men's and women's employment in dual-earner households. *American Sociological Review* 75(2): 303-329.

Chai, Y. 2014. From socialist *danwei* to new *danwei*: a daily-life-based framework for sustainable development in urban China. *Asian Geographer* 31(2): 183-190.

Chan, A.K.L., and Tan, S.H. ed. 2004. *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

Chan, K.W. 2004. Chinese *Hukou* reforms and rural-urban migration. *Zhongguo Laodong Jingji (China Labour Economics)* 1: 108-124.

Chan, K.W. and Zhang, L. 1999. The *hukou* system and rural-urban migration in China: Processes and changes. *The China Quarterly* 160: 818-855.

Chen, F. 2004. The division of labor between generations of women in rural

- China. *Social Science Research* 33(4): 557-580.
- Chen, F. 2005. Employment transitions and the household division of labor in China. *Social Forces* 84(2): 831-851.
- Chen, F., Liu, G., and Mair, C.A. 2011. Intergenerational ties in context: Grandparents caring for grandchildren in China. *Social Forces* 90(2): 571-594.
- Chen, M. 2008. 'Entrepreneurial Women: personal wealth, local politics and tradition'. In Goodman, D. (Eds.) *The New Rich in China: Future Rulers, Present Lives*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 112-125.
- Chen, S.Y. 1996. *Social Policy of the Economic State and Community Care in Chinese Culture: Aging, Family, Urban Change, and the Socialist Welfare Pluralism*. Avebury: Brookfield.
- Chen, S. and Adamchak, D.J. 1999. The effects of filial responsibility expectations on intergenerational exchanges in urban China. *Hallym International Journal of Aging* 1(2): 58-68.
- Cheng, T. and Selden, M. 1994. The origins and social consequences of China's hukou system. *The China Quarterly* 139: 644-668.
- Chi, W. and Li, B. 2013. *Journal of Comparative Economics* 42(3): 708-725.
- China Statistical Yearbook 2015*. National Bureau of Statistics of China. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- China Statistical Yearbook 2016*. National Bureau of Statistics of China. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Women and Men in China—Facts and Figures 2012*. National Bureau of Statistics of China. Available at:
<http://www.unicef.cn/en/uploadfile/2014/0109/20140109030938887.pdf>.
 Accessed 8 November 2016.
- Choi, J. 2008. Work and family demands and life stress among Chinese employees: The mediating effect of work–family conflict. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 19(5): 878-895.
- Chow, E. N. L. and Zhao, S. M. 1996. The one-child policy and parent-child relationships: A comparison of one-child with multiple-child families in China.

- International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 16(12): 35-62.
- Chow, G. C. 2004. Economic reform and growth in China. *Annals of Economics and Finance* 5: 127-152.
- Chow, N. 2006. The practice of filial piety and its impact on long-term care policies for elderly people in Asian Chinese communities. *Asian Journal of Gerontology & Geriatrics* 1(1): 31–35.
- Christiansen, L., Lin, H., Pereira, J., Topalova, P.B. and Turk, R. 2016. Individual Choice or Policies? Drivers of Female Employment in Europe. *IMF Working Paper* 16/49.
- Ciccia, R. and Verloo, M. 2012. Parental leave regulations and the persistence of the male breadwinner model: Using fuzzy-set ideal type analysis to assess gender equality in an enlarged Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy* 22(5): 507-528.
- CIPD. 2013. Zero-hours contracts: Myth and reality. Research report November. Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/emp-law/terms-conditions/zero-hours-reality-report> Accessed 9 May 2017.
- Clark, C. 1967. *The Conditions of Economic Progress*. London: MacMillan.
- Clark, S.C. 2000. Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. *Human relations* 53(6): 747-770.
- Cockburn, C. and Ormrod, S. 1993. *Gender and Technology in the Making*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Collins, P. 1998. Negotiating selves: Reflections on 'unstructured' interviewing. *Sociological Research Online* 3(3).
- Confucius. 1885. *Li Chi: Book of Rites Part I*. New York: Kessinger Publishing.
- Confucius. 2000. *The Analects*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching & Research.
- Connell, R. 2007. *Southern Theory: the Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Cook, S. and Dong, X.Y. 2011. Harsh choices: Chinese women's paid work and unpaid care responsibilities under economic reform. *Development and Change*

42(4): 947-965.

Croll, E. 1983. *Chinese Women since Mao*. London: Zed Books.

Coonan, C. 2013. China law forces adult children to visit and care for their elderly parents. Available at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-law-forces-adult-children-to-visit-and-care-for-their-elderly-parents-8681677.html> Accessed 30 June 2017.

Crompton, R. 2006. *Employment and the Family: The reconfiguration of Work and Family Life in Contemporary Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crompton, R. 1999. 'The decline of the male breadwinner: explanations and interpretations'. In Crompton, R. (Eds.) *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment: The Decline of the Male Breadwinner*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-25.

Crompton, R. and Harris, F. 1999. 'Attitudes, women's employment, and the changing domestic division of labour: A cross-national analysis'. In Crompton, R. (Eds.) *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment: The Decline of the Male Breadwinner*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.105-127.

Crompton, R. and Lyonette, C. 2006. Work-life 'balance' in Europe. *Acta Sociologica* 49(4): 379-393.

Crompton, R., Lewis, S. and Lyonette, C. 2007. 'Introduction: the unravelling of the 'male breadwinner' model—and some of its consequences'. In Crompton, R., Lewis, S. and Lyonette, C. (Eds.). *Women, Men, Work and Family in Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.1-16.

Cunningham, M. 2001. Parental influences on the gendered division of housework. *American Sociological Review* 66(2): 184-203.

Cunningham, M. 2001. The influence of parental attitudes and behaviors on children's attitudes toward gender and household labor in early adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and family* 63(1): 111-122.

De Laine, M. 2000. *Fieldwork, Participation and Practice: Ethics and Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Delphy, C. and Leonard, D. 1992. *Familiar Exploitation: A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Western Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Delphy, C. 1991. 'Is There Marriage After Divorce?'. In *Sexual Divisions Revisited*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.45-58.
- Den Dulk, L. and van Doorne-Huiskes, A. 2007. 'Social policy in Europe: Its impact on families and work'. In Crompton, R., Lewis, S. and Lyonette, C. (Eds.) *Women, Men, Work and Family in Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 35-57.
- Deutsch, F. M. 2006. Filial piety, patrilineality, and China's one-child policy. *Journal of Family Issues* 27(3): 366-389.
- Ding, D.Z., Goodall, K. and Warner, M. 2000. The end of the 'iron rice-bowl': whither Chinese human resource management?. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 11(2): 217-236.
- Dixon, C.S. 2015. Interviewing adolescent females in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report* 20(12): 2067-2077.
- Drisko, J. W. 1997. Strengthening qualitative studies and reports: Standards to promote academic integrity. *Journal of Social Work Education* 33(1): 185–197.
- Doucet, A., and Mauthner, N. 1998. "Voice, reflexivity, and relationships in qualitative data analysis": Background paper for workshop on "Voice in Qualitative Data Analysis".
- Drobnič, S. and Guillén Rodríguez, A.M. 2011. Tensions between work and home: job quality and working conditions in the institutional contexts of Germany and Spain. *Social Politics* 18(2): 232-268.
- Du, F. and Dong, X. Y. 2010. *Women's Labor Force Participation and Childcare Choices in Urban China during the Economic Transition*. The University of Winnipeg, Department of Economics World Paper. Available at: <ftp://ftp.repec.org/opt/ReDIF/RePEc/win/winwop/2010-04.pdf> Accessed 9 September 2014.
- Du, F. and Mann, S. 2003. 'Competing claims on womanly virtue in late imperial china'. In Ko, D., Haboush, J.K. and Piggott, J. (Eds.) *Women and Confucian*

- Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.219-247.
- Duggleby, W. 2005. What about focus group interaction data?. *Qualitative Health Research* 15(6): 832-840.
- Duncan, S. and Edwards, R.1999. *Lone Mothers, Paid Work and Gendered Moral Rationalities*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Duncan, S., Edwards, R., Reynolds, T. and Alldred, P. 2003. Motherhood, paid work and partnering: values and theories. *Work, Employment and Society*, 17(2): 309-330.
- Dwyer, S. C., and Buckle, J. L. 2009. The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8(1): 54-63.
- Eby, L. T., Casper, W. J., Lockwood, A., Bordeaux, C., and Brinkley, A. 2005. Work and family research in IO/OB: Content analysis and review of the literature (1980–2002). *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 66(1): 124–197.
- Edwards, L. 2004. ‘Constraining women’s political work with ‘women’s work’’. In E.McLaren A. (Eds.) *Chinese Women-Living and Working*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 105-124.
- Elliott, L. 2016. A zero-hours contract is not 'flexibility' but exploitation – and it's rising. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/mar/09/zero-hour-contract-is-not-flexibility-but-exploitation-and-its-rising> Accessed 18th June 2017.
- Erickson, J.J., Martinengo, G. and Hill, E.J. 2010. Putting work and family experiences in context: Differences by family life stage. *Human Relations* 63(7): 955-979.
- Esquivel, V. 2011. Sixteen years after Beijing: what are the new policy agendas for time-use data collection?. *Feminist Economics* 17(4): 215-238.
- European Commission. 2007. *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and Better Jobs Through Flexibility and Security*. Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Communities.

European Commission. 2010. Gender pay gap: what are the causes? Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/causes/index_en.htm
Accessed 6 June 2017.

Evans, A., Gray, E., and Reimondos, A. 2011. Relationship reports: The effect of presence of others during the interview. *In 2011 HILDA Survey Research Conference*. University of Melbourne.

Evans, H. 1997. *Women and Sexuality in China*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Evans, H. 2008. *The Subject of Gender: Daughters and Mothers in Urban China*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Fagan, C. and Hebson, G. 2006. *Making Work Pay' from a Gender Perspective: A Comparative Review of Some Recent Policy Reforms in Thirty European Countries*. Luxembourg: The European Commission, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Fei, J. 1995. 'Economic reform and women's employment in Shanghai: A study of rural and urban industrial changes'. In M. Moghadam. (Eds.) *Economic Reforms, Women's Employment, and Social Policies*. Helsinki: World Institute for Development Economics Research, pp.10-43.

Filep, B. 2009. Interview and translation strategies: coping with multilingual settings and data. *Social Geography* 4(1): 59-70.

Finch, J. 1989. *Family Obligations and Social Change*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

Finch, J. 2007. Displaying families. *Sociology* 41(1): 65–81.

Finch, J. 2012. *Married to the job: Wives' incorporation in men's work*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Finch, J. and Mason, J. 1993. Negotiating family obligations. *The Sociological Review*, 38(2): 219-246.

Fong, V. L. 2006. *Only Hope: Coming of Age under China's One-child Policy*. Stanford: University Press.

Fraser, N. 2014. *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "postsocialist" Condition*. New York: Routledge.

- Fredriksen-Goldsen, K.I. and Scharlach, A.E. 2001. *Families and Work: New Directions in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frejka, T. 2008. Overview chapter 5: Determinants of family formation and childbearing during the societal transition in Central and Eastern Europe. *Demographic Research* 19:139-170.
- Frenkel, S. J., Korczynski, M., Shire, K. A., and Tam, M. 1999. *On the front line: Organization of work in the information economy*. New York: Industrial and Labor Relations Press.
- Fu, C.K. and Shaffer, M.A. 2001. The tug of work and family: Direct and indirect domain-specific determinants of work-family conflict. *Personnel Review* 30(5): 502-522.
- Fu, H. 2005. Jiaoyu ruhe yangchangbiduan? Wenhui Daily. Retrieved from news.sina.com.cn.
- Gair, S. 2012. Feeling their stories: Contemplating empathy, insider/outsider positionings, and enriching qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research* 22(1): 134-143.
- Gambles, R., Lewis, S. and Rapoport, R. 2006. *The Myth of Work-life balance: The Challenge of Our Time for Men, Women and Societies*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Giddens, A. 1985. *The Nation State and Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge Polity Press.
- Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., and Chadwick, B. 2008. Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal* 204(6): 291-295.
- Ginn, J., Arber, S., Brannen, J., Dale, A., Dex, S., Elias, P., Moss, P., Pahl, J., Roberts, C. and Rubery, J. 1996. Feminist fallacies: a reply to Hakim on women's employment. *The British Journal of Sociology* 47(1): 167-174.
- Glover, J. 2002. Women and scientific employment. *Science Studies* 15(1): 29-45.

- Goffman, E., 1955. On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry*, 18(3): 213-231.
- Goh, E. C. 2009. Grandparents as childcare providers: An in-depth analysis of the case of Xiamen, China. *Journal of Aging Studies* 23(1): 60-68.
- Gold, T., Guthrie, D., and Wank, D. (Eds.). 2002. *Social Connections in China: Institutions, Culture, and the Changing Nature of Guanxi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gornick, J.C. and Meyers, M.K. 2003. *Families that Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Greenhaus, J.H. and Beutell, N.J. 1985. Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review* 10(1): 76-88.
- Greenhaus, J.H., Collins, K.M. and Shaw, J.D. 2003. The relation between work–family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 63(3): 510-531.
- Gregory, M. and Connolly, S. 2008. Feature: The Price of Reconciliation: Part - Time Work, Families and Women's Satisfaction. *The Economic Journal* 118(526): F1-F7.
- Gregory, A. and Milner, S. 2009. Work–life balance: A matter of choice?. *Gender, Work & Organization* 16(1): 1-13.
- Gu, D., Dupre, M.E. and G. Liu. 2007. Characteristics of the institutionalized and community-residing oldest-old in China. *Social Science & Medicine* 64(4): 871–883.
- Guan, Y. 2003. Consumption patterns of Chinese children. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 24(4): 373–379.
- Guest, D.E. 2002. Perspectives on the study of work-life balance. *Social Science Information*: 41(2): 255-279.
- Guttek, B.A., Searle, S. and Klepa, L. 1991. Rational versus gender role explanations for work-family conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 76(4): 560-568.
- Hakim, C. 1998. Developing a sociology for the twenty-first century: Preference

- Theory. *The British Journal of Sociology* 49(1): 137-143.
- Hakim, C. 2000. *Work-lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century: Preference Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hakim, C. 2003. A new approach to explaining fertility patterns: Preference theory. *Population and Development Review* 29(3): 349-374.
- Halverson, C. 2003. From here to paternity: Why men are not taking paternity leave under the family and medical leave act. *Wisconsin Women's Law Journal* 18: 257-280.
- Haynes, J., and Dermott, E. 2011. Displaying mixedness: differences and family relationships. In Dermott, E., and Seymour, J. (Eds.) *Displaying Families*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 145-159.
- He, J. and Jiang, Y. 2008. An Analysis of China's Childcare Policy and Current Situation from the Perspective of Supporting Women and Balancing Family and Work. *Studies in Preschool Education* 8: 3-7.
- Heaphy, B. 2011. 'Critical relational displays'. In Dermott, E., and Seymour, J. (Eds.) *Displaying Families*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 19-37.
- Hegewisch, A. and Gornick, J.C. 2011. The impact of work-family policies on women's employment: a review of research from OECD countries. *Community, Work & Family* 14(2): 119-138.
- Hershatter, G. 2007. *Women in China's long 20th century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hesketh, T., Lu, L. and Xing, Z. W. 2005. The Effect of China's One-Child Policy After 25 Years. *The New England Journal of Medicine* 353(11): 1171-1176.
- Hinsch, B. 2016. *Women in Imperial China*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hiroko, H. 2008. Housewifization and changes in women's life course in Bangkok. In Ochiai, E. and Molony, B. (Eds.) *Asia's New Mothers: Crafting Gender Roles and Childcare Networks in East and Southeast Asian Societies*. Kent: Global Oriental, pp. 110-128.
- Hochschild, A. 1989. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at*

- Home*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- Holliday, A. 2007. *Doing & Writing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Holzman, D. 1998. The place of filial piety in ancient China. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118(2): 185-199.
- Houston, D.M. 2005. 'Work-life balance in the 21st century'. In Houston, D. M. (Eds.) *Work-life Balance in the 21st Century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.1-10.
- Hu, Z. and Peng, X. 2015. Household changes in contemporary China: an analysis based on the four recent censuses. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 2(9):1-20.
- Hung, E.P. and Chiu, S.W. 2003. The lost generation: Life course dynamics and xiagang in China. *Modern China* 29(2): 204-236.
- Ikels, C. (Eds.). 2004. *Filial piety: Practice and Discourse in Contemporary East Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Ikels, C. 1990. 'Family Caregivers and the Elderly in China'. In Biegel, D. E. and Blum, A. (Eds.) *Aging and Caregiving: Theory, Research and Policy*. CA: Sage Publications, pp. 270-284.
- Ikels, C. 1993. 'Settling accounts: the intergenerational contract in the age of reform'. In Davis, D., and Harrell, S. (Eds.) *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 307-333.
- ILO. 2012. *Fact Sheet: Domestic Workers in China*. Beijing: ILO Office for China and Mongolia. Available at:
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_114256.pdf Accessed 7 April 2016.
- Irwin, S. 2005. *Reshaping Social Life*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Jacka, T. 1997. *Women's Work in Rural China: Change and Continuity in An Era of Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jackson, S. 1996. *Christine Delphy*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Jackson, S. 2006. Gender, sexuality and heterosexuality: The complexity (and

- limits) of heteronormativity. *Feminist Theory* 7(1): 105-121.
- Jackson, S. 2015. 'Families, domesticity and intimacy: Changing relationships in changing times'. In Robinson, V. and Richardson, D. (Eds.) *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.125-143.
- Jackson, S. and Liu, J. 2017. The social context of aging and intergenerational relationship in Chinese families. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 4(2): 2-5.
- Jackson, S., Ho, P.S.Y and Na, J.N. 2016. 'Interviewing across culture: talking to mothers and daughters in Hong Kong and Britain'. In Griffin, G. (Eds.) *Cross-Cultural Interviewing: Feminist Experiences and Reflections*. Oxon: Routledge, pp.30-43.
- Jackson, S., Ho, P.S.Y. and Na, J.N. 2013. Reshaping tradition? Women negotiating the boundaries of tradition and modernity in Hong Kong and British families. *The Sociological Review* 61(4): 667–687.
- Jarviluoma, H., Moisala, P. and Vilkkko, A. 2003. *Gender and Qualitative Methods*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Jayarathne, T. E., and Stewart, A. J. 1991. 'Quantitative and qualitative methods in the social sciences'. In Fonow, M. M. and Cook, J. A. (Eds.) *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp.85-106
- Jia, W. 2001. *The Remaking of the Chinese Character and Identity in the 21st Century: the Chinese Face Practices*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Jia, X. 2016. An Introduction on 2008 Time Use Survey in China. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Events/28-30_June_2016/Session_2_China.pdf Accessed 12 December 2016.
- Johnson, K.A. 2009. *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, M. M. 1975. Fathers, mothers and sex typing. *Sociological Inquiry* 45(1): 15-26.
- Kahn, R.L., Wolfe, D.M., Quinn, R.P., Snoek, J.D. and Rosenthal, R.A. 1964. *Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity*. New York: John

Wiley.

Kamo, Y. 1988. Determinants of household division of labor resources, power, and ideology. *Journal of Family Issues* 9(2): 177-200.

Kanuha, V. K. 2000. "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work* 45(5): 439-447.

Kelliher, C. and Anderson, D., 2010. Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations* 63(1): 83-106.

Kelly, L., Burton, S., and Regan, L. 1994. 'Researching women's lives or studying women's oppression? Reflections on what constitutes feminist research'. In Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. (Eds.) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*. London: Taylor & Francis, pp. 27-48.

Kemp, R. 2016. Why are only 1 in 100 men taking up shared parental leave?

Available at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/why-are-only-1-in-100-men-taking-up-shared-parental-leave/> Accessed 30 May 2017.

Kenyon, S. 2010. What do we mean by multitasking?--Exploring the need for methodological clarification in time use research. *Electronic International Journal of Time Use Research* 7(1): 42-60.

Kirchmeyer, C. 2000. Work-life initiatives: Greed or benevolence regarding workers' time?. *Trends in Organizational Behavior* 7: 79-94.

Koslowski, A., Blum, S., and Moss, P., (Eds.). 2016. *12th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2016*. London: University of London, Institute of Education.

Kwok, H. K. 2012. The Generation Y's working encounter: A comparative study of Hong Kong and other Chinese cities. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 33(2): 231-249.

Lai, G., 1995. Work and family roles and psychological well-being in urban China. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 36(1): 11-37.

Lardy, N. 1983. *Agriculture in China's Economic Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Lee, Y. J., and Xiao, Z. 1998. Children's support for elderly parents in urban and rural China: results from a national survey. *Journal of Cross-cultural Gerontology* 13(1): 39–62.
- Lee, W.K. 2002. Gender ideology and the domestic division of labor in middle-class Chinese families in Hong Kong. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 9(3): 245-260.
- Lerman, N., Oldenziel, R. and Mohun, A. P. (Eds.). 2003. *Gender and Technology: A reader*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Letherby, G. 2003. *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Leung, A.S. 2003. Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* 20(3): 359-374.
- Leung, J. T., and Shek, D. T. 2011. “All I can do for my child”—development of the Chinese Parental Sacrifice for Child’s Education Scale. *International Journal on Disability and Human Development* 10(3): 201-208.
- Lewis, J. 1992. Gender and the development of welfare regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy* 2(3): 159-173.
- Lewis, J. 2001. The decline of the male breadwinner model: Implications for work and care. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 8(2): 152-169.
- Li, W., Hodgetts, D., Ho, E. and Stolte, O. 2010. From early Confucian texts to aged care in China and abroad today: The evolution of filial piety and its implications. *Journal of US-China Public Administration*, 7(7): 48-59.
- Li, Y. 2013. Women’s movement and change of women’s status in China. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 1(1): 30-40.
- Liamputtong, P. (Eds.). 2008. *Doing cross-cultural research: Ethical and methodological perspectives*. Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Lin, J. (2003). Chinese women under economic reform: Gains and Losses.

- Harvard Asia Pacific Review* 7(1): 88-90.
- Lin, Y. 1977. *My Country and My People*. Hong Kong: Heinemann Education Books.
- Ling, Y. and Powell, G. N. 2001. Work-family conflict in contemporary China: Beyond an American-based model. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 1(3): 357-373.
- Liu, J. 2004. Holding up the sky? Reflections on marriage in contemporary China. *Feminism & Psychology* 14(1): 195-202.
- Liu, J. 2007. *Gender and Work in Urban China: Women Workers of the Unlucky Generation*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Liu, J. 2016. Ageing in rural China: migration and care circulation. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology* 3(1): 1-19.
- Liu, J. 2017. *Gender, Sexuality and Power in Chinese Companies: Beauties at Work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Liu, J. and Xu, Li. 2009. *Labor Division in Household in China: Change of Trends between 1989 and 2006*. Available at: <http://iussp2009.princeton.edu/papers/92990>
- Lu, F. 1989. *Danwei*: A special form of social organization. *Social Sciences in China* 1: 71-88.
- Lu, Y., Hu, X.M., Huang, X.L., Zhuang, X.D., Guo, P., Feng, L.F., Hu, W., Chen, L., Zou, H. and Hao, Y.T., 2017. The relationship between job satisfaction, work stress, work–family conflict, and turnover intention among physicians in Guangdong, China: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ open* 7(5). Available at: <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/7/5/e014894> Accessed 31 June 2017.
- Madriz, E. 2000. ‘Focus groups in feminist research’. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp.835-850.
- Madsen, P.K. 2007. Flexicurity: A new perspective on labour markets and welfare states in Europe. *Tilburg Law Review* 14: 57-79.
- Major, V.S., Klein, K.J. and Ehrhart, M.G. 2002. Work time, work interference

- with family, and psychological distress. *Journal of Applied Psychology*: 87(3): 427-436.
- Mann, S.L. 2011. *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History* (Vol. 9). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marks, S.R. and MacDermid, S.M. 1996. Multiple roles and the self: A theory of role balance. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58(2): 417-432.
- Mason, J. 2002. *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Masselot, A. and di Torella, E.C. 2010. *Reconciling Work and Family Life in EU Law and Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maurer-Fazio, M., Connelly, R., Chen, L., and Tang, L. 2011. Childcare, eldercare, and labor force participation of married women in urban China, 1982–2000. *Journal of Human Resources* 46(2): 261-294.
- Mauthner, N.S. 1998. It's a woman's cry for help!: A relational perspective on postnatal depression. *Feminism & Psychology* 8(3): 325-355.
- Maykut, P., and Morehouse, R. 1994. *Beginning Qualitative Researchers: A Philosophical and Practical Guide*. Washington DC: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Maynard, M. 1994. 'Methods, practice and epistemology: The debate about feminism and research'. In Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. (Eds.) *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*. London: Taylor & Francis, pp.10-26.
- McElwain, A.K., Korabik, K. and Rosin, H.M., 2005. An examination of gender differences in work-family conflict. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science / Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement* 37(4): 283-298.
- McKie, L. and Callan, S. 2012. *Understanding Families: A Global Introduction*. London: Sage.
- McRae, S. 1993. Returning to work after childbirth: opportunities and inequalities. *European Sociological Review* 9(2): 125-138.
- McRae, S. 2003. Constraints and choices in mothers' employment careers: a consideration of Hakim's preference theory. *The British Journal of Sociology* 54(3): 317-338.
- Merton, R.K., 1987. The focused interview and focus groups: Continuities and

- discontinuities. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 51(4): 550-566.
- Miao, C. 2015. The evolution of filial piety in ancient China and its influence on neighboring countries: Taking the classic of filial piety as the chief source. *Asian Social Science* 11(12): 319-325.
- Mies, M. 2001. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on A World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Mill, J.S., 1869. *The Subjection of Women* (Vol. 1). New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Miller, E.T. 2004. 'Filial daughters, filial sons: comparisons from north rural China'. In Ikels, C. (Eds.) *Filial Piety: Practice and Discourse in Contemporary East Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp.34-52.
- Miller, T. and Bell, L. 2002. 'Consenting to what? Issues of access, gate-keeping and "informed" consent'. In Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M. and Jessop, J. (Eds.) *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, pp. 53-69.
- Miller, T., and Boulton, M. 2007. Changing constructions of informed consent: Qualitative research and complex social worlds. *Social science & medicine* 65(11): 2199-2211.
- Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M., and Jessop, J. (Eds.). 2012. *Ethics in qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Miranda, V. 2011. Cooking and Caring, Building and Repairing: Unpaid Work around the World. In *Society at a Glance 2011: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing.
- Moen, P. 2011. From 'work-family' to the 'gendered life course' and 'fit': Five challenges to the field. *Community, Work & Family* 14(1): 81-96.
- Moen, P. and Sweet, S. 2004. From 'work-family' to 'flexible careers' A life course reframing. *Community, Work & Family* 7(2): 209-226.
- Morgan, D. 1996. *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morgan, D. 2011. *Rethinking Family Practices*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Mrkić, S. and Chief, S. 2008. *Time Use Statistics in the Context of Social Statistics*. In *Seminars on New Directions in Social Statistics*. New York: United Nations Statistics Division.
- Mullings, B. 1999. Insider or outsider, both or neither: some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross-cultural setting. *Geoforum* 30(4): 337-350.
- Murphy, K. 2014. A marriage bar of convenience? The BBC and married women's work 1923-1939. *Twentieth Century British History* 25(4):533-561.
- Myrdal, A., and Klein, V. 1968. *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work*. London: Routledge & K. Paul.
- Nelson, M. (2006). Single Mothers "Do" Family. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68(4): 781-795.
- Nespor, J. 2000. Anonymity and place in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative inquiry* 6(4): 546-569.
- Nolan, J. 2008. 'Gender and Equality of Opportunity in China's Labour Market'.
- Oakley, A. 1974. *The Sociology of Housework*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ochiai, E., Mari, Y., Yasuko, M., Zhou, W., Setsuko, O., Nachiko, K., Michiyo, F. and Sang Ook, H. 2008. 'Gender roles and childcare networks in East and Southeast Asian societies'. In *Asia's New Mothers: Crafting Gender Roles and Childcare Networks in East and Southeast Asian Societies*. Kent: Global Oriental, pp. 31-70.
- OECD. 2015. Part-time employment rate. Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/emp/part-time-employment-rate.htm> Accessed 27 April 2017.
- OECD. 2016. Employment rate. Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-rate.htm> Accessed 15 April 2017.
- Offer, S. and Schneider, B. 2011. Revisiting the gender gap in time-use patterns multitasking and well-being among mothers and fathers in dual-earner families. *American Sociological Review* 76(6): 809-833.
- Office for National Statistics. 2017. People in employment on a zero-hours contract: Mar 2017. Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/contractsthatdonotguaranteeaminimumnumberofhours/mar2017> Accessed 8 June 2017.

Oliver, P. 2003. *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Pan, R. 2002. *Shehui Bianqian zhong de Jiating: Jiating Shehuixie [Families in Social Transition: Sociology of the Family]*. Tianjin: Tianjin Academy of Social Science Press.

Parental Leave Act. 1995. Government Offices of Sweden. Available at: <http://www.government.se/4ac87f/contentassets/d163a42edcea4638aa112f0f6040202b/sfs-1995584-parental-leave-act> Accessed 6 June 2017.

Park, S. and Lunt, N. 2015. Confucianism and qualitative Interviewing: Working Seoul to soul. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 16(2): Art 7. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2166> Accessed on 23 April 2017.

Pissarides, C., Garibaldi, P., Olivetti, C., Petrongolo, B. and Wasmer, E. 2003. *Women in the Labor Force: How Well is Europe Doing?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Poelmans, S. 2001. *Individual and organizational issues in work-family conflict*. Research paper, no 445. Barcelona: IESE.

Polkinghorne, D.E. 2007. Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 13(4): 471-486.

Pun, N. 2006. *Made in China Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Qi, X. 2011. Face a Chinese concept in a global sociology. *Journal of Sociology* 47(3): 279–295.

Qi, X. 2013. Filial obligation in contemporary China: Evolution of the culture-system. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 45(1): 141-161.

- Qi, X. 2014. *Globalized knowledge flows and Chinese social theory*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Qi, X. 2015. Filial obligation in contemporary China: evolution of the culture-system. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 45(1): 141–161.
- Reuband, K.H. 1992. On third persons in the interview situation and their impact on responses. *International Journal of Public Opinion* 4(3): 269-274.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., and Ormston, R. (Eds.). 2013. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Rofel, L. 1994. 'Liberation Nostalgia and a Yearning for Modernity'. In Gilmartin, C. K., Hershatter, G., Rofel, L. and White, T. (Eds.). *Engendering China: Women, Culture and State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 226–249.
- Rofel, L. 1999. *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rofel, L. 2007. *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.
- Rose, H. 1982. 'Making science feminist'. In Whitelegg, E. (Eds.). *The Changing Experience of Women*. Oxford: Martin Robertson, pp.352-372.
- Rosengren, C. 2015. Performing work: The drama of everyday working life. *Time & Society* 0(0): 1-21.
- Rowthorn, R.E. and Ramaswamy, R. 1997. Deindustrialization: causes and implications. *IMF Working Paper* 97(42):1-38.
- Rutter, M. and Brown, G.W.1966. The reliability and validity of measures of family life and relationships in families containing a psychiatric patient. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 1(1): 38-53.
- Ryan, P. and Dundon, T. 2008. Case Research Interviews: Eliciting Superior Quality Data. *International Journal of Case Method Research and Application* 10(4): 443-450.
- Sadler, G.R., Lee, H.C., Lim, R.S.H. and Fullerton, J. 2010. Recruitment of

- hard-to- reach population subgroups via adaptations of the snowball sampling strategy. *Nursing & Health Sciences* 12(3): 369-374.
- Samman, E., Presler-Marshall, E. and Jones, N. 2016. *Women's Work: Mothers, Children and the Global Childcare Crisis*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Schlenker, B.R. 1987. 'Threats to identity: Self-identification and social stress'. In Snyder, C.R. and Ford, C.E. (Eds.) *Coping With Negative Life Event: Clinical and Social Psychological Perspectives*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 273-321.
- Scott, S. 1998. Here be dragons: researching the unbelievable, hearing the unthinkable. *Sociological Research Online* 3(3).
- Seawright, J. and Gerring, J. 2008. Case selection techniques in case study research a menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308.
- Sechiyama, K. 2013. *Patriarchy in East Asia: A Comparative Sociology of Gender*. Leiden: Brill.
- Settles, B. H., Sheng, X., Zang, Y., and Zhao, J. 2013. 'The One-Child Policy and Its Impact on Chinese Families'. In Kwok-bun, C. (Eds). *International Handbook of Chinese Families*. New York: Springer, pp. 627-646.
- Sisterhood and After Research Team, 2013. *Marriage and Civil Partnership*. Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/marriage-and-civil-partnership> Accessed 5 May 2017.
- Shang, X. 2001. Moving toward a multi-level and multi-pilar system: changes in institutional care in two Chinese cities. *Journal of Social Policy* 30(2): 259–281.
- Sheng, X., 1991. 'Zhongguo Chengshi Laonianren de Jiating Shenghuo' [The Family Life of Urban Chinese Elderly]. In Hu, R., Yao, S., and B. Liu. (Eds.) *Zhongguo Chengshi Laoling Wenti Yanjiu* [The Study of Aging Issues in Urban China]. Tianjin: Jianjin Educational Press, pp.13-39.
- Sheng, X., and Settles, B. H. 2006. Intergenerational Relationships and Elderly Care in China A Global Perspective. *Current Sociology* 54(2): 293-313.
- Short, S. E., Fengying, Z., Siyuan, X., and Mingliang, Y. 2001. China's one-child

- policy and the care of children: An analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. *Social Forces* 79(3): 913-943.
- Skinner, C. 2003. *Running Around in Circles: Coordinating Childcare Education and Work*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Smock, P. J. and Noonan, M. 2003. Gender, Work, and Family in the United States: What Do We Know From Social Science Research?. *Ann Arbor, 1001*, 48106-1248.
- South, S. J. and Spitze, G. 1994. Housework in marital and nonmarital households. *American Sociological Review* 59(3): 327-347.
- Spector, P., Allen, T., Poelmans, S., Cooper, C., Bernin, P., Hart, P., Lu, L., Miller, K., de Moraes, L., Ostrognay, G. and Pitariu, H. 2005. 'An international comparative study of work/family stress and occupational strain'. In S. A. Y. (Eds.) *Work and Family: An International Research Perspective*. Hove: Psychology Press, pp. 71-86.
- Stacey, J. 1996. *In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Stacey, Judith. 1983. *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sun, R. 2002. Old age support in contemporary urban China from both parents' and children's perspectives. *Research on Aging* 24(3): 337-359.
- Temple, B. and Young, A., 2004. Qualitative research and translation dilemmas. *Qualitative Research* 4(2): 161-178.
- World Bank, 2016. Labor force participation rate, female (percent of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=CN>
- Accessed 10 May 2017.
- World Bank, 2016. Population ages 15-64 (% of total). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.1564.TO.ZS> Accessed 13 May 2017.
- Th évenon, O. 2013. *Drivers of Female Labour Force Participation in the OECD*, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 145. Paris:

OECD Publishing. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k46civrngnms6-en>

Accessed 12 May 2017.

Treas, J. and Drobnič, S. (Eds.). 2010. *Dividing the Domestic: Men, women, and Household Work in Cross-national Perspective*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.

Tsui, A. S., and Farh, J. L. L. 1997. Where *Guanxi* Matters Relational Demography and *Guanxi* in the Chinese Context. *Work and Occupations* 24(1): 56-79.

Unger, J. 1979. China's troubled down-to-the-countryside campaign. *Contemporary China* 3(2): 79-92.

US Bureau of Labour Statistics. 2017. *American Time Use Survey-2016 results*. Available at: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf> Accessed 1 July 2017.

Van Teijlingen, E., and Hundley, V. 2002. The importance of pilot studies. *Nursing Standard* 16(40): 33-36.

Vanek, J. 1974. Time spent in housework. *Scientific American* 231(5): 116-121.

Ver Ploeg, M., Altonji, J., Bradburn, N., DaVanzo, J., Nordhaus, W. and Samaniego, F. (Eds.). 2000. *Time-use Measurement and Research: Report of a Workshop*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.

Viebrock, E. and Clasen, J. 2009. *Flexicurity: A State-of-the-Art Review*.

REC-WP Working Papers on the Reconciliation of Work and Welfare in Europe No. 01-2009. Available at:

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1489903 Accessed 3 April 2017.

Visser, J. 2002. The first part-time economy in the world: a model to be followed?. *Journal of European Social Policy* 12(1): 23-42.

Vuri, D. 2016. *Do Childcare Policies Increase Maternal Employment?*. IZA World of Labor. Available at:

<https://wol.iza.org/articles/do-childcare-policies-increase-maternal-employment/long> Accessed 28 April 2017.

Wajcman, J. 2013. 'Domestic technology: labour-saving or enslaving?' In

- Jackson, S. and Moores, S. (Eds.) *The Politics of Domestic Consumption: Critical Readings*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp. 217-230.
- Walsh, M. and Wrigley, C. 2001. Womanpower: The transformation of the labour force in the UK and the USA since 1945. *Economic & Social History* 30: 1-4.
- Wang, F. L. 2005. *China's Household Registration (Hukou) System: Discrimination and Reform*. In Paper presented on the Congressional-executive commission on China One hundred ninth Congress.
- Wang, G. Z. 2016. *Reproductive Health and Gender Equality: Method, Measurement, and Implications*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Wang, H. 2016. 50 percent Chinese Women Still Suffer Gender Discrimination: Survey.
<http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/survey/1603/2239-1.htm>
 Accessed on 16 April 2017.
- Wang, Q. and Zhou, Q. 2010. China's divorce and remarriage rates: Trends and regional disparities. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 51(4): 257-267.
- Watson Farley & Williams. 2015. Aero hours contracts: Flexibility or exploitation? Available at:
<http://www.wfw.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/WFW-EmploymentInsight-Dec2015.pdf> Accessed 24 May 2017.
- West, C. and Zimmerman, D. H. 1987. Doing gender. *Gender & society* 1(2): 125-151.
- Westwood, S. 2002. 'Domestic labour or stand by your man-while he sits down and has a cup of tea.' In Jackson, S. and Scott, S. (Eds.) *Gender: A Sociological Reader*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 159-164.
- Whyte, M.K. 1999. 'The changing role of workers'. In Goldman, M. and MacFarquhar, R. (Eds.) *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.173-196.
- Whyte, M.K. 2005. Continuity and change in urban Chinese family life. *The China Journal*, 53, 9-33.

- Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., y Charles, V. 2006. Anonymity and Confidentiality. *In Conference ESRC Research Methods Festival*. University of Oxford.
- Wilson, E. 2002. *Women and the Welfare State*. London: Taristock Publications.
- Wilthagen, T. 2007. Flexicurity pathways. *Tilburg Law Review*. 14: 80-89.
- Wilthagen, T. and Tros, F. 2004. The concept of ‘flexicurity’: a new approach to regulating employment and labour markets. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 10(2): 166-186.
- Winfield, B.H., Mizuno, T. and Beaudoin, C.E. 2000. Confucianism, collectivism and constitutions: Press systems in China and Japan. *Communication Law and Policy* 5(3): 323-347.
- World Economic Forum, 2015. *The Global Gender Gap Index*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.
- World Economic Forum, 2016. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.
- Wu, X. 2014. The rise and decline of the housewifization: From the perspective of individualization. *Nanjing Journal of Social Sciences* 2: 62-68.
- Xi, J., Sun, Y., and Xiao, J. J., (Eds.). 2006. *Chinese Youth in Transition*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Xia, C. L., and Ma, F. I. 1995. The impact of number of children on familial support for the elderly. *Population Research* 19 (1): 10-16.
- Xiao, Y. and Cooke, F. L. 2012. Work–life balance in China? Social policy, employer strategy and individual coping mechanisms. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 50(1): 6-22.
- Xinhua Net, 2015. China to allow two children for all couples. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-10/29/c_134763645.htm Accessed 16th April 2017.
- Xinhua Net, 2016. *China preparing to raise retirement age: report*. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-02/28/c_135137885.htm Accessed 7 April 2017.

- Xu, Q. and O'Brien, M. 2014. Fathers and teenage daughters in Shanghai: Intimacy, gender and care. *Journal of Family Studies* 20(3): 311-322.
- Xu, A., DeFrain, J. and Liu, W. (Eds.) 2017. *The Chinese Family Today* (Vol. 158). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Yan, Y. 2003. *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Yan, Y. 2009. *The Individualization of Chinese Society*. Oxford: Berg.
- Yang, H. 1996. The distributive norm of monetary support to older parents: a look at a township in China. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58(2):404-415.
- Yang, H. 2012. Urban women's gender discrimination issues in employment, women of China. Available at <http://www.womenofchina.cn/html/report/144652-1.htm> Accessed 7 November 2016.
- Yang, M. M. H. 1994. *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Yang, N., Chen, C. C., Choi, J., and Zou, Y. 2000. Sources of work-family conflict: A Sino-US comparison of the effects of work and family demands. *Academy of Management Journal* 43(1): 113-123.
- Yee, J. 2001. Women's Changing Roles in the Chinese Economy. *Journal of Economics* 27(2): 55-67.
- Yue, X., and Ng, S. H. 1999. Filial obligations and expectations in China: Current views from young and old people in Beijing. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2(2): 215-226.
- Zang, J. 2003. 'songdai jiafa de tedian ji qi dui jiazu zhong nannv xingbie jue se de rending' [The characteristic of men and women roles in song dynasty]. In Deng, X. (Eds.) *Tangsong Nvxing yu Shehui [Women and Society in Tang and Song Dynasty]*. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, pp. 275-298.
- Zhai, X. 2006. *Renqing, Mianzi yu Quanli de Zai Shengchan [Renqing, Mianzi and the Reproduction of Power]*. Beijing: Beijing University Press.
- Zhan, H. J., and Montgomery, R. J. 2003. Gender and elder care in China the

- influence of filial piety and structural constraints. *Gender & society* 17(2): 209-229.
- Zhan, H.J., Feng, X. and Luo, B. 2008. Placing elderly parents in institutions in urban China a reinterpretation of filial piety. *Research on Aging* 30(5): 543–571.
- Zhang, C., and Li, R. 2017. If Grandma Is Still on the Job, Will Daughters Skip Having Babies? Available at: <http://www.caixinglobal.com/2017-06-30/101108209.html> Accessed on 1st July. 2017
- Zhang, F.Q. 2004. Economic transition and new patterns of parent-adult child coresidence in urban China. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(5): 1231–1245.
- Zhang, M., Foley, S. and Yang, B. 2013. Work–family conflict among Chinese married couples: testing spillover and crossover effects. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 24(17): 3213-3231.
- Zhang, Y. and Goza, F. W. 2006. Who will care for the elderly in China?: A review of the problems caused by China's one-child policy and their potential solutions. *Journal of Aging Studies* 20(2): 151-164.
- Zhao, X. R., Qu, H. and Ghiselli, R. 2011. Examining the relationship of work–family conflict to job and life satisfaction: A case of hotel sales managers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 30(1): 46-54.
- Zheng, Y. 2016. *Working-age population sees biggest drop in modern history*. Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-01/20/content_23158090.htm Accessed 9 June 2017.
- Zhu, J. (2011). Gongzuo jiating zhong de laodongli shichang tanxi [The Analyzing of Labour Market and Work Family Relationship]. *Jianxi Social Sciences* 6.
- Zuo, B. 1997. *Zhongguoren de Lian yu Mianzi [Face among Chinese People]*. Hubei: Central China Normal University Press.
- Zuo, J. and Bian, Y. 2001. Gendered resources, division of housework, and perceived fairness—A case in urban China. *Journal of Marriage and Family*

63(4): 1122-1133.