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Middle class one-child migrants: between transnational aspiration in the UK and family responsibility in China

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Abstract

The rapid economic development in China since 1978 and the one-child policy enacted in 1979 produced a large number of middle class families with only one child. Initially inspired by the Western means to affluence, these one-child migrants came to the UK (mostly) as international students and remained after their study to take up opportunities to gain work in the professions. As the only child they were faced with the dilemma of seeking greater mobility in the host country, and looking after their ageing parents in China. This research seeks to understand the factors behind their decision to migrate or to settle, and how the only-child migrants in the UK negotiate filial obligations in relation to their parents in China. The transnational one-child family provides a unique case for investigating how families function and change under extreme conditions; as well as how traditional family values and practices shift in the 21st Century within the context of rapid modernisation.

The findings of the research are based on interviews with 27 one-child migrants, 6 migrants with siblings and 7 parents of the one-child participants. The migrant participants are from different regions of China and were dispersed in the UK. The majority of the sample has an urban middle class background. By including parents and children from the same family, which is rarely done in transnational family research, this study is able to analyse the separated household members from both sides. The detailed accounts of the migrants' lived experience reveal a multi-level decision-making process over the life course of these families, a predominately parent-to-child intergenerational material transfer, as well as a reconfigured reciprocity between one-child migrants and their parents.

Families represent the most intimate form of a transnational social field. One-child transnational families in this study have shown intense circulation of material resources, emotion and care forged by the biological bond and family contract; these families played a crucial "bridging" role that connects the social spaces between

China and the UK. As a result individual migrants are actively involved in relationships in multi-layered spaces, and simultaneously influenced by these relationships. International education and the globalised late-capital world gave rise to a demographic of Western-educated Chinese migrants who are relatively mobile, while some aspects of their lives are still geographically bound. By introducing the time factor into the family-migration nexus the thesis shows that migrants' establishment in the host country and their transnational ties are neither incompatible, nor are they static; their relationship evolves with the life cycle of the individuals, and the changing society in both the host country and China.

Research Questions

How do the Chinese one-child migrants of a middle class background balance their aspirations in the UK and their family obligations to parents in China?

Q1: How do adult migrants perceive their up-bringing in post-1978 one-child families?

Q2: What motivates middle class migrants to come to the UK, and what role do parents play in migration decision making?

Q3: How does being the only child in a family impact on a migrant's economic and social mobility in the UK?

Q4: Given the historical importance of filial duties in Chinese society, how does this cohort understand and negotiate their responsibility to their parents?

Content

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

Multidimensional[1]

The world is multidimensional
and that gives us headaches.
We want it to be monochrome
so it can be clear.
We want it to be uniform
so it can be true.
We want it to be limited
so we can grasp it, make it stay.
But its dimensions are endless:
the world keeps slipping away.

Blaga Dimitrova
(Bulgarian poet and politician, 1922-2003)

The world for the migrant is continuously multidimensional. Migrants want everything to be clear. Very little is clear if you are crossing a vast distance to an unfamiliar environment, without the security of contacts and with little prospect of immediate acceptance by the host society. This researcher wanted everything to be uniform; wanted everything to be limited so it could be easily grasped. However, migration is heterogeneous; its dynamics and patterns currently change faster than ever before. Yet we still ask: *Why do people migrate? What happens to them after they migrate? What is the impact of migration?*

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[1] Translated by Niko Boris and Heather McHugh

More than a hundred years after E. G. Ravenstein's early attempt to generate "the laws of migration" (1889, 1885), it has been claimed that we are now in "the age of migration" (Castles and Miller, 2009) where few countries are indifferent to the opportunities and challenges of international migration, and more individuals are on the move than before. While the number of low-skilled migrants in OECD[2] countries increased by 12% during the first decade of the 21st Century, the highly-skilled/educated migrants increased by 70% (OECD, 2013a).

Migrants have been viewed primarily as skills-bearers to be exploited for the host countries' economy, hence the common divide of "high-skill" and "low-skill" migrants in research and migration policies. However, a migrant's life is multidimensional. Apart from being a worker, an individual is also a son/daughter, (maybe) a spouse/a parent, possibly a property owner, who perhaps owns a business, and who is likely to be a member of several social networks. Furthermore, people are not *born* a migrant, they *become* a migrant at a certain point(s) in their life. The earlier part of their lives before leaving home inevitably shapes their migration decisions and their experiences after migration. There is no uniformity to migration.

This PhD research started as a study of the 21st Century new migrants from mainland China in the UK. As the initial profile emerged, two features of these more recent arrivals became so striking that it was difficult not to explore them further. One unique feature is that these young migrants, who are in their 20s and 30s, were born during the height of the one-child policy in China, thus most likely making them the only child in the family. The other feature is the overall affluence of the new Chinese migrants relative to the earlier Chinese migrants, and even the white British population. The most direct evidence of this cohort's affluence is the large proportion of graduates from British universities who came as self-funded students. The fact that these young

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[2] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) currently has 34 member countries, including the US, UK, Australia and other developed European countries.

migrants could afford overseas rate tuition fees and maintenance costs in the UK suggests a substantial financial contribution from their parents. Both features point to the significant role that family is likely to play in these migrants' life, and vice versa. Therefore, this research highlights the understudied family dimension of the new Chinese migrants, and investigates the relationship between space (migration), time (inter-generation) and the dynamics of family.

Who are the middle class one-child Chinese migrants?

In the late 1970s, the Chinese government carried out two fundamental policy decisions which transformed China, Chinese families, and China's position in the global order within three decades. One was the economic reform which incorporated the "open-door" policy, the other one was the one-child policy. The economic reform, also known as "reform and opening up", equipped a great number of Chinese people with the resources, aspiration and opportunities to go abroad. The number of Chinese who migrated has been increasing each year since 1978. The first small peak occurred around 1989, which was correlated with the upheaval of the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident (Zhang, 2005). However, the mainland Chinese started to migrate on a larger scale at the turn of the 21st Century.

The new Chinese migrant cohort has been referred to as "the new diaspora" (Liu, 2011), "new migrants" (Benton and Gomez, 2011:57), the "third wave" (Fung, 2008), and the "new Chinese migration order" (Pieke, 2007). These terms all refer to the same cohort: migrants from mainland China after the 1980s who live (semi-) permanently outside China. This research will use the reference "new Chinese migrants" consistently to avoid confusion. Apart from chain migrants (new migrants who join kin in the destination country [Lee, 1966]) and undocumented migrants, the new Chinese migrants also consist of an unprecedentedly large affluent demographic that belongs to the Chinese middle class which emerged following the domestic economic development (Liu, 2011, Zhang, 2005).

Of this migrant population, the largest number were students. Statistics in 2011 show China as the top student sending country in the world (OECD, 2013b). However, whether "international students" can be defined as "migrants" is a contested matter. Very few writers acknowledge the distinction, for example, between temporary international travellers (tourists and short-stay business people), short-term contract-based individuals (students and diplomatic officials) from migrants who intend long-term or indefinite settlement (Wellman and Cole, 2011, Wang, 2007). In the early 2000s, population geographers were still unclear about the differentiation between "student migrations" and "skilled and professional migrants" (Waters, 2012, King, 2002). Furthermore, the student-turned-migrant has an even more complicated status. Wang Gungwu pointed out the unique status of "post-student" overseas Chinese. The term "post-student" refers to the Chinese who do not return home but seek to work in the country where they received training and education; thus they are neither students nor traditionally-defined migrants (Wang, 2007:165). Most middle class migrants in this study are post-student migrants whose migration status was made up of two key stages: the decision to study abroad, and the decision to remain in the UK.

The rapid increase in out-migration at the beginning of the 21st Century coincided with the coming of age of the one-child generation. The one-child policy was carried out nationally from 1979 in response to the "over-population" theory (Greenhalgh, 2008). Urban couples were allowed to have only one child, but rural couples were allowed a second child if the first-born was a girl (Deutsch, 2006). Three decades later, statistics show that there are more than 150 million only-children in China; a demographic which makes up more than 7.6% of the Chinese population (Bao, 2012). Among the nation's post-'80s generation, 65% come from one-child families (Lin and Sun, 2010). Children who were born in more economically developed regions are more likely to be an only-child. For example, Shanghai's only-child percentage exceeded 80% of all children, and in Beijing the percentage was 70% (Bao, 2012).

China is the only country that adopted a birth control policy to reduce the birth rate and thereby slow population growth (Schultz, 2007, Fong, 2004). The population growth was viewed as a "burden" to the nation's modernisation in the late 1970s (Greenhalgh, 2003); yet more than 30 years later, when faced with a rapidly ageing society (about 30% of China's population is over the age of 50 in 2015), China ended the one-child policy in October 2015 and now encourages couples to have two children (Xinhua News, 2015a).

From 2015, while couples in China may *choose voluntarily* not to have more than one child, the Chinese population born between the late 1970s and the early 2000s is likely to be the only demographic in human history that was born under the no-more-than-one-child *imposition*. This unique one-child generation grew up in a rapidly changing China, where a significant proportion of families became affluent, and going abroad (mainly to study) changed from something forbidden to being a widespread middle class phenomenon. When the only-children grew up and joined the new Chinese migration wave in pursuit of their overseas aspiration, they became the "middle class one-child migrants" upon whom this study is focused.

Why study the middle class one-child Chinese migrants?

Since the late 20th Century many Asian societies have experienced rapid economic development and demographic changes. Modernisation and globalisation have been associated with the erosion of traditional Asian family values. The Chinese state enacted a law in 2013 that made visiting or calling parents regularly a legal obligation; failure to do so could lead to a lawsuit (Ford, 2013). The frequency of the home-visit was not specified. The establishment of the law has been associated with the increasingly reported parental neglect in China[3]. Based on the experience of more developed Asian countries, like Japan and Singapore, where the growing number of

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[3] See BBC (1 July 2013). "New China law says children 'must visit parents'" for media report about cases where elderly parents were neglected in China.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-23124345 Accessed 2 July 2016

the middle class population correlated with the decline of the norm of filial piety, Leo Lewis wrote in *The Times* that "the old norms of the Chinese filial piety are about to be tested to breaking point by the creation of a large, urban middle class" (Lewis, 2013a). However, whether this claim can be validated needs more empirical evidence.

Furthermore, since its implementation in the 1970s, the one-child policy was regarded in the West in a predominately negative discourse. Media reports of horror stories like forced abortions easily associated the policy with the Chinese state as the "totalitarian Other" in contrast to the "democratic West" (Greenhalgh, 2003:163). In the 1980s, as the first cohort of the one-child generation started their schooling, the dominant discourse of the one-child policy shifted, both in China and in the West, to the "danger" of the "spoiled" one-child generation. The only children were commonly labelled as "little emperors". The "selfishness" found among them was referred to as the "little emperors syndrome" as if it was a disease[4]. In 1987, the Chinese state made a film titled "Little Emperors of China" with the then leading Chinese actors in it, addressing the claimed problems of the "spoiled" one-child generation.

From the 1980s into the early years of the 21st Century, the one-child generation has been predominately perceived as a "problem" by the public, and their "being the selfish only child" was blamed for the increasing divorce rate, job insecurity and child neglect among young couples (Feng, 2013). However, as the one-child generation was still in the relatively early stages of their lives, the negative claims tended to be based on speculation, rather than lived experience. From the late 1990s, a limited amount of qualitative research has been conducted specifically focused on the only children. However, their findings were largely based on samples of relatively young people; the age of the one-child generation made it impossible to carry out satisfactory studies in the previous decades. In this study, the one-child migrants are aged between their

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[4] Even in recent years the "little emperor" phrase (or "little emperor syndrome") is still frequently used in mainstream media. For example, see BBC (22 November 2013), "No siblings: A side-effect of China's one-child policy"; Independent (10 January 2013), "One-child policy: China's army of little emperors". See Bakken, B. (1993). Prejudice and danger: the only-child in China. *Childhood*, 1(1), pp.46-61 for the author's critical discourse analysis on the stereotypes of "spoiled one-child" during the 1980s.

early 20s to late 30s with a significant number of them having established their own families[5]. Thus it is possible for this study to obtain substantial material in order to explore the (possibly) misunderstood and under-researched life experiences of the one-child generation.

Finally, one-child Chinese migrants are at the centre of several intense relations. As individuals, their migration took place during one of the most uncertain stages of their lives: important life events such as completing education, starting a career, getting married and becoming parents, tend to happen to people in their 20s (although starting a family is sometimes deferred). Each life event is intertwined with the on-going decision about return migration or re-migration to another country. Yet the longitudinal feature of the migration decision-making process has not been given much attention. As migrants whose social, economic and cultural lives are divided between the host country and China, they are very sensitive (and vulnerable) towards any policy and social changes in both countries. Therefore, the question remains whether middle class migration will lead to transnational advantages or transnational compromises. As the only child in the family, crucial aspects of a migrant's life, such as care, emotion and expectation are intensified, thus making the one-child transnational family a unique "transnational social field" (Levitt and Schiller, 2004) to investigate how family and migration impact on each other.

Why the UK as a focus of migration research?

Compared to Asian-Pacific countries, the UK's Chinese migrants are relatively understudied. Researchers in the 1960s agreed that "the Chinese were the least assimilated of Britain's immigrant minorities" (Benton and Gomez, 2011:211). Subsequent studies considered Chinese culture as a barrier to their further integration into mainstream society: "…this view was developed in the late 1970s and remains

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[5] In addition to having "older" one-child participants, the fact that the researcher also belongs to the "one-child generation" further distinguishes this research from the previous ones. This feature is elaborated on in Chapter 2's methodological discussion on "conducting interviews as 'one of them'".

influential in the 1990s…" (Chau and Yu, 2001:110). The UK public's view of the Chinese people included such assertions that the Chinese were "silent", the "least well-known and understood", and the "least British among all ethnic groups" (Chan et al, 2007, Parker and Song, 2008). Such a profile remained consistent from the 1960s to the 2000s.

However, the arrival of the new Chinese migrants drastically changed the Chinese presence and impact in the UK. Because of the attraction of British higher education, the UK became the second most popular destination for Chinese students, particularly for postgraduate studies (China Daily, 2013). The Chinese arrivals in the 21st Century also transformed the education landscape in the UK. By 2009, China provided the largest number of international fee-paying students in British universities. By 2012, one out of three non-EU students were from China (Universities UK, 2014, Home Office, 2013). The Chinese students' enthusiasm for British degrees makes a sharp contrast when compared to British students' growing doubt over the "value" of university education after the tuition fee for home students tripled in 2012[6]. Therefore, an investigation of the Chinese students' motivation to study in the UK contributes inter alia to the debate about the "value" of British university education.

There is no one source which directly indicates the number of one-child Chinese migrants in the UK. The 2011 UK Census showed that there were 152,000 China-born residents in 2011, two thirds of whom arrived during 2001-2011, and among whom nearly half were students aged 16 and over (ONS, 2013a). The low return rate of students during the first decade of the 21st Century shows that many highly-educated Chinese opted to stay in the UK after graduation: "research gaps are yet to be filled by addressing questions such as how this elite immigrant group insert themselves into the host community" (Luk, 2008:64).

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[6] See the *BBC* (4 June 2015), "Students doubt fees value for money". Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-32991494 Accessed 11 February 2016; *Times Higher Education* (13 August 2015), "More than half of graduates say degree was not worth the money". Available at https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/more-half-graduates-say-degree-was-not-worth-money Accessed 11 February 2016.

Three reports about the new Chinese migrants in London emerged in the last decade: *Young Chinese Migrants in London* (Knowles, 2015), *The Changing Chinese Community in London: New Migration, New Needs* (Lam et al, 2009), and *Migration, Integration, Cohesion: New Chinese Migrants to London* (Pharoah et al, 2009). The two reports in 2009 mainly focused on disadvantaged new Chinese migrants and their social needs. Very limited attention was given to post-student migrants in these two reports. The report in 2015 highlighted the affluence of the elite migrants from Hong Kong and Beijing, in particular, their tendency to choose gentrified areas to live in London. While all three reports raised the public awareness towards Chinese graduates in the UK, the gap in understanding these new Chinese migrants in the UK is still wide open. To quote Caroline Knowles (2015:4): "The Chinese are the UK's fastest growing ethnic group and yet we know little about them… Current knowledge of the Chinese in the UK and in London urgently needs updating".

Dissertation structure

Chapter 1 provides the literature review. The objective of the literature review is to place the middle class one-child migrants cohort in its historical, theoretical and empirical context. How new Chinese migrants balance their middle class aspirations, filial obligations and transnational mobility lies at the nexus of several bodies of research literature. The review starts with a brief historical review of global Chinese migration before focusing on the socioeconomic context of Chinese migrants in the UK.

Subsequently, the review summarises three approaches scholars take to understand/explain the motivation, processes and impacts of Chinese migration, namely the economic network approach, the family capital accumulation approach, and the Chinese culture approach. The next part analyses the social, economic and cultural background of the one-child middle class migrant in a changing China, which

incorporates the combined influence of the 1978 economic reforms and the 1979 one-child policy. Finally, the one-child migrant cohort is examined in relation to its aspirations as highly-educated, affluent migrants, as well as being the only children with filial obligations to their parents.

Chapter 2 addresses the methodology adopted in this study. This chapter takes the reader through the journey of the design, data collection and data analysis stages of the research. The design stage involved a pilot study, which helped to finalise the answers to questions such as "who to include, how to find participants, and the questions posed to them". The discussion of data collection centres upon the advantage/challenge of recruiting participants and conducting interviews as "one of them" – a middle class only child from mainland China. Finally, the research journey takes the chapter to the process of data analysis, including a reflexive account of the whole research process, especially to do with the issue of "truth" in interview data.

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 are the findings' chapters. These four chapters are structured in a chronological order according to the four life stages of the one-child migrants, namely their up-bringing in China, their decision to come and remain in the UK, the process of establishing a career and family in the UK, and finally their plan of future settlement. In all the four stages of a migrant's life, it was the changing relationship with the parents in a shifting society that was the focus of the analysis. Also, in order to link the micro-level data to the macro-level socioeconomic context, each chapter (except for **Chapter 5**) begins with a background section that puts the reader into the immediate historical and social context of the material that follows.

In order to understand a migrant's decision made in his/her early twenties, it is important to review the kind of family and society where they grew up during their childhood and adolescence. **Chapter 3** presents a retrospective account of growing up in a changing China as the only child in a middle class family. A mixed picture emerges, from both the children's and the parents' points of view, with regard to parental

academic expectations, and how parents "disciplined" the child. Such a diversity of parent-child interaction not only challenges the stereotype of the "authoritarian, academic-centred" Chinese up-bringing, but it also serves as an indicator of the complex family negotiation process as the only children leave home to go abroad.

The one-child migrants in this study distinguish themselves from "migrants" in the traditional sense because most of the one-child migrants arrived as students, and later switched their status to "post-student migrants". **Chapter 4** incorporates the two stages of the decision-making process (the decision to study abroad and the decision to remain in the UK) and uses the "migration mobility trajectory framework" as an explanatory model. The model highlights the time factor as well as the internal and external factors in a migrant's decision-making process. In this framework, parental involvement is found to be an important external factor, but its influence is subject to an evolution in the individual pathway, parental opinion change, and intergenerational interaction.

Chapter 5 focuses on the migrants' lives in the present. How are these middle class migrants, after growing up in a competitive Chinese society, with a British qualification, and careful decision making to remain in the UK, getting on with their lives? As much as the researcher would like to elaborate on these migrants' social integration, career opportunity and sense of belonging in the host country, the "storyline" focuses mainly on the intergenerational relationship between the migrants and their parents. Arguably the continuing support (in forms of money and childcare) from parents has positively impacted on the migrants' mobility in the aforementioned three areas. The different life-stages of the sample enables the researcher to present a diverse picture of how transnational one-child families adjust themselves alongside their child's life progress in the UK.

In **Chapter 6** migrant children and their parents talk about their understanding of family responsibility (filial piety) and how they see their intergenerational relationships in the

future. Given the findings about what the families experienced in the previous three chapters, the reflective and indicative accounts of the children and parents at this point are shaped by a mixture of social, economic and cultural factors from China and the UK, from the "traditional" and the "modern". Using the notion of "family contract", the chapter proposes an explanatory model which captures the changing family contract from horizontal (distance) and vertical (multi-generation) perspectives. Through two-dimensional analysis of transnational families, this research shows the simultaneous impact of time and space on the most intense form of the nuclear family, as well as the initiatives and compromises made by family members at the centre of the changes. The theoretical implications of these changes are elaborated on in **Chapter 7**, which is the concluding chapter of the dissertation.

Chapter 1. Locating Chinese one-child migrants in the context of time, space, and theory: a historical, theoretical and empirical review

There has been no research that is specifically focused on the Chinese middle class only-child migrants in the UK. Furthermore, very little is known about how these migrants balance their aspirations (as migrants) with their obligations towards their parents (as the only child). This literature review has drawn its content largely from numerous studies about the Chinese in and outside China from different fields: historical accounts of overseas Chinese (e.g. Benton and Gomez, 2011, Kuhn, 2008, Wang, 2000); sociological and anthropological inquiries into Chinese ethnicity and identity in host countries (e.g. Fong, 2011, Waters, 2011, 2008, Parker and Song, 2008, Pieke et al, 2007, Nyíri, 2001, Ong and Nonini, 1997, Parker, 1995); socio-economic analyses of the emerging middle class in China (e.g. Li, 2010, Biao and Shen, 2009, Goodman, 2008); demographic examinations of the impact of the one-child policy (e.g. Yi, 2012, Pascu, 2011, Feng and Manson 2004, Hesketh and Zhu, 1997); as well as sociological and ethnographical investigations of the one-child family in China (e.g. Greenhalgh, 2008, Liu, 2008ab, Deutsch, 2006, Zhang and Goza, 2005, Fong, 2004) .

The findings in each of these disparate fields have helped in the understanding of one or more aspects of the Chinese middle class only-child migrants in the UK. But these contributions are necessarily fragmented. How do the UK Chinese one-child migrants of a middle class background balance their aspirations in the host country with their filial obligations in a rapidly expanding China? There is no one specific theoretical framework which can encapsulate such an intergenerational relationship in a transnational setting. The research questions in this study find their theoretical, conceptual and empirical reference in both migration studies and family studies.

The distinct questions of migrant motivation, migration process, and the impact of migration in the host country and sending country have attracted scholars from

different disciplines within the social sciences to contribute to the theory-building and debate (Massey et al, 1994, 1993, Borjas, 1989, Fawcett, 1989; Wallerstein, 1984, 1974, Lee, 1966, Lewis, 1954, Ravenstein, 1889, 1885). Similarly, the development of the intergenerational relationship in different time, geographical and cultural contexts has also been examined by scholars who approached it from various theoretical and empirical angles (Göransson, 2009, Goh, 2006, Fong, 2004, Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002, Becker, 1993ab, Finch and Mason, 1999, Song, 1999, Walker, 1993).

However, the existing explanatory models tend to be restricted to the scope of the scholar's discipline, or the time of research. The gap in the research is plain: we still do not know very much about the aspiring middle class only child who migrates from a rapidly developing country. How new Chinese migrants balance their middle class aspirations, filial obligations and transnational mobility, lies at the nexus of several bodies of research literature. Therefore, the purpose of this literature review is to take threads from various research fields/disciplines and synthesise the key threads. In this way, it will become clear why studying one-child migrants and their relationship with parents is significant in simultaneously addressing key elements in 21st Century migration and mobility, the ageing society and intergenerational relationships, as well as the family value shifts in a period of rapid modernisation and globalisation.

The literature review is made up of three parts. The first part reviews the studies of Chinese migrants, a demographic which includes the traditional Chinese diaspora and the new Chinese migration. The second part analyses the social, economic and cultural background of the one-child middle class migrant in a changing China, which incorporates the combined influence of the 1978 economic reform and the 1979 one-child policy. Finally, the one-child migrant cohort is examined in relation to its aspirations as highly-educated, affluent migrants, as well as being the only children with filial obligations to their parents.

1.1 Overseas Chinese: the traditional Chinese diaspora and the new Chinese migration

1.1.1 Studies of the traditional Chinese diaspora

a. From sojourner to settler

The ancient history of Chinese migration is intertwined with state-led expeditions and ordinary people's cross-border trading activities, from the establishment of the Silk Road by early traders and later reinforcement by the Chinese Emperors in the 2nd Century BC (Hattori, 2000), to the last, and arguably most influential, pre-modern China's maritime expeditions led by the state official Zheng He in 1434 (Menzies, 2008, Wang, 2000). From Zheng He's return later in the decade until the late 19th Century there was a long period of prohibition of migration from China, except for a short period around the 1630s, which marked the peak of Chinese merchants' activity in Southeast Asia before modern times (Wang, 2000). During the early migration history the Chinese mainly migrated to Southeast Asia (Poston and Yu, 1990). When the Qing Emperors (Qing Dynasty 1644-1912) closed the border from the mid-17th Century to the mid-19th Century, the Chinese sojourners who were not able to return home settled in the host country and became ethnic minorities in various Southeast Asian countries. The overseas Chinese communities thrived, especially in Java and parts of the Malay Archipelago (Wang, 2000).

The next phase of Chinese migration covered the period from the decline of the Chinese Empire in the mid-19th Century to the Republican period of the late 1940s. These were the periods when migration to all parts of the world occurred on a large scale. Such migration was initiated by ordinary people and led by institutions, in the form of war-time refugees, merchants, as well as coolies (Yun, 2008, Poston & Yu, 1990). The coolie trade led the Chinese mostly to the new frontiers of America, the gold mines of Australia, and even to the WWI battle fields of Europe (Benton and

Gomez, 2011, Wang, 2000, Poston and Yu, 1990).

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 once again closed China's border. For the subsequent three decades, there were no new migrants from mainland China (Skeldon, 1996)[7]. The settled and local-born generations elsewhere became politically oriented towards their host countries (Liu, 2011). However, the Chinese settlers' experience in the host countries had not been smooth; the Chinese were "the target of exclusion laws in all five continents" (Benton and Gomez, 2011:361).

For example, the United States maintained its Exclusion Era against the Chinese from 1882 to 1943 because it thought that the Chinese undermined law and order in various regions of the country (Hsu, 2000); the Chinese in the Philippines were treated as inferiors to the Filipinos by the American colonisers in the early half of the 20th Century; they were later barred from citizenship by the newly independent Philippine government from 1946 to 1975, which further alienated the Chinese from the mainstream Philippine society (See, 2008). After serving in WWI, the Chinese labourers in Britain were subjected to deportation under the 1919 Alien Act when the racist "Yellow Peril" rhetoric was widely circulated (Parker D. , 1998).

In spite of the exclusions from host countries during the early part of the 20th Century, the overseas Chinese established various diasporic communities. This demographic carved its own niche in a number of host societies. The most visible evidence of the presence of the Chinese are the Chinatowns in big cities all over the world (Kuhn, 2008, Luk, 2008, Thuno, 2007). By the end of the 20th Century, approximately 37 million people of Chinese ethnicity lived outside mainland China, around 70% were

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[7] In the 1950s, apart from cadres and students sent to the Soviet Union, a small population flow took place from south China mainly to the UK via Hong Kong (Skeldon, 1996). After a short period of "encouraging overseas Chinese to return to China to assist the state's reconstruction" in the early 1950s, the Chinese border was closed in 1958 as the suppression of the right-wing opposition intensified and the communist regime's hostility towards foreign countries grew (Liu, 2006:135-138).

located in Southeast Asia (Kuhn, 2008). Among those Chinese who resided outside of Asia, the majority lived in more developed countries (Poston and Yu, 1990). The presence of the Chinese overseas "varies by place, circumstance, time, and other determinates, past and present" (Wickberg, 2007:177). The next section moves on to briefly examine the history of Chinese settlement in the UK.

b. Chinese diaspora in the UK: business, mobility, and identity

Chinese settlement in the UK started relatively later than that in the Asia-Pacific regions. The UK's first Chinese visitor was recorded in 1681 (The British Museum, 2008). However, large-scale migration from China to the UK began after the mid-19th Century. The early Chinese diaspora originated mainly from Canton and Hong Kong (Benton and Gomez, 2011). Such migrants generally came from a poor background and did menial work (Liu, 2011). A most common early pattern among this wave of migrants was the objective to make money in the UK and return home for retirement. A shift from sojourner to settler occurred from after WWII and the following several decades; a period also marked by the unstable political and economic environment in China (Benton and Gomez, 2011).

From the 19th Century to the early 20th Century the UK Chinese diaspora experienced changes of business openings and opportunities. The various niches have been summarised by scholars as "salt-soap-soya". This designation refers essentially to the seafaring groups of the late 19th Century, the laundry business in the early 20th Century, and the catering industry from the mid-20th Century (Benton and Gomez, 2011, The British Museum, 2008).

There are later signs of the Chinese diaspora's economic activities expanding, which indicate their attempts to break away from the narrow catering niche, and their seeking greater social mobility. The percentage of Chinese workers (regardless of place of birth) working in the catering industry fell from an estimated 90% in 1985 to

slightly more than half in 1991 (Chau and Yu, 2001). Recent research shows that a larger number of Chinese can be found working in the business sector and health and education service (Knowles, 2015).

Meanwhile, the early diaspora's second generation, the British-born Chinese, have developed a very different profile; they have enjoyed greater social mobility, and are not prepared to be bound by their ethnic identity; they are better educated, and culturally more assimilated to British society than their parents were. British-born Chinese are more likely to have professional jobs and have become middle class, rather than continuing in their parents' take-away business (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Song, 1999). This group of the Chinese diaspora tends not to identify itself only as Chinese, but as having "segmented identities", where being neither *Chinese* nor *British* dominate unconditionally (Parker, 1995).

Among the British-born Chinese, there have not been consistent signs of cohesion; nor did the members of the group feel strongly connected to China nor to migrants from China (Parker and Song, 2007). Surveys and interviews conducted among the China-born population also showed a weak connection with the British-born Chinese (Knowles, 2015, Lam et al, 2009). Such a gap between new-comers and long-term settlers was not exclusive to the UK. As migration from mainland China experienced a sudden increase from the late 20th Century, the influx of new Chinese migrants to the host countries (mainly developed Western countries) drastically changed the profile of their Chinese population, and these changes have been perceived with ambivalence by the host society. The next section reviews, briefly, the new Chinese migrants' encounters with the Chinese diasporas and the mainstream society in the UK.

1.1.2 The new Chinese migration

While the earlier Chinese migrants were largely driven by poverty at home, the new Chinese migrants consist of more affluent migrants whose reason for migration is

more individualised. This range of migrants includes professionals, entrepreneurs, self-funded students, and other high-skilled workers (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Liu, 2011). The new Chinese migration is closely associated with the rapid economic growth in mainland China and China's incorporation in the global economy (Skeldon, 2007). However, low-skilled and illegal migrants still exist at the other end of the spectrum in the new Chinese migration. They can be found working in the Chinese ethnic niche, or are employed by other Chinese or non-Chinese people. Such workers are exploited and are to be found doing the dirty, difficult and dangerous jobs, "3-D" jobs (Thuno, 2007, Pieke et al., 2004, Wang, 2000).

Another factor that makes the new Chinese migrants different from the former Chinese diaspora is their place of origin. The new migrants come from all over mainland China, while the members of the earlier Chinese diaspora were mainly from Fujian, Canton and Hong Kong (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Pieke, 2007, Skeldon, 2007, Wang, 2000). This factor is believed to have created a barrier between new Chinese migrants and the established Chinese community: the most obvious obstacle being that the former speak Mandarin while the latter speak mainly Hakka or Cantonese.

However, there are more gaps than language between the new migrants and the traditional Chinese settlers. For example, the clash of interests between Mandarin (mainland new-comers) and Cantonese (Hong Kong settlers) in European Chinese associations (Li, 1998); the competition for public service resources between old and new Chinese communities in Toronto (Salaff and Chan, 2007); the widened gaps and intensified hatred between the old communities and the new arrivals can be found in Surinam (Fat, 2009), Italy (Ceccagno, 2007), Zanzibar (Hsu, 2007), and Hungary (Nyiri, 2001). Moreover, the new-comer Chinese in the Philippines have been socially discriminated against by *both* local government and the old Chinese community (See, 2007). Hostility from local residents is also experienced by new Chinese migrants in various regions in Africa (Robinson, 2009, Ma Mung, 2008).

Since the start of the 21st Century, several reports on mainland Chinese migrants' lives and needs in the UK have been produced by various researchers (Kagan et al., 2011, Pharoah et al., 2009, Lam et al., 2009, Chan et al., 2004,). Although these studies demonstrate the diversity of the Chinese in the UK, they tended to focus on the Chinese involved in forced-labour contexts, or those with severe language and financial limitations, as well as those with an insecure legal status. What is clearly revealed from the research is the inadequacy of the attention and social aid the disadvantaged mainland Chinese migrants received from the social services and traditional Chinese communities.

It is difficult to say whether such negative encounters of new Chinese arrivals were specifically ethnic, economic or political given that each country's environment and policy varies. However, research was mainly conducted on low-skilled, uneducated and financially disadvantaged migrant cohorts. Such a global research profile is also reflected in research about the UK Chinese, which was largely focused on the disadvantaged low skill immigrant, particularly illegal immigrants from Fujian (Pieke et al, 2004, Beck, 2004). Although the "Chinese elite" have appeared in media headlines for their conspicuous consumption of Western luxury goods and investment in the major Western cities' property market, they deserve more academic attention for an in-depth understanding. There has been very little investigation into how middle class Chinese migrants, who are highly educated and hold professional jobs, see their future in the UK and in China.

Among the limited research, which has focused on more affluent Chinese migrants in the UK, is Caroline Knowles' report *Young Chinese Migrants in London* (2015). By analysing the patterns of Chinese residential locations in London, Knowles revealed a trend of Chinese population concentration in more expensive areas. Her small-scale interviews with professionals from Beijing and Hong Kong indicated a more individualistic, rather than a Chinese community-oriented, residential choice. Although

Knowles' report mainly touches upon the geographical impact of the new Chinese migrants in London, her middle class subjects revealed a demographic that was geographically, socially and psychologically detached from their ethnic community. Such a feature can be found in middle class migrant cohorts elsewhere. For instance, Christine Avenarius (2007) investigated upper/middle class Chinese from Taiwan in the US; her findings showed that this group of migrants was independent from the Chinese ethnic network. Their social network was more personalised and they resided in suburban areas which were far away from urban Chinese communities. Such a residential and lifestyle choice is similar to British middle class migrants who settled in the suburbs of Paris (Scott, 2006).

Clearly the middle class migrants have a very different profile of overseas experience and survival strategy relative to the less affluent new Chinese migrants, and the earlier Chinese migrants who were mostly from modest and working class backgrounds. However, the unique feature that distinguishes middle class migrants from mainland China and those from Hong Kong, Taiwan and European countries is that the former come from a China that has been politically suppressed and self-isolated from the outside world for three decades. The suddenness of the increase of wealth and access to foreign travel is rare in any other nationality in contemporary migration[8]. In addition to the drastic social and economic changes in China, the global environment in the 21st Century, with its changing prospect in the host countries, transnational infrastructure and communication/transportation technology, also shaped each step of a migrant's decision-making process as her or his journey unfolded.

Having briefly reviewed the history of Chinese migration in the UK and the rest of the world, the next section examines the main explanatory models that scholars have

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[8] Among the BRIC countries, during the past three decades, Russia is the only country that also experienced a sharp increase in GDP and the level of freedom to go abroad, like China. GDP increase rates of all countries (1981-2015) are available from the World Bank http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD Accessed 25 March 2016.

developed since the 1990s, namely the economic network approach, the family capital accumulation approach, and the Chinese culture approach. These three approaches overlap and form an insightful debate about why and how Chinese migration occurred and was sustained.

1.1.3 Understanding Chinese migration

a. Chinese transnational economic networks

The Chinese migrant networks formed during the history of Chinese migration have been regarded as the crucial factor for overseas Chinese survival, expansion, and prosperity. Migrant networks are "sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin" (Massey et al., 1993); they help to reduce migration costs and risks by providing resources to migrants in the host country.

Steven Vertovec (1999) defined transnational networks as long-distance networks which have "dense and highly active networks spanning vast spaces"; that they are "transforming many kinds of social, cultural, economic and political relationships". Such transnational networks included agents such as nation states, and formal institutions based in a single country. In addition, formal institutions existed and operated in multiple countries; non-institutional actors were also a presence (Portes, 2001). According to Portes, the transnational migrant networks represented one manifestation of the non-institutional actors' category.

The literature on the development of Chinese transnational networks has been dominated by the theme of economic activities. Historically, the Chinese have been regarded as the "trade diaspora" (Cohen, 1997), or, along with the Jews and Armenians, as "middleman minorities" (Light, 2007, Gold, 1997). Migrant settlers have

had the cohesiveness to maintain their ethno-national identity and separateness without assimilation into host societies (Light, 2007, Light and Gold, 2000). Such a historically accumulated demographic-migrant network is viewed as an advantage in the forming, persisting, and the maintaining of transnational ties and activities in the contemporary world of globalisation (Light, 2007, Cohen, 1997).

Thomas Faist described the overseas Chinese as "by far the largest set of transnational networks in the world" (2008). The Chinese transnational communities were regarded by Vertovec as an "avenue for capital"; such communities "spread themselves for economic reasons" (2009:9). The South Asian Chinese transnational migrant network has benefited from powerful family ties and kinship connection; it is perpetuated by business linkage, marriage and religious communities (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Wong, 2001). In the US, the Chinese constitute the second largest migrant group[9], and is believed to contribute to future chain migration (Yin, 2007). The majority of French Chinese arrived through networks built by old and new migrant communities (Pina-Guerassimoff, 2006). The Chinese traders in Italy were found to rely heavily on importing goods from China, thus their strong relationship with suppliers in China would seem to follow (Ceccagno, 2007).

However, the migrant network theory, proposed and elaborated by Massey and colleagues, was largely built upon earlier economic/labour migrants with limited resources, who were exploited by the unequal global system for their cheap labour and desire to send remittances home. It was not until the mid-1990s that scholars started to pay attention to *how* the affluent and privileged Chinese migrants shaped Chinese transnationalism. Aihwa Ong and her colleagues (Ong, 1999, Ong and Nonini, 1997, Mitchell, 1997) introduced the concept of "flexible citizenship" and its role in transnational capital accumulation strategy. By incorporating the migration

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[9] Statistics in 2010 showed that Chinese migrants represented the second largest foreign-born demographic in the US, following the Mexicans. In 2013 Indian migrants took over and became the second largest foreign-born demographic in the US. See http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states-1 and http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states Accessed 14 April 2016.

pattern of the "elite", the previous understanding of migrants' transnational pursuit of higher income (economic capital) was extended to include the accumulation of other forms of capital, namely cultural, social and symbolic capital.

Ong and Nonini claimed that "it is impossible to understand such transnational phenomena unless strategies of accumulation by Chinese under capitalism are examined, for such strategies penetrate these phenomena and are in turn affected by them" (1997:4). The emergence of "entirely new sectors of production" and the "speedup of all aspects of economic life" generated new, flexible production, consumption and accumulation of capital (Ong and Nonini, 1997:10). Therefore, as Ong (1999) argued, the transnational community is constituted of the highly mobile, flexible "global citizen" for whom notions of the "nation-state" have become irrelevant (Yang, 2011, Wong, 2003). Miller (2001:2) put such a strategy more plainly as the seeking "access to as many *rights* as possible while falling prey to as few *responsibilities* as possible" [emphasis original]. While such a migration strategy raised concerns for the relationship between individuals and states, it also brought the family under the spotlight because of the role family often played in initiating, sustaining and benefiting from "flexible citizenship" strategies.

 b. Family capital accumulation strategy

Having limited connection with traditional Chinese communities, the "elite" Chinese migrants may have benefited from their personal social and economic networks both at home and in the host countries. However, what the "elite" Chinese migrants had in common with the traditional Chinese diaspora was the significant role of the family in generating and sustaining their transnational networks. A common pattern found among the trans-Pacific Chinese families was characterised as an "astronaut family"; the term referred to the process where one parent accompanied the children to the host country while the other parent (usually the father) stayed in the home country to earn money; he would travel regularly between his family and work (Tsong and Liu

2009, Huang and Yeoh 2005, Waters, 2005, Ong 2003). Similarly, widely used terms like "Pacific shuttle", and "parachute kids" (Ley 2010, Tsang et al 2003, Zhou 1998) also reflected an education-motivated, child-centred trans-Pacific migration arrangement. This kind of family arrangement was based on the idea of gaining cultural and social capital in the host country and economic capital in the home country.

The "family capital accumulation strategy" model echoes the "new economics of migration" theory which views migration as a household decision to minimize risks to family income, or to overcome capital constraints on family production activities by diversifying the allocation of household resources (Stark, 1991, 1984). While the latter described the *survival strategy* for poorer households to control the risks to their economic well-being (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Parreñas, 2005, Wang, 2001), the former appears to be an "upgraded" version which described how affluent players *take advantage* of the transnational migration field to consolidate and further increase their existing wealth and social security.

Although such a discourse provided an economic logic, which examined the "new" Chinese mobility as an active family capital-accumulating strategy, it risked over-simplifying middle class Chinese families' transnational practice by assuming a similar (high) level of flexibility and sustainability. An early study, by Anita Mak, suggested that the high-skilled Hong Kong migrants' shuttling between countries, usually taken as a sign of transnational mobility, was in fact a compromise in solving the career-family dilemma (1997). Since the turn of the century, a growing body of literature based on more recent empirical findings has started to shed different light on Ong's original framework.

Johanna Waters' longitudinal research on Hong Kong/Taiwan Chinese women in Canada between 1999 and 2007 (2011, 2009) showed that "flexible citizenship" may be an accurate way of describing the affluent migrants' objective, but not necessarily

their long-term experience. While her participants appeared to be practising similar "flexible citizenship", their feelings and sense of belonging tended to be localized. Furthermore, Waters observed that, over time, some wives in "astronaut families" showed progressive empowerment while others experienced regressive powerlessness, thus highlighting the importance of *time* in the transnationalism experience. In addition, Elaine Ho's (2008) study of Singaporean migrants in London highlighted the ambivalent role that family played in influencing its members' transnational mobility:

> As much as highly skilled and capital-endowed transnational migrants may capitalise upon the geographical dispersal of family members to seek citizenship status in other countries, familial considerations and restrictive citizenship regulations in the country of origin may equally act as the reasons for eventual return (Ho, 2008:162).

Ho's Singaporean interviewees had to renounce their Singapore citizenship if they attained British citizenship. Such a complication also applied to migrants from mainland China, but not to Chinese citizens from Hong Kong[10] or Taiwan. The clash of dual-nationality recognition between host and home country restricted the level of "flexibility" in the Singaporeans' (and mainland Chinese) transnational mobility, and complicated their long-term settlement decision. However, the problems caused by the prohibition of dual-nationality status by certain countries were overlooked by the "flexible citizenship" framework.

Furthermore, Weiqiang Lin (2012) pushed the argument further by questioning the "planning stage" of the "family capital accumulation strategy". Having observed the difference between his Singaporean cohort among other new East Asian migrants, Lin found a less "calculative" motivation among the middle class Singaporeans; rather,

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[10] Hong Kong citizens were allowed to have dual nationality before the transfer of sovereignty from the UK to China in 1997. In principle, the Nationality Law of the PRC applied to Hong Kong citizens from 1 July, 1997, however, because of the historical and ethnic reasons, some Hong Kong citizens were able to keep dual nationality after 1997.

they were "more loosely guided, and are propelled by an almost taken-for-granted ambition to be 'cosmopolitan'" (2011:142). Thus Lin argued for the "possibility of alternative realities within many Chinese transnationalisms". Without in any way rejecting Ong's theory, scholars have amended the framework to reflect current notions of migrant "reality". Meanwhile, the "reality" continued to change regardless of the development of the theory. Therefore, more up-to-date research is needed to catch up with this dynamic transnational field.

The shift in focus from the disadvantaged to the affluent Chinese transnational networks in the 1990s was in part a response to the growing presence of affluent Chinese migrants following the "East Asian miracle" of the 1960s. The "miracle" was marked by the rapid economic development of the Four Asian Tigers, namely Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea. Thus it was not surprising to find that the majority of affluent Chinese transnationalism theories were based on observing Chinese migrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. There was very limited mention of affluent migrants from mainland China because they entered the stage much later than their counterparts in East Asia. Yet these "new comers" have shaped the influence of overseas Chinese in terms of their sheer number, purchasing power, as well as their pursuit of an overseas education.

Meanwhile, as more "middle range" Chinese joined the transnational field, the definition of an "affluent" Chinese person became blurred. The "elite Chinese" in the 1990s may have been referred to as entrepreneurs who owned businesses in Hong Kong and properties in Canada. In the second decade of the 21st Century, a top British university graduate working in a finance-related job, which paid for the mortgage in London, may also have been referred to as an "elite Chinese". Unlike the rich entrepreneurs who can obtain permanent residency or citizenship by making a substantial financial investment, the professional migrants are subject to rigorous points-based assessments, and several years of waiting (Liu, 2016, Knowles, 2015). In this respect, the professionally skilled migrants were more likely to have a different

plan for their transnational mobility relative to the rich entrepreneurs.

As the profile (age, education, resource) of the relatively more affluent migrants became more complex, the type of migration arrangement shifted accordingly. Unlike trans-Asia-Pacific "astronaut families", the typical pattern of the one-child transnational family in this study constitutes both mother and father living in China and the only child living overseas. However, different from "parachute kids" who were underage students and needed guardians, the majority of the only children arrived in the UK in their 20s. Parents of these one-child migrants showed a lower degree of mobility when compared to their counterparts in the aforementioned trans-Asia-Pacific families. Unlike middle class parents from Hong Kong and Singapore, for whom international migration had been a central feature of their family history (Göransson 2009, Waters 2005, Skeldon 1994), mainland Chinese parents were deeply rooted in their home community.

Therefore, the one-child Chinese transnational families in this study represent an alternative transnational family model. In this model, husband and wife do not experience separation and there is less demand for change to the career and lifestyle of both the father and mother. The family physical co-presence (in most cases) depends on the child's travelling between China and the host country, while in "astronaut families" it was (usually) the father/husband who did the "shuttling". The tension of separation shifted from between husband and the rest of the family to between the only child and parents.

c. The influence of Chinese culture

Migrants and overseas diasporas are inevitably subject to the influence of the culture of their original country. The Chinese differ from many other diasporas in their relatively limited religious belief. Instead, the traditional Chinese culture, centred upon Confucianism, was often invoked as an explanation for certain Chinese phenomena.

Although the question remains about what essentially constitutes "traditional Chinese culture" as such, it is beyond the scope of this literature review to address this matter. Nevertheless, how the so-called "Chinese culture" is used in Chinese migration literature will be briefly examined.

In celebrating "family business empires throughout the Asia Pacific" (Nonini, 1997:203), Chinese culture was believed to be a crucial factor that contributed to the "global success" of the overseas Chinese. In the 1990s John Kao called the Chinese ethnic business, in and outside of China, "the world's fourth economic power" (1993:24). He argued that these "Confucian-style family ventures" benefited from the patriarchal structure which valued the authority of the head of the family/company, as well as the "Confucian tradition of hard work, thrift and respect for one's social network" (1993:35). Furthermore, "Chineseness" was believed to act as the common ground that blurred the boundaries between China and the overseas Chinese. This perception of identity encouraged people of Chinese descent in different parts of the world to reclaim their Chinese ethnic status. Such a cultural influence was what Aihwa Ong called "triumphant Chinese capitalism" (Ong, 1999:7).

However, only a very few Chinese family businesses thrived and expanded to the level that can be called a "family business empire". Most Chinese migrants were (partly) forced to start their own business as a survival strategy when other options were closed in the host countries. Because many migrant groups were relatively disadvantaged in the local labour market, small labour-intensive businesses which required only a low entry standard, such as restaurants, taxi-driving and grocery stores, became the migrants' choice for making a living (Song, 1999). The reason why Chinese businesses tended to operate on a family basis, according to Benton and Gomez (2011:149), was that the family was "a solution to the problems migrants faced in securing start-up capital and hiring labour". They further argued that the family enterprise, as a business model, was "a prominent feature of the migrant generation", rather than the outcome of Chinese culture.

In her in-depth research about family-run Chinese take-away businesses in the UK, Miri Song noted that "the Chinese have been *mythologized* as paragons of a strong family orientation [emphasis mine]" and it cannot be simply assumed that the Chinese children who worked in take-aways will be unproblematically committed to family "based upon enduring and 'natural' norms of family obligations and feelings of affection" (Song, 1999:16-17). Furthermore, Song's research showed that the majority of take-away owners did not want their children to stay in the catering business; they wanted them to obtain a higher education and have a professional career.

Such a finding is consistent with other research about the UK Chinese migrants who own a catering business (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Parker, 1995), and it is also consistent with the fact that more second-generation of Chinese migrants left the catering business and had professional jobs. The one-child migrants in this study represent the kind of professional middle class that the earlier take-away owners wanted for their next generation in the UK: working in a mainstream industry outside of the ethnic niche. Although these professional migrants (and the British-born Chinese) still faced disadvantages in the local labour market, they possessed enough qualifications and resources to stay in their profession, rather than being forced to "opt out".

The capital/talent-bearing overseas Chinese cohort is desirable for both the Chinese state and the host country. While Western host countries developed selective visa policies and business investment schemes to filter and attract the types of migrants they wanted, the Chinese government, since its 1978 economic reform, invoked "Chinese identity" in its propaganda to attract foreign investment and return migration of professionals. Research so far has questioned the motivation behind the Chinese diaspora's re-connection with China. For example, China attracted more than half of its foreign investment from the diaspora (Liu, 2011): does such financial transfer demonstrate the power of cultural/home land ties? Or is it no more than a product of

attractive business conditions offered by the Chinese government (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Nyiri, 2001)?

The awareness of their offspring's Chinese cultural education, especially to preserve their linguistic ability, was also found among former Hong Kong migrants (Benton and Gomez, 2011), and more recent mainland professional migrants in the UK (Zhang, 2005). Drawing on Chinese culture in order to (re)establish an overseas Chinese identity and sense of belonging has been common among the Chinese migrant community, especially the second generation (Parker and Song, 2008, 2007, Ang, 2001, Parker, 1995). However, a better career opportunity in China's rising economy was also mentioned as a motivation for second-generation Chinese to learn Mandarin (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Zhang, 2005). Therefore, the Chinese migrants' motivation behind the (re)connection with China, and learning the Chinese language may not be dominated by culture, but a mixture of cultural, economic and (perhaps) political factors.

Slightly different from previous Chinese migrants, Hong Liu pointed out that the new Chinese migrants "have been generally viewed as an asset by the Chinese state" because of the perceived value (the large number of highly educated professionals) and loyalty to the PRC:

> They were born and educated in China with substantial family ties in the homeland, the government and public in general are able to identify politically and culturally with those compatriots, and vice-versa (Liu, 2011: 824).

Growing up in China, the new Chinese migrants were more exposed to the political ideology promoted by the Chinese state than any other groups of overseas Chinese. The successful hybrid of filial piety and political loyalty was highlighted in Vanessa Fong's research (2011) among the one-child students in Dalian (a city in northern China) who were about to study abroad. She called this hybridity, which was

pervasive among her young participants, "filial nationalism". It was characterised as a

> strong sense of loyalty to China…based on the idea of an imagined family in which
> China was identified with a long-suffering parent who deserved the filial devotion of
> her children, despite her flaws (Fong, 2011:52).

How well does such "filial nationalism" travel with the new Chinese migrants remains to be seen. The politicisation of "Chinese culture" further complicated the role of culture in the new Chinese migration. When a young professional migrant decided to move back to China for parental reasons (see Chapter 6), for example, to what extent was her sense of family responsibility (consciously or subconsciously) *culturally* embedded or *politically* indoctrinated?

The new Chinese migrants came from a society where traditional Chinese culture had been deeply intertwined with politics and extreme changes in values: the Cultural Revolution from 1966-1976 rejected most aspects of the traditional Chinese value system as well as "Western culture". Shortly after the end of the Cultural Revolution, the economic reform and open-door policy in 1978 welcomed aspects of the West, a market economy was encouraged, the traditional Chinese culture was also promoted. Growing up in such a culturally distorted context, the new Chinese migrants were likely to have had a very different notion of "Chinese cultural values" in comparison with their predecessors. The next section examines the economic, social and culture environment in contemporary China.

1.2 The changing China: the influence of the 1978 economic reform and the 1979 one-child policy

1.2.1 The new middle class in China

China's middle class has unique attributes defined by the pace of its emergence, its

scale, and the political environment. China's dramatic economic development and social change started with fiscal reform in the 1980s: "wealth creation" and "wealth concentration" redistributed all forms of resources. In the short period of three decades China was transformed "from being one of the most egalitarian countries to being one of the most unequal" (Biao and Shen, 2009:516). The rapid privatization of state-controlled enterprises opened up the market, and made available goods, jobs and services, as well as intensifying competition for economic, cultural and political resources. Within two decades, social stratification became the salient feature based on the individual's performance in the market-orientated economy (Bian, 2002). So rapid was the economic change that Biao and Shen were able to claim that, "class formation and class closure are underway" (2009: 513).

Unlike the emergence of the middle class in Europe, China's middle class is believed to have emerged as a state-planned phenomenon rather than "a real historical force" out of "a history of political struggle and mobilization" (Crossley, 2012:96). The Chinese middle class grew in a society that had a state-imposed and state-maintained economic policy which incorporated both agrarian and urban-industrial bases (Li, 2010a, Li, 2010b, Goodman, 2008). The context of the emergence of the middle class was "a very particular post-socialist Chinese 'situation' where social, cultural, political and economic forces, including the Party, the state and multinational capital, intersect and jostle for legitimacy and success" (Donald and Yi, 2008:76). The Chinese leadership "called for 'enlarging the size of the middle-income group'" to give "hope to the country's still massive underclass" (Li, 2010b:11). Developing a middle class was said to be a way of expanding individual initiatives and self-driven economic growth (Goodman, 2008).

The membership of the middle class expanded rapidly: "Never in history have so many people made so much economic progress in one or two generations" (Li, 2010b:3).The scale of the middle class in China varies depending on the source of information as well as the criteria of definition. *The Times* estimated that the

membership of the Chinese middle class was 250 million (Lewis, 2013b), the McKinsey model suggests that the number of middle class people was 290 million in 2011, and will be 520 million by 2025 (Farrell et. al, 2006). Because residents in the cities have more opportunities to enter middle class professions and education, the urbanized feature of the distribution of middle class membership is significant. The Chinese government announced that 78% of city residents will be members of the middle class by 2020 (Li, 2010b). Meanwhile, because sociologists are adopting different measuring criteria (Li, 2010a), the estimated size of the current urban middle class ranges from 8% to 50%.

1.2.2 <u>The desire for Western affluence</u>

People worldwide "no longer see their lives as mere outcomes of the givenness of things, but often as the ironic compromise between what they could imagine and what social life will permit" (Appadurai 1996:54). What, however, are the aspirations of the newly emerging middle class? In China, the projection of the middle class derived initially from advertisements which were associated with "real estates, automobiles and other expensive commodities" (Li, 2010a:140). In general, the most direct middle class aspirations were a "relatively high and stable" income, a "professional or managerial" occupation, a "higher" education, and the enjoyment of a "comfortable" lifestyle (Li, 2010a:139-140).

Little did the major middle class aspirations resemble with traditional Chinese culture; rather, the aspirations have originated from the image of the affluent West. According to her in-depth study of average income Chinese families in Dalian, China in the 1990s, Vanessa Fong observed an overwhelming admiration by Chinese parents and children for the "First World" (2004). Drawing on Immanuel Wallerstein's analysis of a "capital world system" (1974) which divided the world into "core" (First World), "peripheral" (Third World) and "semi-peripheral", Fong employed the "culture model of modernization" promoted by the "capital world system" as a way to explain Chinese

people's admiration for the "West": it "motivates people to desire First World affluence and believe that participation in a modern economy will enable them to attain that affluence"[sic] (2004:14).

A similar attitude was found among young Chinese (in their early twenties), a decade later, during Anni Kajanus' ethnographic fieldwork in Beijing in 2008. However, Kajanus' participants showed a more pronounced "cosmopolitan orientation" (2015:170): apart from "practical benefits", they hoped to become a "cosmopolitan subject" with "confidence in transnational settings" (2015:40). Although the aspirations of Chinese youth to seek "first world" affluence may vary, the initial means to achieve it have been more or less the same: studying in a developed Western country. Overseas education was considered by both parents and students to be the "gateway to the ultimate goal of a life in a more open and affluent Western society" (Bodycott and Lai, 2012).

The use of education to consolidate capital within the family is similar to the understanding of the European middle class: "academic qualifications are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital" (Bourdieu, 1977:187). Following Bourdieu, Fiona Devine (2004) characterised a process where the middle class had an intergenerational structure: a middle class can be legitimate only when members of high-ranking occupational groups reproduce their advantage across time by securing access to similarly high-ranking occupations for their children.

The Chinese families' "strategies of accumulation begin with the acquisition of a Western education" (Ong, 1999: 95). Why do the Chinese middle class seek education outside of China, particularly in developed countries? Xiang Biao and Wei Shen believed that such student migration is to a large extent pushed by anxiety, specifically "about the future, and the rapid social stratification in China". These elements were seen as the "fundamental driving force of this anxiety … Overseas education is expected to provide extra advantage to be one step ahead in the fierce

competition" (2009: 516).

For the mainland Chinese to "legitimate their wealth and consolidate their newly acquired positions", sending offspring overseas became a "typical strategy to achieve" the goal (Biao and Shen, 2009). Such an arrangement echoes the "family capital accumulation strategy" discussed earlier (see section 1.1.3). Given that most of the young middle class Chinese migrants are very likely to be the only child in the family as a result of the 1979 one-child policy, the one-child generation and its family relationship needs to be examined.

1.2.3 <u>The one-child generation and the changing Chinese family</u>

a. Having only one child: changes beyond quantity

"It is undeniable that single-children will create a different society for China" (Chen, 2003). The Chinese government hoped that its one-child policy would create a generation of "ambitious, well-educated children" (Fong, 2004:2). This hope was based on a simple positive outcome between child quantity and "child quality" (Schultz, 2007, Hunushek, 1992). The physical health of children born after the 1979 one-child policy has been reported to have improved significantly (Wu and Li, 2012). However, because of the improvement of food supply and healthcare from the 1980s generally, the contribution of the one-child policy to children's health is not fully established (Rosenzweig and Zhang, 2009).

Subsequent research has focused on the concentrated resources invested in having only one child. The one-child nuclear family, described as an inverted triangle, or "4–2–1 syndrome", which refers to the phenomenon of four grandparents and two parents focusing their attention, in both material and other forms, on their one-and-only child (Liu, 2008b). Accompanying growing family purchasing power and consumerism, such a child-centred family was said to have produced a generation of

spoiled, selfish and over-protected children who have been labelled as "little emperor" and "little empress" (Yi, 2012, Lin and Sun, 2010, Fong, 2004, Hesketh and Zhu, 1997). However, "such speculations have not been supported by any substantial evidence in research" (Chen, 2003). Other observers also argued that such a "theory" was biased and lacked evidence, and merely maintained a "stereotype" (Bao, 2012, Goh, 2011, Liu, 2008b, Falbo and Poston, 1993).

As the one-child generation grew older, academic attention shifted from the "spoiled child" speculation; the focus was more about the lived experience of one-child families. Although qualitative studies of this kind are still limited, significant in-depth research has been made into important aspects of the one-child generation's up-bringing, including gender (Kajanus, 2015, Liu, 2006), mobility (Fong, 2011, 2004) and multigenerational relationships (parenting and grandparenting) (Goh, 2011). These studies showed that the changes that one-child families experienced were more than a matter of quantity; they constituted a re-structuring of Chinese families in a modernising society. This re-structuring incorporated a complex shifting dynamic of resource flow, emotional attachment and intergenerational practice, and thus re-shaped the meaning of the Chinese family in a changing society.

Almost all the scholars who studied the one-child family found that in each family, the only-child was seen as the "only hope"; that the one-child generation faced great pressure from their family to become high-achievers (Lin and Sun, 2010, Liu, 2008ab, Deutsch, 2006, Fong, 2004). The Chinese only-children are said to have been brought up with "First World living standards and educational opportunities", but their ambition clashes with "Third World parents and society"; they were faced with "intense parental pressure and competition" (Fong, 2004:3). Such a clash is also reflected in Fengshu Liu's (2008a) interviews with only-child students in Chinese universities: in terms of career plans, they needed to negotiate with competing values among individual choice, parental expectation, and the communist system.

However, most empirical research was done when the only-child cohort was still made up of students; they were likely to be subject to the daily influence of their parents and their own concerns about the uncertainty of the future. Little is known about what are the clashes, if any, between parental expectation and self-aspiration, after the only-child becomes independent of their parents. There is an urgency to understand the inter-generational relationship between parents and adult only-children because of China's rapidly ageing society, and the continuing heavy dependence on familial care for elderly people (Yi, 2012, Pascu, 2011, Hesketh et al. 2005, Feng and Manson, 2004).

b. Family contract, filial piety and the one-child family

Parental investment in their children's upbringing and well-being in exchange for old age care from those children is a basic principle of reciprocity between the two generations within a family. The economist Gary Becker pointed out that both parents and children would benefit more if parents invested more in children for a commitment by the children to care for parents in return. But can children's commitments to their parents be enforced? "Economists and lawyers usually recommend a written contract to insure commitment, but can you imagine a society that will enforce contracts between adults and ten-year-olds or teenagers?"(Becker, 1993a:14) Instead of a formal negotiation, Becker described how parents could help determine the value of the children by making their children feel a sense of indebtedness and/or create a "warm" atmosphere in their families to increase their children's willingness to reciprocate (Becker, 1993a).

However, the formation and modification of a family contract is more complex than superficially rational and/or normative interactions between parents and children. Instead of explicitly agreeing upon a set of expectations and responsibilities, family members are socialised into pre-existing contracts (Göransson 2009, Song, 1999, Walker, 1996, Finch and Mason, 1993). These contracts have been shaped by factors

beyond the family level from above (state policy) and from below ("culture logic") (Göransson, 2009:85, Finch, 1989, Lewis and Meredith, 1988).

While children's support to parents may have been motivated by a sense of "indebtedness" or affection, it was also significantly influenced by a socially constructed set of rules which apply specifically among family members. This unwritten "contract", and its "rules", act as the fundamental principle that shapes each member's understanding of resource distribution as well as responsibility allocation within the family (Song, 1999, Walker, 1996, Finch and Mason, 1993, Lewis and Meredith, 1988). Unlike any contract in the legal sense, family contracts are developed over a long period of time, shaped by internal and external factors, and often found to be taken for granted by family members.

The concept of "family contract" provides a framework to examine intergenerational relationships in general. In Chinese families, *filial piety*, as a form of "family contract", has dominated intergenerational relationships for centuries. Children were *expected* to support parents when parents became elderly. More specifically, the eldest son and his wife have historically had the main responsibility of taking care of the son's elderly parents (Song et al., 2012, Zhan and Montgomery, 2003). Such a pattern was also found in other East Asian societies, such as in traditional Japanese and Korean family culture, which was also characterised by Confucian filial obligation (Lee, 2010, Park et al., 2005).

In practice, the son (or the eldest son) provided the financial contribution while the daughter-in-law carried out everyday care. Therefore, sons were regarded as long-term members of the family while daughters were temporary members who eventually devoted themselves to the husband's family (Greenhalgh, 1985). Apart from caring for elderly parents, filial piety also emphasized a superior-inferior relationship within the family: children were expected to show respect, obedience and loyalty to parents (Fong, 2004, Zhan, 2003, Baker, 1979). In fact, the traditional norms

of filial piety were highly patriarchal and gendered. Such a pattern of elderly care in Chinese families has not changed fundamentally for 2000 years (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003).

However, the 21st Century has witnessed the changing pattern of parental care in industrialized East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea. Studies from these countries did not claim a weakened traditional family value, rather, empirical evidence demonstrated a more complex intergenerational reciprocal relationship. The growing population mobility diversified the Korean family's living arrangement. By adapting to various geographical distances, parental care shifted into complex formats (Park et al., 2005, Sung, 2001). For example, Kristen Lee's research (2010) between two generations of Japanese women showed their ambivalence towards parental care. The growing conflict between social norms and gendered expectations, in addition to the consideration of non-traditional care arrangements, challenged the assumed hierarchy of caregiver under the patrilineal system.

Although "filial piety" is still the most important value underlying the practice of the support of the elderly in communist China (Fong, 2011, 2004, Bodycott, 2009, Deutsch, 2006, Chow, 1991), recent research has indicated evidence of changes with regard to the norm and practice of filial piety in the 21st Century. Two survey analyses were conducted respectively on two northern Chinese cities (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003) and one rural province (Song et al., 2012). The findings showed that in both cities and the rural region, parents were increasingly cared for by daughters instead of daughters-in-law. Furthermore, daughters in cities tended to provide equal financial support as sons.

However, most care-givers in the two surveys were between 30 and 50 and were more likely to be the parents of only-children, rather than the only-children themselves. Nevertheless, the evidence indicated three trends in modern Chinese families: the practice of filial piety had become more flexible because of the increasing mobility and

unavailability of adult children; the elderly population had less authority as the traditional extended family shifted to a small nuclear family; lastly, gendered filial piety expectation had become blurred as sons and daughters were equally expected to support their parents.

Furthermore, there was no affluent class cohort in the above investigations. These observations were made based on the principle that elderly parents still relied, materially and practically, on their offspring for old age care. However, this principle was challenged by the findings from Yuanting Zhang and Franklin Goza's research in China among parents in well-paid professional jobs from the more developed southeast coastal regions, including Shanghai and Zhejiang (2005). Middle class parents did *not* want/plan to rely on their only child for their old age; they were willing to invest most of their income on the child, but did not expect a financial return. Moreover, they were prepared to invest in a pension scheme and a nursing home. The motivation behind such a decision was to relieve the next generation of financial and emotional pressure.

Although Zhang and Goza's study (2005) included interviews with only a small number of middle class parents of the one-child generation, their findings indicated that the amount of family economic resources seemed to override certain traditional norms of familial caring practice. In fact, the tradition of material support from the younger to the older generation may stop (or even reverse) among the middle class Chinese families. However, what are the implications of such a change for filial piety in Chinese families? And how do children and parents come to terms with this new contract of family responsibility? While parents in Zhang and Goza's research had only a young child, the one-child migrants in this study are aged from their early-20s and late-30s. Thus these participants provide a key opportunity to investigate the forms of intergenerational support in middle class one-child families, and family members' attitudes towards such an arrangement.

The traditional and collective emphasis on Chinese family values is in continuous conflict with growing autonomy, mobility and choice, which have accompanied economic development, modernization and Westernization. The challenges to the one-child family increase as the only child moves overseas. The final part of the literature review elaborates on the existing research conducted on mainland Chinese migrants with a focus on the mixed picture of middle class mobility and the role of the family in migrants' overseas mobility.

1.3 One-child migrants in a transnational middle class family: individual aspirations and family responsibilities on a global level

1.3.1 Mixed profile of mobility among middle class migrants

The categorization of migrants in terms of their financial status is not new in overseas Chinese studies. The Chinese migration in the 19th Century was divided into four types based on the way migrants met the expense of travel. The freest migrants were those who were able to pay through family resources. The others were subjected to various types of loans and restrictive contracts. Such distinguishing factors in turn "determined the degree of personal freedom the migrants enjoyed" (Kuhn, 2008:113).

From the 20th Century onwards, social capital (migrant networks) and cultural capital (language ability) were taken into account together with economic capital, to understand a migrant's overall mobility (Light, 2007, Waters, 2006, 2005, Ong and Nonini, 1997, Massey et al., 1993). Highly mobile migrants, or a "transnational elite", as Bryceson and Vuorela put it, move more by choice and would

> be in a better position to negotiate their connections, their nationalities, and benefits associated with their choice of a national residence. The symbolic capital of education and language enable them to move freely, offering relatively easier access to border crossing and citizenship (2002:8).

The above description is true only in a relative sense. As far as legal migration is concerned, no migrant is free from the migration policies of the host country. Apart from the obvious barriers, such as migration policies, recent research into highly educated and highly skilled migrants from mainland China to developed countries suggested a complex picture of the middle class's transnational mobility: the range of economic, social and culture capital was not sufficient to explain migrant mobility; it was how migrants *engaged* with such capital elements at a practical level that made the distinction in mobility.

Bourdieu (1986) argued that it was *convertibility* that determined the value of capital. Social and cultural capital such as qualification and social network will mean little if it cannot be converted to other types of capital, especially economic capital. Studies of overseas middle class Chinese have shown a vulnerable side to their overseas profile. The resources they have in China may not be successfully transferred abroad, thus any spatial advantage may turn into a disadvantage. For example, among university degree holders from mainland China in Canada, few have successfully secured a professional job using their Chinese university degree (Teo, 2007).

In such a case the cultural capital they had in China could not be converted to economic capital in Canada because their Chinese credentials were not valued by the Canadian job market. As a result, most high-skilled Chinese were doing low-skilled jobs and trapped as "immigrant prisoners" (Teo, 2007). Such a disappointment, especially in terms of economic unfairness, and the lack of recognition by the host society, is shared by mainland Chinese who were educated in Australian universities. As Fung and Cheng wrote, their "golden dream" turned into "grey realities" (1996:19).

The Chinese middle class migrant cohort had its own limitations in adapting to the host society. Thus the kind of mobility indicated in Bryceson and Vuorela's "transnational elite" (2002:8) or Aihwa Ong's "flexible citizen" (1999, 1993) must be

interpreted with caution. The one-child migrants in this study differed from the above mainland Chinese in two ways: most of them obtained their university qualification in the UK, and they were working as professionals in the UK. Therefore, this research fills a gap in the mobility profile of professional mainland Chinese migrants.

1.3.2 <u>Family in the one-child migrants' perception</u>

Philip Kuhn identified the "space continuum" feature in the Chinese family across the past five centuries. He argued that,

> living together did not necessarily mean living in the same physical locality. Living 'in' the family (in the sense of one's obligation and expectations) was not compromised because one was living 100, 1000 or even 10000 miles away. And living 'separately' might mean living in the same compound but cooking on a separate stove (2008:25).

The family members referred to here were, historically, largely male inheritors. However, in the 21st Century, when traditionally big families had been reduced to one-child families, the implication of such a "space continuum" is focused on the three members of the family: the parents and the child.

Kin support has been regarded as a migrant's "most valuable asset in the country of origin" (Vertovec, 2009:63). Unlike former Chinese migrants whose family at home depended on their remittances from the host country, middle class Chinese migrants were likely to receive financial support *from* China. For less affluent Chinese families, the financial burden to send their only child abroad was "onerous" for parents; they usually used up their life-savings or went into debt to support their children abroad (Fong, 2011:67).

Apart from financial support, parents at home also provided childcare when needed. Such practice, which was popular among the early 20th Century Chinese diaspora in

the UK, has also been found among professional mainland Chinese migrants in Canada and Australia (Teo, 2007, Da, 2003). The disadvantaged Chinese professionals who encountered a financial crisis also faced the responsibility of looking after the next generation as many were married with children. Because of the high cost of childcare in Canada, the most common solution was to leave their children with grandparents in China (Teo, 2007).

While families can create bonds they can also be sites of conflict and contradiction. Such a feature may intensify when families are maintained transnationally (Wolf, 2002, Parreñas, 2001). A significant number of overseas Chinese students reported that one of the aspects of migration life they enjoyed was the freedom to be away from their parents. Given that most of them were in their mid-20s, such a remark should not be thought unusual (Bodycott and Lai, 2012). However, as Fong (2011) observed, any emergency that involved parents at home could be a sufficient factor that almost certainly terminated the only-child's life abroad and which sent them home immediately: there were no other offspring that parents could rely on.

The sole care provider role imposed a significant challenge for one-child migrants. The research into intergenerational care in transnational family studies has tended to focus on the migrant parents, and their relationship with their offspring at home (Parreñas, 2005, 2001, Kofman, 2004, Levitt, 2001). There is very little research on how adult migrants deal with the care of their parents who remained in the sending country. There is even less research into the middle class migrants' relationship with their parents. Some earlier transnational family studies mentioned the migrants' concern of parental care; a common strategy to solve the problem was the availability of siblings, spouse and other family members (Song et al., 2003, Izuhara, and Shibata, 2001, Parreñas, 2001). However, in the case of one-child Chinese migrants, they do not have a sibling or an extended family to help with the everyday practical care of their parents.

Among the very limited studies carried out from the overseas Chinese only-child's perspective is Vanessa Fong's latest study as published in her *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World* (2011). Fong offers a detailed account of the overseas only-child's lived experience with regard to their perception of gains and losses from transnational travelling, their adjustment to spatial difference, and how these factors impacted upon filial fulfilment. Fong followed her Dalian cohort as its subjects went to study overseas in the US, UK, Australia, Ireland and Japan.

The profile Fong presents is overwhelmingly pessimistic: after a decision to migrate, spontaneously triggered by the sense of "gambling", the overseas only-children were disappointed by the "reality of the West", which was felt by the cohort members, to incorporate a tough employment situation, an unstable migration policy, and a generally unpleasant social life. They consistently reported a close bond with their parents at home; parental expectations and financial support were crucial to their migration out of China. Furthermore, her subjects were burdened with guilt for having spent their parents' life-savings; they felt the pressure of not being able to meet parental expectations in the future. Interestingly, a desire to escape China's one-child policy was rarely mentioned by migrants in Fong's research; "even the few who mentioned it described it as a minor additional benefit of staying abroad and not as significant reason for their decisions to go or stay abroad" (2011:159).

However, Fong's findings cannot be applied to the one-child migrants from more affluent families: her cohort was largely derived from average and below-average income families, which means they did not grow up with a middle class background. Second, before going abroad, the only-child's academic performance in their Chinese school was average or below average, which meant that they lacked the potential to become middle class through educational credentials in China. Finally, most of them went abroad to attend language schools and few succeeded in getting a university degree in a Western country. The lack of a university degree is a significant

disadvantage in capital accumulation and reproduction. The limited convertibility of a high school qualification resulted in a trapped transnational cohort, that was all the more disadvantaged given the economic capital that had been invested in it. As Fong noted, her cohort consisted of "financially struggling young Chinese transnational students who got to know each other in low-prestige schools, low-wage work settings" (2011:37).

It is also important to note that members of Fong's cohort were mostly in their early 20s. As Lee (1966) noted, life cycle plays a crucial role in the decision of migration. He observed that "many personal factors" which affect individual migration choices "are associated with stages in the life cycle and in particular with the sharp breaks that denote passage from one stage to another". Later scholars have reiterated the point: "one's emotional and material needs are strongly linked to stages of the individual's life cycle" (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002:17).

Therefore the dependency of only-children migrants on their parents in Fong's research can be viewed as only temporary given that most of them are young adults who had not established themselves; they were in a typically unstable stage of their lives. The life cycle feature was also reflected in Fengshu Liu's research (2008b) about the one-child cohort's struggle with their filial duty. Her cohort members were young adults in a "transitional stage" who felt "torn between the desire for breaking away and having the freedom to explore the world on the one hand and the need for the security and warmth of the home" on the other. Whether such a parental dependency turned out to be sustainable would require more up-to-date research on a more established adult cohort.

1.4 Summary

The middle class one-child migrants cohort from mainland China is unique. The cohort cannot be easily fitted into any existing theoretical model, nor is it similar to any other

Chinese migrant group in ancient or modern history. This cohort is part of what Wang Gungwu calls the "upgrading" of Chinese migrants coming to the West: "[e]specially striking is the ability of these highly educated immigrants to join the professional, scientific, and business worlds of the settler societies while retaining a deep attachment to China" (Kuhn, 2008:357).

For the first time in modern history, Chinese migrants come from a China that is fast becoming one of the leading powers of the world. The young, affluent and educated one-child migrants have an especially complex connection with China. On the one hand, the desire for Western affluence among middle class families motivated them to leave China to acquire social capital such as education, work or citizenship in Western countries. On the other hand, the separation of children and parents intensifies the already urgently felt problem of parental care in one-child families. The long-distance care relationships of the middle class transnational family have been understudied, and there is even less research about how adult migrants manage their relationship with ageing parents left in the sending country.

Traditional Chinese family culture was centred on Confucian collectivism where filial piety was essential in child-parent relationships. However, the traditional, patriarchal, and gendered family value structure was reported to show some signs of loosening after three decades' of opening up, and economic development; such findings were gathered mainly from the parents' generation. Further research is required about the one-child generation's perspective on the collective value of family, and, more importantly, how this cohort balances filial duty with self-aspirations in the transnational context.

The UK currently provides a good opportunity to study the Chinese middle class one-child migrant cohort, the defining elements of which are clear: the cohort is young, highly educated, highly skilled, and professional. Never before has such a large number of affluent Chinese migrated to the UK. This middle class cohort is changing

the UK Chinese profile significantly, yet the understanding of the cohort is limited. Research tends to overlook a migrant's connection with her or his sending country and how the sending society can shape the migrant's life in the host society.

This research explores the impact of family and parental ties in China on the middle class one-child migrants' life in the UK. By investigating this cohort's lived experience, its aspirations in the UK, as well as its perception of its role as the only child in a filial piety-centred Chinese family, it is hoped that the research will reveal the inner struggle of the young affluent migrant cohort in relation to the growing complexity of international migration.

Chapter 2. Methodology

2.1 The process of designing the research

2.1.1 Rationale for a qualitative approach

The one-child migrants in this study simultaneously belong to two sharply distinguishable demographic groups: the new Chinese migrants in the UK and the one-child generation in China. Both groups have attracted academic attention, separately, from demographers and human geographers, whose quantitative analyses have provided valuable accounts with regard to the rapid increase of the new Chinese migrants to the UK, the sharply reduced family size, and the concerns about old age familial support. While a quantitative approach at a macro-level is useful in outlining the "big picture", it is the micro-level, qualitative, approach that fills out the "human story".

This research focuses on the one-child migrants as a starting point and aims to explore the intergenerational relationship in a changing space and time. A cluster of data is required to answer the research question: experience (up-bringing, migrant decision, family contact), opinions (responses towards immigration policies, perceptions of filial piety, attitudes towards intergenerational responsibility), and feelings (nostalgia, emotional struggles, sense of belonging). Such data requires a qualitative research design because the subtle and often hidden processes and dynamics cannot be easily obtained by quantitative data analysis. Qualitative data collection is crucial, too, in capturing the ambivalent feelings that both the one-child migrants and their parents are likely to experience.

For example, by analysing demographic changes in China during 1979-2004, Feng and Manson (2004) raised concerns about the greater obligations placed on the one-child generation based on the longer life-expectancy of the older generation.

However, qualitative research conducted with parents from different financial/class backgrounds revealed a more complex intergenerational financial exchange and parental expectations. Zhang and Goza's research (2005) found that in spite of the heavy financial investment in raising their child, middle class parents did not plan to rely on their only child for old age care. Less affluent parents, nevertheless, had no choice but to rely on their offspring. Therefore, although Feng and Manson were able to point out a national-level demographic and development shortfall, the failure to recognize heterogeneous family coping strategies may have resulted in a somewhat distorted picture. It is to be hoped that this research, which focuses on the transnational one-child family caught at the centre of demographic, geopolitical and economic changes, will fill a gap in the understanding of Asian families in transition and will complement existing studies of Chinese families and migration.

Another reason for taking a qualitative approach is the limited statistics available on this cohort. Data about the number and distribution of the Chinese population in Europe were poorly recorded during the last century. The number of Chinese (in Europe) was "imperfectly known" and researchers "had to struggle with official statistics that allow only a partial view of the actual number of Chinese in their country" (Benton and Pieke, 1998:8). Among the very limited research on the new Chinese migrants in the UK, Wai-ki E. Luk (2008) systematically analysed the patterns of British new Chinese immigration from a demographic point of view. He identified significant features of his research cohort such as the rapid increase in number, the large proportion of professionals and students, as well as the low return rate of graduated students. However, Luk struggled to explain the reason behind the phenomena and called for qualitative research on this highly diverse group's identities, settling behaviours and social impacts in the host country. This study could be said to be addressed to Luk's call.

The semi-structured interview process is arguably the most widely employed method in social research because of its flexibility (Bryman, 2008). In research that has

produced significant findings about middle class migrants, one-child families and transnational families, the semi-structured interview is the main method, in some cases, the only method of data collection. However, the interview method has proven to have revealed significant variations about a relatively under-researched area in migration studies: Asian middle class migrants' attitudes and behaviours.

For example, Weiqiang Lin (2011) and Johanna Waters (2006, 2005) conducted interviews on Singapore migrants in the US and Hong Kong migrants in Vancouver in their respective research, and discovered different motives behind Asian parents sending their children to study abroad in developed Western countries. Janet Salaff and her colleagues used a combination of survey and in-depth interviews to investigate Hong Kong migrants' use of overseas networks; the latter helped to "place the networks they use in the context of their lives" (Salaff et al, 1999:205). By doing so, Salaff et al discovered different motivations and psychological attachment in the use of overseas networks among the affluent middle class (potential) migrants and the less affluent middle class ones.

The in-depth investigation of contemporary Chinese family relations has been explored by scholars using mainly interview and observation (ethnographers combine these two methods). Two substantial pieces of ethnographic research exploring intergenerational relationships in Chinese one-child families, were carried out by Esther Goh (2011) and Vanessa Fong (2004). Fong conducted her fieldwork in Dalian, a north Chinese city, in 1997; Goh's fieldwork was conducted in Xiamen, a south Chinese city, in 2006. Both Fong and Goh obtained first-hand observation data on the everyday interaction between parents and their school-age child. However, this observation was largely limited by the children's age and geography. Adult children tend to move out of the parental home when they go to university or start working. In transnational families, the one-child migrants and their parents are typically separated by vast distances. "Any attempt at 'locating' transnational families would be self-defeating" (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002:7). The transnational one-child family

does not have a distinctive physical space where researchers can use observation strategies.

The large geographical distance between only children and parents is a key feature in this study. Although parents sometimes go to stay with their child in the UK, usually for temporary purposes like tourism or looking after infants, it is difficult to subject such fleeting contact to systematic observation. Furthermore, not all the parents will come to visit their child, and their stay is usually short. Moreover, family tensions can become more pronounced when parent and child are separated by country borders. Therefore, a semi-structured in-depth interview process is the most appropriate method for data collection in this research.

2.1.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted during September - October, 2013. The objectives of the pilot study were to specify the types of participants to be included in the sample, to develop a strategy for participant recruitment, and the modification of the interview questions (if needed). Because of the exploratory nature of the pilot study, the sampling was inclusive. With two basic criteria applied to the participants: those born after 1975 and who had a Bachelor's degree or above, the pilot study was conducted among 6 participants (3 only-children and 3 non only-children) from Exeter, Bridgwater and Canterbury, among whom one was a postgraduate student. The 6 participants were recruited through the researcher's personal social contacts. However, to reduce bias, the researcher avoided interviewing close contacts. As a result, 3 participants were introduced by the researcher's friends; the other 3 participants were the researcher's former colleagues with whom the researcher worked briefly in 2011, but had been out of touch with for more than two years.

The pilot study fulfilled its purpose in helping to identify participants and resolve two other key questions: "how to find them" and "what to ask". From the findings of only

children and non-only children, significant differences emerged with regard to up-bringing, family support dynamics and the pressure of parental long-term care. Therefore, a small number of non-only-children were included to help bring out the impact of being the only child on a migrant's life. The student respondent indicated his wish to remain in the UK after graduation as well as his sense of duty to be near his parents. As potential "post education migrants", one-child students provided cases for the researcher to investigate the "decision-making process" to remain (or to return) as it took place. Therefore, a small number of postgraduate students were also included in the sample.

Interviewing both children and parents from the same family was rare in transnational family research largely because of the difficulty of accessing both children and parents in a transnational setting. However, parents bring an important perspective in terms of their expectations of their children and filial obligations. They provide the other side of the sometimes unusual accounts in one-child families. For example, the pilot study revealed the continuing substantial financial and practical support *from* parents *to* only children in spite of the child's (often) highly paid professional jobs. Therefore, it was decided that the research should include a number of parents of the one-child participants.

The difficulty of gaining access to potential participants was confirmed by the pilot study. Snowball sampling, which usually commenced with the existing contacts of the researcher, was common in recruiting interview participants. Snowball sampling is useful in research where creating a sampling frame is not straightforward (Bryman, 2008:185) and it was used as a primary method to recruit participants in this research. This sampling strategy has been used in Chinese migration research where a highly specified cohort needed to be targeted. For example, in Gao's research (2006) into the Chinese diaspora in Australia, he used the snowball strategy to find a cohort originally from the mainland, who were former overseas students, and who had lived in Australia for more than ten years and had obtained the right of residence in Australia. In Lin's

research (2011) on the affluent Singapore-Chinese in the US, snowball sampling was also used.

However, such a "word of mouth" recruitment method in the pilot study turned out to be inefficient. The 6 pilot study participants failed to connect the researcher to other professional Chinese migrants for a variety of reasons, for example, a reluctance to discuss highly personal matters, and the lack of a strong social circle with fellow Chinese migrants. The pilot study gave the researcher an opportunity to restructure the recruitment strategy (the challenges and outcomes of participant recruitment will be elaborated on in section 2.2).

Finally, in order to improve the initial interview questions, the pilot study participants were contacted the day after the first interview and were asked to assess the interview questions. In particular, participants were asked if they felt any of the questions made them feel uncomfortable, or if the researcher failed to inquire into any areas which they considered to be significant. The interview questions were modified according to their feedback. The pilot study participants were contacted again after the interview questions were finalised. After completing an additional interview, these 6 pilot study participants' responses were included in the main data. (See Appendix 3 for detailed interview questions.)

2.1.3 <u>Research design</u>

Sample criteria

Table 1: Criteria for sample recruitment

	one-child migrants	migrants with sibling(s)	one-child students	parents
age*	born 1975 or after	born 1975 or after	born 1975 or after	parents of the one-child participants
education**	Bachelor or above	Bachelor or above	Bachelor or above	
birthplace	mainland China	mainland China	mainland China	mainland China
total recruited number (40)	22 (14 female, 8 male)	6 (4 female, 2 male)	5 (2 female, 3 male)	7 (see Appendix 2)

*The reason for using 1975 as a birth year base line was that cohort members born shortly before 1979 may still have been affected by the one-child policy as their parents were not allowed to have any more children.

** A university degree is an effective way to distinguish new Chinese migrants who were likely to be professionals from those who were likely to be low-skill migrants. However, it is not impossible that a degree holder, for some reason, works in a low-skill job. Nevertheless, during the recruitment the researcher rarely came across such cases where an individual was massively over-qualified for the job (e.g. a university graduate working as a restaurant waiter). This feature is partly the outcome of the British work permit policy which severely limits the number of low-skill foreign workers. Therefore, Chinese students who successfully switched to a "work visa" tended to be high-skill/professional migrants.

Pre-interview questionnaire

A survey was created on a survey tool website *Qualtrics.com*. Participants were sent a survey link (https://az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bCJ9HvDEUYCivyJ) a few days before the interview which took about 1 minute to complete. The survey contained questions about key facts with regard to participants' personal information and background, their UK experience and their parents. The Table below shows the content covered by survey questions:

Table 2: Basic personal information covered in questionnaire

Personal information	Name, gender, year of birth, marital status, education level, profession, income level, birthplace, only-child status, contact detail
UK related	Year of arrival in the UK, visa type, location
Parents-related	Parent's age, income level

The objective of adding a survey was not to generate a quantitative profile to the research cohort; rather, it was designed to help carry out interviews more effectively. The survey had two functions: for those participants who were recruited through snowball sampling, the survey helped to generate a basic profile without taking up time during the interview. Such a profile also helped the researcher to modify interview questions to suit the participant's situation. Another function of the survey was to help the recruitment of participants on the internet. Potential participants were more likely to respond to a brief survey than to commit themselves to a one-hour interview. By putting this link on the internet, the researcher had more chance for an initial positive response. Having received the questionnaire responses, the appropriate respondents were contacted with a letter as an invitation to taking part in the interviews (see Appendix 1 for the full letter).

Interview procedure

A face-to-face interview was the preferred method of interview in this research. The participants were encouraged to meet the researcher for the interview, and the interview took place either at the participant's home or in a café. However, a small number of migrant participants in the UK (8 out of 33) opted for a telephone interview mainly because of practical reasons [11]. Parent interviews in China were conducted

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[11] Telephone interviews were recorded using the "recording" function on the researcher's mobile phone. The researcher is aware of the disadvantage of the telephone interview structure, e.g., the absence of facial expression and hand gestures. However, the telephone interview had its advantage when two young mothers were able to leave during the telephone interview and attend to the needs of their babies. Furthermore, two interviewees preferred the telephone interview because they felt more "comfortable" this way, rather than talking to the researcher face-to-face. Generally speaking, the telephone interview allowed greater flexibility in scheduling interviews.

following the same principle. As a result, 3 parent interviews were conducted face-to-face and 3 interviews were conducted over the telephone because of the travel distance. The interview process is discussed in more detail in section 2.2.2.

The consent form was signed by the researcher and the participant at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix 5 for the details of the consent form). In the case of telephone interviews the participants were sent the electronic version of the consent form, and confirmed their acknowledgement by email. All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin. With the participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The participants were informed of their rights, including the right to inquire about how the information of their interview was handled, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Upon the completion of the research, none of the interviewed participants withdrew from the research, and only one participant asked for the transcribed version of the interview.

2.2 From paper to the field: the challenges and strategies of recruitment, sampling and conducting interviews

It is important to note here that the researcher herself can be considered to be one of the one-child migrant cohort. Born in 1987, the researcher is an only child who grew up in a middle class family in east China, came to the UK to do a Master's degree, remained in the UK to work as an international purchaser for a short period before starting her PhD course. Being an "insider" of the targeted cohort had a two-fold impact at almost every stage of the research, including recruiting participants, conducting interviews and analysing data. Therefore, the identity of the researcher among her (potential) participants will be discussed in the rest of the chapter.

2.2.1 Recruiting the "invisible" cohort

The word "invisible" has been repeatedly used in media and in academic research

when describing the Chinese in the UK (Barber, 2015, Luk, 2008, Parker and Song, 2007, The Guardian, 1993). Chan et al (2007) pointed out the three difficulties of sampling the Chinese in the UK, for both qualitative and quantitative researchers: a geographically dispersed population, the lack of easily accessible sampling frames, and the danger of generating unrepresentative data (Hong Kong Chinese are more easily to be reached than other Chinese groups). In his geographical account of the Chinese in the UK, Wai-ki E. Luk (2008) pointed out that although Chinatown was the most visible ethnic economic concentration in major British cities, the Chinese were "the most dispersed ethnic group in the country with the least visible residential concentration". Therefore, finding the targeted cohort among the already hard-to-reach Chinese population in the UK was, practically, challenging.

The middle class new Chinese migrants were more difficult to reach than the traditional Chinese diaspora in two ways. First, they were professionally dispersed in mainstream industries (instead of concentrating in the catering business). Such a feature was also likely to lead to the further geographical dispersion of the professional cohort. Second, there was a lack of professional new Chinese migrants in Chinese associations, partly because the established associations were catering for traditional Chinese settlers, and partly because the resourceful middle class migrants did not feel the immediate need to create and participate in diasporic associations (Liu, 2011, Benton and Gomez, 2011). Even so, at the beginning of the sample recruitment, various Chinese associations (such as the British Chinese Society and the Chinese and Oriental Students Society) and university alumni associations were contacted, but there was no response.

To overcome the above challenge, the internet was used in addition to the researcher's personal contacts, as another resource of recruitment. In 2007, David Parker and Miri Song studied the use of the internet (online public forum) by the second generation British Chinese. They highlighted how such a public cyberspace

provided important sites for self-expression and collective identity production of the geographically dispersed, socially marginalised young Chinese. Following the Parker and Song (2007) findings, the researcher observed active participation of new Chinese migrants on the two major mainland Chinese public forums in the UK: LKCN http://lkcn.net/bbs/index.php?act=idx and Powerapple www.powerapple.com. These two online forums were used as fields of recruitment and produced positive responses.

In addition to public forums, social network services (SNS) also gave rise to more specified online groups, such as various professional and academic online groups formed by mainland Chinese in the UK, where the target cohort of this research was more likely to be found. Being an insider, it was relatively straightforward for the researcher to gain access to these Mandarin-speaking forums and SNS groups.

In order to maximize the size and the diversity of the sample, messages were published on both online forums and SNS groups with the link to the short questionnaire. Based on the individuals' basic information, the researcher selectively contacted the questionnaire respondents and invited them to take part in the interview. The purpose of the selection was to keep a more gender-balanced sample with a variety of professional backgrounds. For example, the questionnaire posted on the public forum elicited a response from a substantial number of postgraduate students, but only a small number of students were required in the sample. Furthermore, some questionnaire respondents from mainland China did not match the "middle class" criteria (e.g. they did not have a degree, or they worked in low-skilled jobs), and were thus excluded from the research.

While the internet recruitment attracted a reasonable amount of interest, the person-to-person recruitment was slow. Like the pilot study, most participants did not "snowball" into a greater number of contacts. The majority of participants indicated the limited social contacts they had with fellow Chinese migrants. Since most of the middle class Chinese migrants arrived in the UK as students, the initial Chinese friends they

made were mostly their fellow students. "Now they've all gone back" was the most frequently expressed explanation for their lack of Chinese contacts in the UK. Working in non-Chinese companies also limited the participants' opportunities for making Chinese friends, compared to their counterparts who worked in the Chinese catering business.

Furthermore, there appeared to be a lack of active involvement with Chinese communities among the professional Chinese migrants. Being highly educated, fluent in English and resourceful, this cohort clearly had the ability to develop its social circle outside of the Chinese community. Although the majority reported a generally limited social circle in the UK, they appeared to be indifferent/casual about the limited number of Chinese friends, but showed more anxiety about how difficult it was to "make friends with the locals". This attitude is similar to Knowles' (2015: 17) discovery in the latest study on affluent Beijing migrants in London. She found that her informants did not "lead particularly Chinese lives", nor did they "live in what is referred to as the Chinese community": they were "integrated in a London cosmopolitan way".

A breakthrough in the recruitment of more participants in the UK, was, ironically, made by contacting returnees in China. Similar to other members in the cohort, the researcher maintained contact with her friends who returned to China after study/work abroad. Through the network of the returnees, a substantial number of UK participants with a variety of backgrounds were recruited. This feature of "transnational recruitment" reflected the emerging transnational social field of the new Chinese migrants. Such an adjustment in the recruitment process was also an example of how the profile of participants and recruitment strategy influenced each other during the research process. As Bryman (2008:185) pointed out, snowball sampling is useful in "reflecting the relationships between people". The Figure below shows the three channels of sample recruitment (contacts in the UK, contacts in China, and the internet) as well as the *limited* "relationships between people".
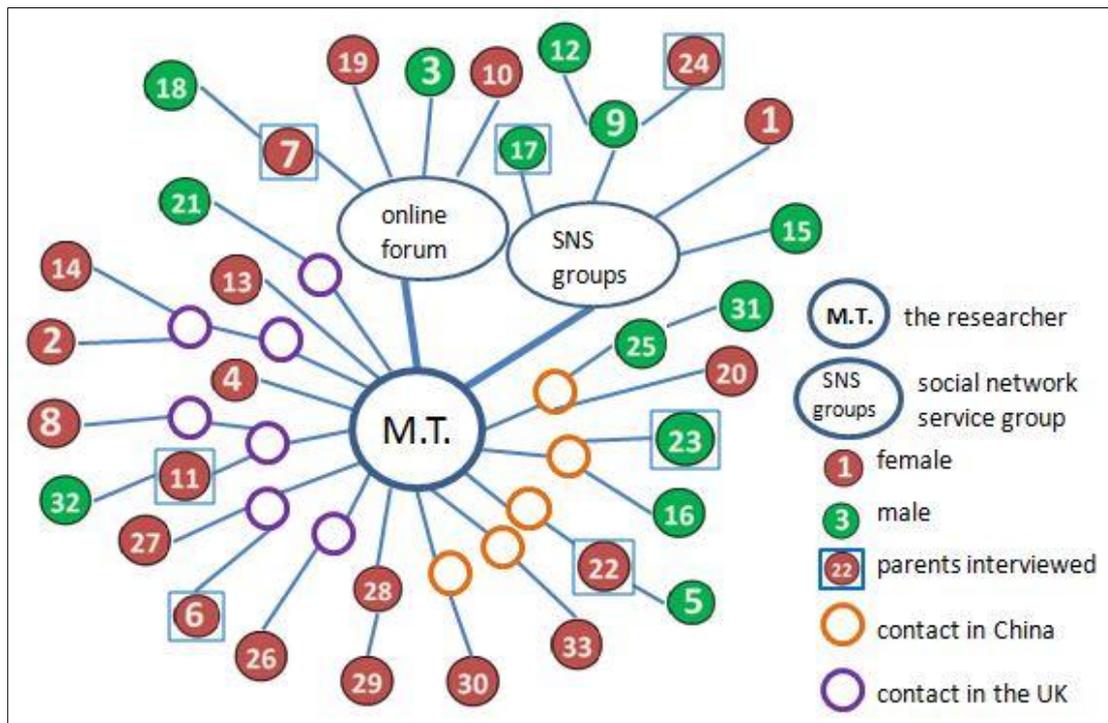
Figure 1: Participant recruitment network

The diagram shows the variety of sources and the process of recruiting participants. The matching of number and individual participants can be found in Appendix 2.

Interviewing both the child and parents from the same family has been rare in transnational family research largely because of the difficulty to access both child and parents in a transnational setting. The recruitment of parents began later than the recruitment of migrant participants. After the completion of each interview, the participants were asked if they would be willing to connect the researcher to their parents in China. This request was met with three types of responses. First, the participant did not want to ask their parents to take part in the research. Second, the participant asked, but parents declined the interview request. Third, the participant and parents both responded positively to the interview request, and they constituted the 7 sets of parents in the sample.

The different types of responses reflected the matter of *trust*. For most parents in this study, taking part in social research was new to them. The parents' generation

experienced the Cultural Revolution and were understandably wary of taking part in an "interview" with a researcher (i.e. a stranger) from a public institution. For example, during an interview with a father from the Inner Mongolia region of China, the researcher was asked several times if the interview would be "leaked" to the Chinese Communist Party even after repeated assurances of the confidentiality entailed in the research. Parental suspicion towards "interviews" was also part of the reason why some participants were reluctant to contact their parents for the researcher. For example, Zhiming (male, 31, sales manager) was recruited through the internet. He was supportive of the research, but when asked to contact his parents, Zhiming hesitated for a while and politely refused, explaining that his parents might think he had "got into trouble in the UK" and was subject to "investigation".

Nevertheless, at the more positive end of the spectrum, some participants and their parents were very supportive. Ideally the researcher would have interviewed both the mother and the father of the respondents, however, 5 out of the 7 interviews involved only the mother or the father. The 7 interviews were made up of 4 telephone interviews and 3 face-to-face interviews. Children acted as the gatekeeper, especially in the cases of telephone interviews, in deciding which parent's telephone number to give to the researcher. Their choice of parent was based on a combination of practical consideration (e.g. the less busy parent) and the recognition of the authority in the family, i.e., children did not necessarily choose the parent based on daily intimacy, but the one whom they felt could act as the "spokesperson" for the family. For example, Tengfei (male, 28, PhD student) reported an emotional gap between him and his "authoritarian" father, but preferred his father to take part in the interview.

Because of the long distance, not all the parents could be interviewed face-to-face. Apart from Beiyao's (female, 30, process engineer) mother who happened to be in the UK to look after Beiyao's new-born son, the researcher visited Ran's (male, 27, software engineer) parents in Sichuan province (west China) and Bolin's (female, 38, export manager) parents in Zhejiang province (southeast China). There was no

dominant factor which singled out the supportive parents from those who declined the interview request. The parent participants' background was fairly diverse in terms of age, educational level, occupation and home town (see Appendix 2). It is not unlikely that a larger number in the parent sample may produce a noticeably different pattern with regard to parental background and their response to an interview request. However, the diversity that emerged from such a small number in the parent sample suggested the complexity behind people's attitudes, and the importance of situation-based analysis.
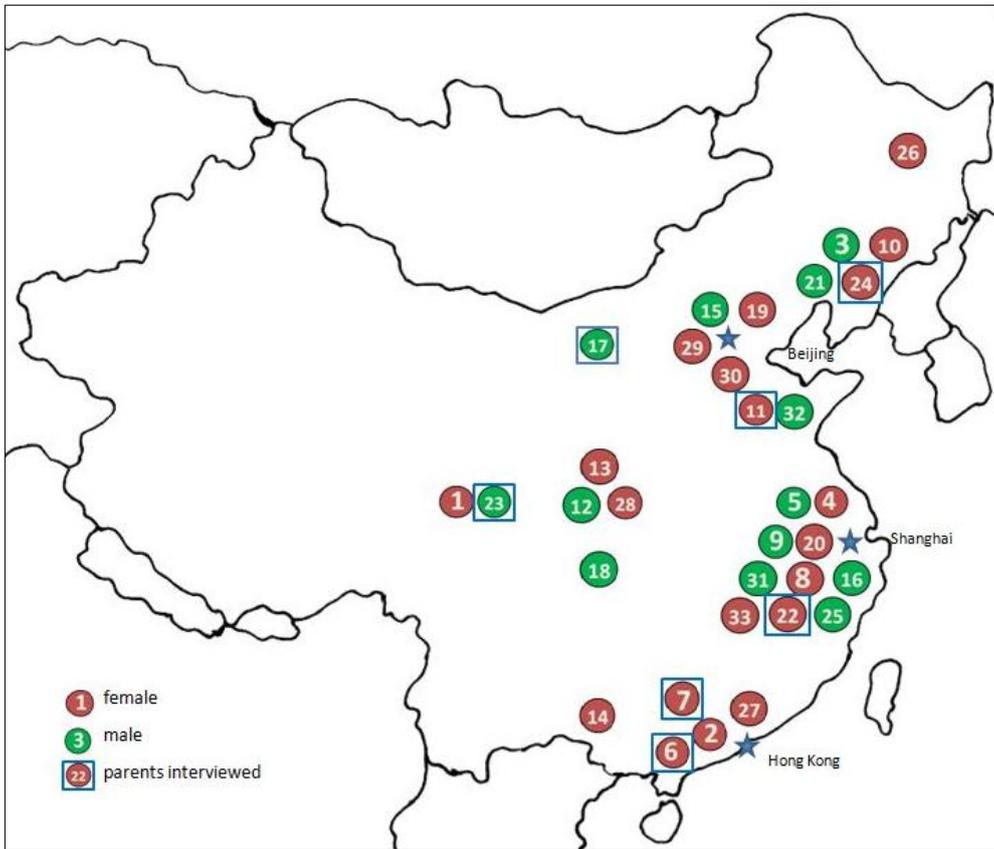
Figure 2: Participants' place of origin in China
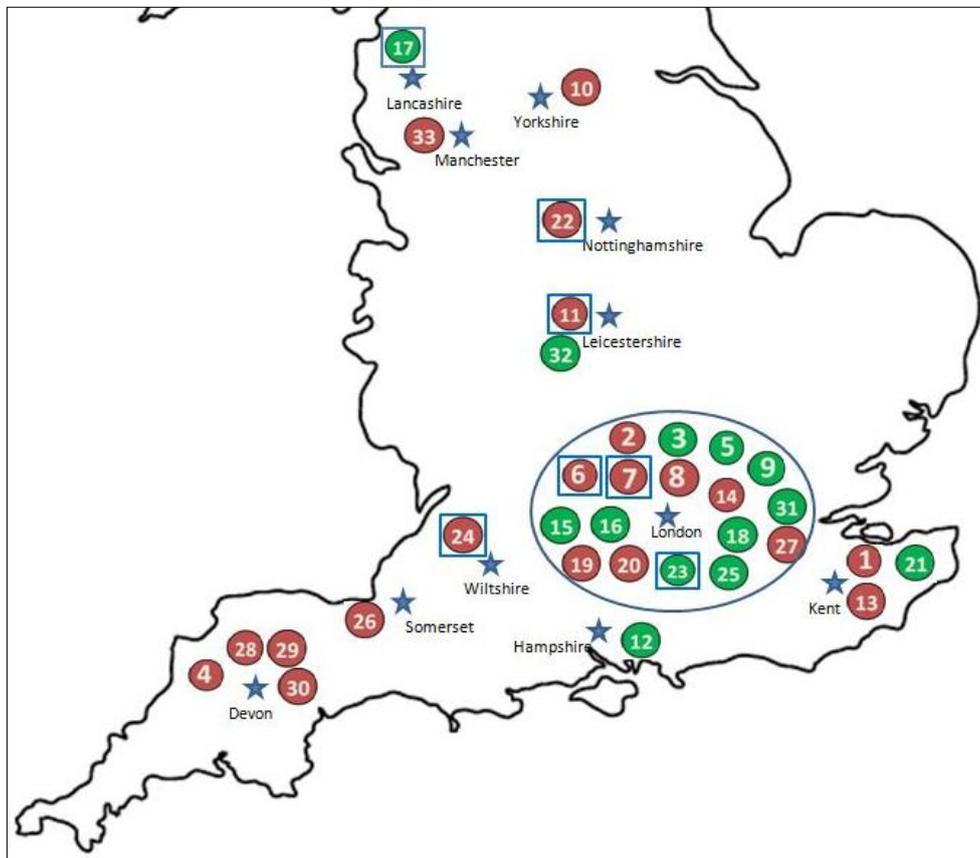
Figure 3: Participants' place of residence in the UK

The sample recruited in the UK was made up of 20 women and 13 men. There is currently no reliable research which documents the gender ratio among middle class one-child Chinese migrants in the UK. Consistently, more Chinese women than Chinese men graduated from UK higher education institutions between 2001-2011. Women outnumbered men in Master's programmes and undergraduate programmes by a ratio of 1.5 to 1 in 2008/09 (Iannelli and Huang, 2013). Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that more women remained after education than men. Furthermore, the total number of 40 participants constituted enough variety for the purpose of this research.

In terms of places of origin, the participants came from a variety of regions in China. Such diversity reflected what the literature highlighted about the new Chinese migrants: they not only came from transnational coastal migrant regions like Shanghai and Canton (near Hong Kong), but also from inland regions which were not traditionally migrant-sending places. However, there was no identifiable pattern between participants' places of origin and places of residence in the UK. Participants were distributed in various part of England. Nevertheless, the concentration of the Chinese population in London is clear. Such a London-dominant Chinese population distribution also reflected the latest report of the young Chinese migrants (aged 23-39) in London (Knowles, 2015).

However, Knowles (2015) pointed out that although London had the biggest Chinese population in *number*, Cambridge had the highest *concentration* of Chinese population (the Chinese constituted 3.6% of the population). A relatively high Chinese concentration can also be found in cities with Russell Group universities[12]. Most participants had moved at least once: they arrived in the UK where their university was, and later moved to where their job was (if the university was not in London). Job opportunities were greater in London, and nearly half of the participants who lived in London were in finance-related jobs (see Appendix 2).

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[12] The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities. See http://russellgroup.ac.uk Accessed 12 February 2016.

These maps of sample distribution are by no means representative of the one-child migrants' population. The objective of the study was not to recruit a statistically representative sample, but to recruit a sample with a diverse background in order to reduce bias. Major qualitative studies into the one-child generation tended to be limited to one Chinese city (see Kajanus, 2015, Fong, 2011, 2004, Goh, 2011). Although Kajanus (2015) and Fong (2011) followed their participants as they went abroad as students, their research subjects were geographically limited to their place of origin. This study is the first time that a piece of qualitative research on the one-child generation contains participants from vastly different regions of China; such regions in China have distinctive cultural and socioeconomic features which were likely to shape its people's perceptions. Based on a very limited observation in this study, participants from north China (including Beijing) were relatively more politically sensitive; while participants from south China were relatively more business-oriented. Although such an observation is not generalisable, an inclusive one-child generation sample certainly contributed to more balanced data.

Similarly, this study is also the first qualitative research about the new Chinese migrants with participants recruited from different regions in England. The sample included traditionally Chinese concentrated places like London as well as the more white-dominated regions like Devon. In a very general sense, the London participants tended to be younger and more career-oriented. The non-London participants contained a greater proportion of married women. A common reason for these women to live in non-London locations was because their English husbands were settled in various parts of England[13]. Such a feature between London participants and non-London participants was only indicative and not generalisable. Nevertheless, if participants had been recruited from a single location, like London, the researcher may have risked the possibility of over-representing the Chinese migrants who remained mainly for jobs and under-represented those who remained mainly for families.

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[13] All the participants are heterosexual.

2.2.2 <u>Conducting interviews as "one of them"</u>

The empirical data of this research was derived from 40 semi-structured interviews conducted in the UK and China during 2013-2014. Each interview lasted from 1 to 3 hours. As an interviewer, being "one of them" had advantages: the shared experience helped to reduce cultural and social barriers between the interviewer and participants and helped in the building of a trusting relationship (Song and Parker, 1995). Having a shared experience as only children who grew up in China and as one-child migrants in the UK, participants were more likely to reveal their difficulties and struggles where there was a sense of mutual understanding. In fact, during the interviews, a few participants frequently used phrases like "you know that…" or "we all know that…" to suggest a shared intimate knowledge of the "map of meaning" (Liu, 2008b:412) in the Chinese context.

In his *Learning How to Ask* (1986), the non-Hispanic American scholar Charles Briggs provided a detailed reflexive account about his fieldwork in a Mexican community in New Mexico. Drawing on his experience as an "outsider", Briggs highlighted the issue of "the compatibility of interviews as a means of acquiring information with the ways in which their subjects typically convey information to another" (1986:3). Such "compatibility" was much more likely to be achieved by the "insider" interviewer who was familiar with the cultural implication of certain questions, and knowing how to address them.

One example of the "insider" advantage was on the topic of money. In the West, inquiring openly about personal financial matters would be considered highly impolite. However, such a topic is considered acceptable in Chinese culture. Although some respondents had grown accustomed to avoiding money-related topics when socialising with the non-Chinese, it was certainly much easier for them to talk to a fellow Chinese about their personal financial matters. The continuing financial flow

from parents to child migrants and the children's sense of entitlement to parents' money turned out to be a significant finding of this research (see Chapter 5). Given that the financial independence of adult children was regarded as the norm in British society, the participants may not have been willing to reveal as much to a British researcher because of the possible embarrassment attached to it.

Whether qualitative research is better conducted by an "outsider" or an "insider" is open to discussion. This research does not intend to argue that the "insider" approach was inherently "superior". What is important to point out here is that all the published qualitative studies on the Chinese one-child generation, to the researcher's knowledge, have been done by "outsiders". These "outsiders" include Western scholars [14] (Kajanus, 2015, Goh, 2011, Fong, 2011, 2004) and Chinese scholars of an older generation [15] (Liu, 2008ab). For the non-Chinese researchers, apart from culture shock and the language barrier, their "foreign" identity was a marked feature throughout their research. Such a feature was particularly pronounced in Anni Kajanus's fieldwork in Beijing. Being "white and Western", Kajanus believed her "foreign" identity attracted young Chinese people to participate in her research. Consequently, she was "often treated as a guest", and noted her informants' clear effort to show "the 'foreign friend'" the "best part of Chinese society and culture" (2015:41).

The "outsider" identity is not as immediately pronounced among researchers who are Chinese (or Chinese of a Western nationality). However, there was a methodological setback in their research mainly to do with sample recruitment. Most of these researchers entered the lives of their one-child participants as their teacher or through schools/universities. For example, Vanessa Fong (2004) offered free English lessons in exchange for access to her students' family lives. Fengshu Liu (2008ab) worked in a university in China and her participants were recruited through her former students.

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[14] Kajanus came from Finland, Goh was born and raised in Singapore, and Fong was born in Taiwan, raised in California.
[15] Liu was born and raised in China.

What was common among these various recruitment strategies was that the researchers were presented to the young participants as a "teacher". In fact, some researchers (e.g. Goh [2011], Fong [2004]) noted that their participants addressed them as "Teacher Fong" or "Teacher Wu". The teacher-student relationship was traditionally constructed in Confucian discourse as a strictly hierarchical distinction which regarded the "teacher" as the superior and the "student" as the inferior. This relational context was a clear barrier in previous qualitative research conducted by the "older generation".

2.3 Data analysis and presentation

The interviews in this study were transcribed and remained in Mandarin during the process of data analysis[16]. Interview-based findings were arguably something "jointly produced by the interviewer and the respondent" (Briggs, 1986:3). Data analysis is a process where the original interviews were further "edited" by the researcher's interpretation. In the case of cross-language research, the question of when and how to translate the original interview script has been widely discussed (Temple and Young, 2004). In this study, the researcher intended to make as little alteration to the interview data as possible, which included analysing the material in Mandarin.

The value and level of "truth" of interview data has been a much-debated topic. David Silverman (2011) has summarised three approaches of interpreting interview data: positivism, which treats interview data as potential access to "facts"; emotionalism, which focuses on the lived (emotion) experience of the interviewee; and constructionism, which pays more attention to *how* the interview data was constructed than to what was said. While these three approaches treat interviewee (and the role of interviewer) differently based on different perceptions of "truth", it is unwise to take only

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[16] Selected transcripts were translated into English at an early stage so that the author's supervisor could read them and get a sense of the process.

one approach to interpret interview data in this study, because the interview data is a mixture of narrative, attitudes and emotions. The interview data includes retrospective accounts about up-bringing and migration decision making, facts about current concerns like property purchase and remittances, as well as speculation about the future parental care. The "positivism" approach helps to identify recurring claims made by the interviewees, but to further examine these claims' relations to each other, their implications on the participants, as well as on the topic, needs an analysis from different angles.

The process of data analysis involved two stages. The transcribed interviews were coded (using QSRNvivo10) against interview questions, and the codes used were based on the responses. For example, in response to the question: "Why did you come to study in the UK?", participants commonly mentioned a cluster of reasons. Some provided more straightforward answers such as it was "easier to find a job", "it was trendy" or "I like the British culture". Whereas others used more ambiguous phrases like "I want to have a look outside", which might mean an interest in foreign culture, or the accumulation of "social/symbolic capital" for the advancement of their career.

In this situation, the respondent was asked to clarify the ambiguous phrase during the interview. In a less common situation, the participant answered the question by starting with an incident: "I didn't do well in exams, I couldn't go to a good university in China. My parents asked if I would like to study abroad, I said OK" (Quan, male, 26, electronic engineer). In this case, Quan was not *inspired* to study abroad until it emerged as a "less bad" option as far as university choice was concerned. Therefore Quan's answer was coded as both "1. education and career advance" and "5. no major motivation". The outcome of coding and frequency is shown schematically as follows:

Motivation to study abroad	
1. education and career advance	22
2. interested in exploring another culture	21
3. follow the trend	10
4. get away from the Chinese society	7
5. no major motivation	5
6. get away from parents	1

This coding exercise generated a quantified profile of the data. It showed the most frequently mentioned answers and also pointed out the outlying cases. The advantage of coding on Nvivo was that the software's "matrix coding" function allowed the researcher to freely test the relationships between codes and the personal attributes (e.g. gender, income, marital status) of the participants. These results helped to map out the initial pattern of the data and to identify recurring themes.

Having analysed the relationship between cases, the next stage of analysis focused on in-depth case-by-case analysis. This stage contributed to data analysis in three respects. First, it put the codes produced on Nvivo into a relational web. For example, the codes produced (the diagram above) with regard to "motives of migration" indicated that participants tended to have multiple aspirations to go abroad, but it did not reflect the relationship, priority or occurring sequence of these factors. Therefore, the case-based analysis helped bring out the dynamics between these factors. Second, within an interview, repetitions and self-contradictions were important clues for analysis, which could be identified only by reading through the interview as a whole. Finally, the researcher could identify important comments made by the participants which were not directly investigated in the interview questions.

All interview excerpts used in this article were translated into English by the researcher. The names of respondents mentioned in the article are all pseudonyms. The word "children" is used in this research for the convenience of analysing the parent-child relationship; in fact these migrant "children" were between 22-38 years old, and nearly a third of them have had British-born off-spring. The details of the participants

presented in the research were limited to the time of the interview. As the researcher kept in touch with the majority of the participants after the interview, news about decisions to return to China, changes of jobs, and purchase of properties were reported throughout the analysis and writing stages of the research. The continuing life changes of participants, although they cannot be included in the analysis, acted as a constant reminder that each interview account was only a *snapshot* of a living person in a certain place at a certain stage of his/her life.

2.4 Reflexivity

When we talk with someone else about the world, we take into account who the other is, what that other person could be presumed to know, 'where' that other is in relation to ourself in the world we talk about (Baker, 1982:109).

As mentioned earlier, being "one of them" gave the researcher advantages in conducting the research. However, being a native language researcher can have setbacks. In terms of language, there is a danger for a native language researcher to have a "false assumption" behind familiar words, and to take for granted meanings behind shared vocabularies (Davies, 1999: 114). Furthermore, some participants may be less likely to share information with a fellow Chinese than with an outsider of their ethnic community. Both the researcher and the participant are influenced by the "everyday, common-sense knowledge of the social structure" and the tendency to recognize a question and provide an answer to be heard as "appropriate" for a particular identity (Silverman, 2011:179).

The challenge of "common-sense knowledge of the social structure" became more obvious when conducting interviews with the parents of the one-child participants. On several occasions parents talked to the researcher as if they were talking to their own child. For example, when asked if they wished their only child to return to China in the future, one father said: "You just focus on your own career and life, don't worry about

us old people…" Therefore, parents' responses should be treated with great caution. Parents were more likely, understandably, to present a more harmonious family relationship and give a "politically correct" response; while their children were more likely to confess to conflicts and problems with their parents. However, the parents' "politically correct" responses provided valuable accounts which indicated certain socially accepted/dominating norms.

Nevertheless, parents were not always conscious of maintaining a more authoritarian position in front of the researcher who was more or less their child's age. In fact, some parents were clearly relieved to have someone, who shared a similar background as their child, to talk to. Parents were generally keen to give details about their child's up-bringing; two mothers were in tears when talking about the long-term separation from their overseas child. As a listener, it was moving to hear the emotional stories from both parents and children and to appreciate the care and anxiety expressed by both generations. However, as a researcher, it was important to find the balance between a "humanistic" and a social science position (Loseke and Kusenbach, 2008).

Chapter 3. Growing up as an only child in a changing China

The 1978 economic reform and the 1979 one-child policy transformed the profile and outlook of Chinese families during the final three decades of the 20th Century. At the same time the social, economic and political changes posed challenges for families. The parents' generation experienced the poverty, political upheavals and the rigid communist system during the pre-reform period as well as the widening income gap, employment instability and increasing competition in the post-reform era. The one-child generation was born into a developing China where the traditional family culture and non-traditional notions had a combined impact on the same family or individual. This chapter will examine the up-bringing of the middle class only children in terms of parenting and gender differences in the background of a changing society.

3.1 Chinese families in post-1978 transition

3.1.1 Becoming "middle class"

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 1), it is difficult to define "middle class", especially when it is applied in the Chinese context. However, the word "class" is not unfamiliar to the Chinese, given the "class struggle campaigns" in Mao's communist regime (Whyte, 2012). The end of the Cultural Revolution and the start of the economic reforms in 1978 was a significant turning point for social stratification. That period witnessed the shift of a classification based on political identities (e.g. peasant, landlord, capitalist) to the emergence of a middle class based on financial, educational and political criteria.

a. Pre-1978 social stratification

From the 1950s to 1970s, households were classified into "red" and "black" categories. The former referred to the revolutionary class including landless peasants, factory

workers and cadres. The latter referred to the so-called "antirevolutionary classes" including landowners, "right-wingers" (mostly intellectuals) and urban property owners. The classification was largely based on the individual's father's occupation as well as the individual's "political performance" in party-led campaigns (Zhang and Liu, 2013, Bian, 2002). Classes in the "red" category, which were regarded as the "former exploited classes", were favoured in school admissions and job assignments, while the "former exploiting class" suffered systematic discrimination (Walder, 1989). Once labelled a certain "class", it was extremely difficult for an individual to switch from one class to another.

In the late 1950s the state introduced a strict household registration system which limited the physical and social mobility between urban and rural residents (Whyte, 2012, Wu and Treiman, 2004). In cities, the state-owned enterprises allocated jobs largely based on the individual's political "class" (Zhang and Liu, 2013). This politically rigid, economically unsustainable system soon faced the pressure of staff redundancy in the 1960s. Two years following the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, 16 million urban youths were allocated to rural areas to be "educated through hard manual work" (Guan, 1995). The number of adolescents involved in the "sent-down movement" accounted for 10.5% of the urban population in 1979 (Pan, 2002). The movement was arguably a measure to suspend the out-break of the urban employment crisis; it consequently slowed down the rate of urbanization (Li, 2005, Walder, 1989).

Urban children from all "classes" (red and black) were forcibly "sent down" and parents from a privileged background could not prevent it (Unger, 1980, Bernstein, 1977). The "sent-down movement", which lasted for a decade (1968-1978), disrupted a generation of young people's education and career path (Zhou, 2013, Guan, 1995). In this study, parents who were born between the 1940s and early 1950s were affected by the movement. When the great waves of the "sent-down youth" returned to the city at the end of the Cultural Revolution, the state attempted to solve the

massive job demand by allocating more jobs to the already oversubscribed state-owned companies, meanwhile encouraging individuals to turn to self-employment. The former method eventually led to a large number of staff redundancies during the economic reform of the 1980s and 1990s; the latter attempt witnessed the emergence of various non-state businesses (Whyte, 2012, Wu, 2006, Li, 2005). In addition, some of the "sent-down" members resumed their education after 1976, while the rest were not able to do so for physical, psychological and administrative reasons (Zhou, 2013). Such a difference in education levels further divided the socioeconomic profile of that generation when skills and qualifications became essential in the reformed labour market.

b. Post-1978 social stratification

The post-1978 economic reform witnessed the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor as well as the rise of the group in between. The middle-range income group was commonly referred to as the "middle class". A significant number of laid-off workers in the 1980s and 1990s (mainly in cities) became private business owners (Wu, 2006) while the rest struggled in poverty (Li, 2005). The former "red" and "black" divide rapidly blurred. However, the legacy of the communist institutions from the pre-1978 period still had an impact in shaping the new middle class: the emergence of a private sector in China was mainly the product of the transformation of state-owned enterprises. Such companies had, to a large extent, inherited personnel, a managerial system and a political culture from its former context (Goodman, 2008:27).

Therefore, the middle class in China is heterogeneous; individuals from variously labelled political "classes" could acquire middle class status from different channels. Within only a decade, intellectuals from the former discriminated "black classes" became respected because of their qualifications and expertise; the "capitalists" changed from being at the bottom of the pre-1978 political ladder to the elites in the market economy. Moreover, the former cadres were also able to convert their "political

capital" (Wu, 2006) and transform themselves into entrepreneurs in the 1980s. As a result, instead of sharing a "homogeneous middle-class identity and culture" (Li, 2010a:155), the current Chinese middle class has different levels of education, financial affluence and sociopolitical attitudes.

c. Wealth accumulation in "middle class" households

The Chinese household saving rate increased from below 5% in the 1970s to 27% in 2009 (Curtis et al, 2015). A household survey in 2004 indicated a savings rate of 26% in rural areas and 24% in urban areas, which was significantly higher than that of OECD countries (Kuijs, 2006). The high savings rate in a wealth-generating period contributed to the growing family disposable income, which then made large-scale intergenerational transfers possible (see Chapter 5).

The population that became middle class in the post-1978 economic reform was largely the generation that was born in the 1950s and 1960s. In spite of the diversity of their educational and political background, what these "middle class" Chinese had in common was increased household assets and a shared experience of the social and economic upheavals during the second half of the 20th Century. The high post-1978 household savings rate was the result of household income growth, a destabilised former communist-style welfare system, and the reduction in the number of children after the one-child policy (Ma and Yi, 2010, Kuijs, 2006, Modigliani and Cao, 2004).

In this study, parents of middle class one-child families were born between the late 1940s and 1960s. These parents belong to the generation who grew up during the pre-1978 period and acquired their "middle class" status during the post-1978 reform. Around a third of the parents reported (some parents may have chosen not to reveal Cultural-Revolution-related memories to the researcher) that their education had been interrupted by the "sent-down movement", but some continued higher education after 1978 and worked as professionals; while a small number of the parents did not

continue into higher education and became private business owners or remained in the state-owned enterprises as cadres (in managerial positions). Furthermore, it was not uncommon to find some parents doing a mixture of sideline jobs while still having their names attached to a state-owned company for the welfare benefits.

Based on some parents' memories of their childhoods and early working years, most parents in this study had a financially deprived up-bringing, and a low household income period from the 1960s to the 1980s; during which time the 3-year Great Famine (1960-1963) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1977) had a deeply destructive impact upon Chinese families. This kind of background and traumatic historical experience resulted in most parents' desire for financial security, and the tendency to save their newly-acquired wealth for the next generation. With the increase in disposable income and the opening up of the housing market, buying property became one of the main methods for middle class households to invest and consolidate their wealth (Zhang, 2010). Several parents in this study mentioned buying properties as an investment to prepare for major expenses generated by their child.

3.1.2 A more competitive society

The transition from a planned economy to a market economy gave a greater level of freedom to the flow of resources and labour. The individuals in these transitions also found themselves in a crucial period where their former belief in a secure, egalitarian, long-term form of state employment was being challenged by a relatively uncertain, unequal and competitive employment system but one which also brought the opportunities for high income and social up-ward mobility. The changing demands of the labour market had a direct impact on the priorities of education for the younger generation. The competition for a good job thus started from the beginning of children's schooling.

a. Employment changes in the parents' generation

In pre-reform China, most urban residents worked in state-owned enterprises called "work units". A job in "work units" was commonly referred to as an "iron rice bowl", indicating the sense of security that came with it (Whyte, 2015). "Work units" provided for a wide range of welfare including housing, medical care, childcare and children's schooling (Li, 2005). Mao's regime put the emphasis on an egalitarian income distribution and stressed "moral instead of monetary incentives" (Walder, 1989). The salary and welfare provided by "work units" were guaranteed for a lifetime. Many aspects of employees' lives were controlled by the state through the "work unit". For example, employees needed to seek permission from their "work unit" to marry and to have children (Li, 2005). The "work units" employment pattern did not undergo significant changes until the mid-'90s. Thus, the "work units" played a crucial role in the implementation of the one-child policy among urban families in the late '70s and '80s.

The first decade of the economic reform saw the gradual change from equal to competitive salaries in the state-owned enterprises. Job security in "work units" was further challenged in the '90s when a large number of state-owned enterprises went through privatization, and made redundant a great proportion of their employees. The number of people employed in "work units" plummeted from 113 million in 1995 to 41 million in 2002 (Whyte, 2015). Furthermore, the rise of private business and the entrance of foreign investment accelerated competition for jobs and promotion within the "work units" as well as in the wider labour market.

Individuals in the middle of the rapid institutional transitions were faced with the urgent need to adjust themselves from the former "work unit" system to market economy competition. As mentioned before, the rise of private business in post-reform China was, to some extent, the result of the failure of the state to reduce the rate of unemployment in the state-owned enterprises. However, a significant proportion of

the working population in the '90s was not so passive, and they became aware of the diversity of business opportunities and the risk of the household's dependency on the inefficient "work units". During the massive cut of state-owned enterprise employees in the mid-'90s, 20% of the staff were not forced to leave: they *chose* to resign for better-paid opportunities (Li, 2005).

In this study, it was common to hear about the changes in the career paths of the parents as they experienced institutional changes during the last three decades of the 20th Century. Some parents switched from the public to private sector (from "work units" to self-employment/starting their own business); some parents changed the field of their expertise in response to the labour market's demand (e.g. a father switched from fish farming research to accountancy); while some parents had two or more jobs (e.g. a couple who worked as clerks in a state-owned enterprise also had a side-line private business selling computer spare parts). In this study the various changes parents made to adapt to the competitive post-reform society tended to lead to higher household incomes and better household financial security. While the rapid social stratification after 1978 meant a significant percentage of former "work unit" employees became less well-off, the parents in the research are the successful survivors of the socio-economic changes.

Nevertheless, "work units" still had a strong influence on the parents' generation. The majority of parents in this study had jobs in state-owned enterprises. The parents who survived the massive staff cuts in the '90s were already established employees (in middle or higher management positions) in their institutions. Therefore, most parents had a secured pension, and, more importantly, they were entitled to a medical insurance scheme where the state paid a significant part of their medical expenses. In addition to that, parents had their own savings to cover other medical expenses. Overall, both the legacy of the state-owned enterprises from the pre-1978 communist era and the growth of the market economy contributed to the middle class parents' financial independence and security.

b.   Schooling and competition in the one-child generation

Table 3: State school system in China

Age: 7-12	13-15	16-18	19+
Primary school	Key middle school	Key high school	University
	Ordinary middle school	Ordinary high school	
		Vocational or Technical college	

China launched a "9-year compulsory education" law in 1986. By 2000, the middle school education coverage reached 85% of the whole population (Ministry of Education of PRC, 2015). From the late 1990s, the state no longer assigned jobs for university graduates, and graduates were exposed to labour market competition. In the meantime, the state initiated an unprecedented expansion of higher education. The level of university enrolment increased from 3 million in 1996 (Whyte, 2015) to 25 million in 2006; thus transforming higher education from exclusivity to inclusivity (Yeung, 2013). As the number of job-seekers with higher qualifications rose, prestigious jobs became "increasingly elusive" (Fong, 2004: 88) for those who graduated from a more prestigious university. As a result, from the age of 13, the one-child generation students needed to compete to go to a "key" secondary school so that they would have a greater chance of entering a prestigious university.

The term "key schools" in China refers to better quality state schools. The admission to key schools was, in principle, based on merit. The "key school system" was introduced in the 1980s. Key schools were given priority in the assignment of teachers, equipment and funds. They constituted "only a small percentage of all regular junior or high schools and funneled the best students into the best secondary schools, largely on the basis of entrance scores" (You, 2006). Nevertheless, a minority of key school students who did not meet the entrance requirement were able to study there because their parents had social connections or/and paid extra money. The percentage of this

cohort among all key school students is not clear. The percentage is likely to vary in different regions depending on local key schools' policies. It has been reported that students with a more affluent family background were more likely to be found in key schools (Yang, 2006). Therefore, the one-child generation's schooling consisted of academic competition among students alongside economic and social capital competition among parents.

In addition to the state school system, the emergence of private schools since the early 2000s added to the diversity of schooling choices for the one-child generation. However, the percentage of students who attended private school remained small (7% in 2006 and 10% in 2014) (World Bank, 2015). In a more recent trend, study abroad in secondary schools became another alternative to access education options without competing in the state system. Although the number of under-18 overseas students has been increasing since 2010 (Wang, 2013), such a choice was limited to a small number of families because of the high cost and the concern of the low age of the child.

Table 4: The 33 respondents' school attendance history in China

Pre-university education	male one-child	female one-child	one-child	non one-child
State education ordinary school	6	7	13	5
State education key school	5	8	13	1
Private school	2	1	3	0

The one-child respondents in this study had an above-average level of schooling, especially so given that nearly half of the sample attended key schools. (In China the key school students make up only a minority of all school students.) This feature reflects the middle class family background as well as the highly educated profile of the sample. However, a small number of respondents (4) revealed that their "key school" admissions were "helped" by their parents' connections and extra money paid

to the school.

Because key schools were more concentrated in cities, students outside cities had fewer opportunities to go to a key school. However, this situation did not stop some parents using their social connections to bypass the state system. Zhaohui (female, 23, student) grew up in a town[17] in south China and was a top student in her local school. There was no key school in her town, so for students who wanted to go to a better high school, they had to go to a city. Because of the priority given to the admission of local students, "immigrants" like Zhaohui were in a disadvantaged position. Fortunately for Zhaohui, "my uncle lived in ZH (initials of the city), he knew the headmaster of the key school, and the headmaster helped to get me into his high school. So I left my parents and went to ZH". This kind of corruption was largely the result of unequally distributed education resources between cities and towns as well as the geographical discrimination in a key school's admission system.

The unequal nature of the key school system caused concern in the state administration and attempts were made to promote a more egalitarian system (China.org, 2006, Ministry of Education, 2005). However, this up-down approach did not fundamentally change the demand for key schools among Chinese families. The key school notion "is taken for granted in a society conceived as a hierarchy", as an OECD-led research observed in 2000s: "Parents do not question the existence of such a system; they only think how their own children might win the competition to get into key schools" (Cheng, 2010:95). Such an attitude is arguably influenced by the parents' own memories of their career disruptions in the post-1978 period: the realization of job insecurity as well as the possibility of upward mobility in the market economy.

Similar to Zhaohui, Tao (female, 27, social media manager) and Kai (male, 28, estate

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[17] A "town" in this study refers to a semi-rural, semi-urban area usually located between cities and countryside. Administratively, "towns" are higher than rural villages and lower than cities. Usually "towns" can be regarded as a transition period during the process of urbanisation.

agent) were also from towns, but they did not get into a key school. Although all three only children eventually obtained a Master's degree from British universities, the routes they took, and the parental resources involved, were very different. Tao went to an ordinary high school and eventually came to the UK for a Master's degree. Kai attended private schools in a nearby city, and came to the UK for an A level course at the age of 16; he went on to university where he eventually graduated with a Master's degree. Therefore, for students from outside of cities, and who did not have social connections like Zhaohui did, private school and study abroad provided a channel for those with the financial resources to circumvent the unfair key school admission system.

A few respondents also mentioned the benefits they received during schooling because of their parents' social and economic capital. The reported benefits included the admission to a desirable primary school, starting school at an earlier age[18], and the choice of studying with a preferred teacher. Shan (female, 32) attended both privileged primary school and a key secondary school. She said the admission to the key secondary school was "based on my exam scores"; as for entering the desirable primary school, "it all depended on who your father is. I've no idea how my Dad pulled the connections." The majority of the respondents (both children and the parents) perceived the "using connections" as something to be taken for granted. Only a very small number of the respondents expressed a sense of embarrassment. Therefore, from a very young age, the one-child generation was not only involved in intense competition in academic performance, but they were also aware of the role of parental capital in their upward mobility of the school ladder.

3.1.3 Child rearing in one-child families

As mentioned in the previous section, the pre-reform "work units" that used to provide

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[18] The reason why some parents wanted their child to start school at an earlier age was said to get "one step ahead of everyone else". Sometimes it was also because parents were too busy to look after the child.

welfare services also included childcare. However, during the institutional transformation in the '80s and '90s, the public childcare service was discarded, while the alternative childcare institutions were not well established (Zhang and Maclean, 2012). Although most children started kindergarten at age 4, the main responsibility of childcare before that age fell on families. Most only children were raised in cities where the employment rate for both females and males was high (e.g. in 1982, the urban employment rate for males was 90% and females 80%) (World Bank, 2006). Given that the majority of the one-child families had both the mother and father working full time, the grandparents' help was likely to be significant in child rearing.

In the study sample, most one-child respondents recalled that when they were very young their parents were busy working. A number of only children were sent away to live with their grandparents for the first few years from their birth, while in some cases grandparents lived with the one-child family and helped with daily care. After the children started school, they were usually sent to live with grandparents during summer holidays, where they had the company of cousins who were also spending their summer holidays with grandparents. However, not all the one-child families benefited from grandparent care providers. A small number of mothers reported that their parents-in-law did not want to help looking after a granddaughter as a result of gender discrimination, while their own parents had already committed to care for other grandchildren. In the cases where grandparents' help was absent, parents looked for temporary help from retired neighbours and other relatives, or, in some extreme cases, left the child alone at home (see Section 3.2.2.b.).

Compared with families with more than one child, the childcare pressure in one-child families was less demanding. Among the 6 two-children families in this study, 2 mothers stayed at home to look after the children, while only 1 out of 27 one-child respondents' mother did so. Nevertheless, it is important to note that two-children families tended to be from rural areas and that the number of children may not be the dominating factor of the mothers' employment (or unemployment). Compared to the

binary caring-cared roles between parents and only children, sibling-care was a significant feature of families with more than one child. Based on the interview with the respondents from two-children families as well as parents' memory of their siblings when they were children, one frequently reported role of the older child was to help look after the younger sibling. The one-child families, on the other hand, had a more vertical care system which placed greater expectation upon the older generation (grandparents) to share the early stage childcare. Such an expectation was also carried on to the next generation: when the one-child generation had offspring, their parents played a crucial role in looking after the grandchild(ren) (see Chapter 5).

3.2 The up-bringing of only children in middle class families

The dominant perception of Chinese parenting has been associated with children's high academic achievement and the strict, demanding and authoritarian style of parents; the former is usually regarded as the result of the latter. In the Western media, Yale professor Amy Chua's autobiographical book *The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* generated a sharp critical reaction with regard to extremely strict parenting and children's achievement among Asian American parents (BBC, 2011). The following year, a middle class father in China emerged as an "eagle Dad" (Lewis, 2012) and once again reinforced the perception of the "authoritarian" parenting stereotype in contemporary China.

The concept of "authoritarian" parenting, as widely used in family and adolescent studies, is believed to originate from Diana Baumrind's model (1991, 1971) of three parenting styles, namely, authoritative parents (demanding and accepting), authoritarian parents (demanding and rejecting), and permissive parents (permissive and rejecting). The common association of Chinese style parenting with "authoritarian" parenting has been criticised for misrepresenting Chinese families using methods developed based on Western culture (Goh, 2011, Huang and Prochner, 2003, Chao, 1994). Chao (1994) pointed out that the concept of *Guan* (literally means to govern or

to discipline) is essential in Chinese parenting. It has positive connotations that suggest a sense of care, concern, and responsibility from parents to children; a Chinese parent who does not *Guan* their child may be considered as irresponsible. Therefore, Chinese parents and children may stress the feature of discipline and control in the family because *Guan* is considered to be the accepted norm of Chinese parenting.

The findings in this study from interviews with 27 only children and 7 parents partly confirms the role *Guan* plays in post-1978 Chinese families with around half of the respondents conforming to the traditional hierarchy and more overt daily disciplining. However, the other (nearly) half of the respondents showed a clear divergence from the so-called "authoritarian" parent-child interaction. Furthermore, respondents' accounts of parental influence during their up-bringing extended beyond education. Other dimensions of their personality and social life were also shaped by parental involvement, and these involvements had a mixed impact on the child. The following sections will elaborate on the traditional central focus of Chinese families, namely the child's academic performance, as well as on the less investigated aspects of a Chinese child's up-bringing, namely the aspiration to develop a "well-rounded" person.

3.2.1 Mixed parental involvement in pursuing academic success

Compared to other ethnic groups, Chinese parents have been widely depicted as having very high expectations of their children, particularly in terms of academic performance and career success – though, arguably, the parents' high expectations of their children is not the sole preserve of parents from China per se (or indeed other aspiring immigrant groups). For example, in her study of Chinese families in Singapore, Kristina Göransson found that the Chinese were, in general, more successful than the Malay demographic in Singapore, and that young Chinese parents invested more time and money on each child than the Malay parents in order for them to be "the best of the best" (Göransson, 2009:181). Average Asian Americans (Chinese, Japanese,

Korean and Indian) were found to have higher education expectations and education attainments than average white Americans (Goyette and Xie, 1999).

Similarly, children and parents interviewed in this study all acknowledged high academic expectations from the family, but *how* parents were involved in the child's education showed variations in parental approaches. Almost half of the one-child respondents used the word "strict" or "frequent *Guan*" when describing their parent's attitudes and involvement in their school work, while the other half reported a relatively relaxed parental attitude about academic performance with less frequent *Guan*. There was no significant gender division in the "strict" and "relaxed" difference in the parental approach. Although in general the more "relaxed" parents tended to be those who were highly educated (university level), there was inconsistency in a few cases where highly educated parents were said to be extremely "pushy", and vice versa. Furthermore, in response to different parental levels of "strictness", children also had different coping strategies.

a. Strict parents and "well-behaved" children

This type of parent-child interaction reflects the traditional intergenerational relationship in which the parent's authority is taken for granted, and the child's study is largely parent-led and monitored. "If my school performance was good, then I could be naughty in other things; if I did poorly in school, then I wouldn't be allowed to do anything else" (Liwen, male, 30, key school, tele-communication engineer). The not being allowed to do something the child regarded as fun was a common method of punishment when exam scores were "not good enough". However, physical punishment such as being "hit with a stick" or having "a knock on my head" were also reported by a small number of both males and females.

Interestingly, respondents who were physically punished were all academically successful students who studied in key schools. Such a small sample is not enough to

make any meaningful suggestion about the relationship between strict parenting and the child's academic performance. However, a number of key school respondents, males in particular, attributed their high scores in school to their parents' frequent *Guan*.

Ran (male, 27, key school, software engineer) was a top student and reported the most strict physical punishment among all respondents: he was hit with a bamboo stick if he did not achieve a full score in tests. Ran reported that his motivation to do well in school was mainly to avoid punishment from his parents. However, Ran did not express any resentment about being physically punished, nor did he feel his experience to be unusual among his peers; on the contrary, he regarded a parental "push" as crucial for a child's academic performance: "for a child, studying is a boring process, a child won't naturally enjoy studying, so it is mainly the push from family [that motivates the child to study]." Ran described himself as being "typical" in the parental push model.

While parents' punishments (physical and psychological) appeared to have a direct impact on the child's behaviour, some "well-behaved" children revealed that their obedience to parental requests was not based on "fear", nor was parental authority taken for granted among these children. For example, Liwen (male, 30, key school) reported punishment, but he did not regard fear of punishment as the reason for his hard work:

> Researcher: "Why did you feel pressurized? Was it something to do with a bad exam result and your father's punishment?
> Liwen: "No, I wasn't terrified because of that [father's punishment]. I have a thick skin...However, I could feel that when I did poorly at school, my parents would be unhappy and worried, that's why I felt pressure [to do well in school]."

Liwen interpreted the pressure from parents with positive affection, which reflects the positive connotation of *Guan* (see above): parents' strictness meant a sense of care, concern and responsibility. Like Liwen, a number of respondents reported "strict" parenting but emphasized that their wish to make their parents "happy" was the main motivation for studying hard at school. The motivation of "making parents happy by self-achievement" carried into the children's later life and was incorporated in their definition of filial piety. A significant number of respondents regarded self-achievement to be essential for parental emotional well-being (elaborated on in Chapter 6).

It is important to note that these accounts of up-bringing were not directly observed by the researcher, but they were reported by the respondents as the way they remembered their childhood experiences. Retrospective accounts "are particularly unreliable", they are "influenced by subsequent events and by theories current at the time of the interview" (Kitzinger, 2004: 128). However, retrospective accounts enabled the cohort individuals to evaluate the long-term impact of the event(s) on their current situation in a more thought-through and reflexive manner.

These respondents' understanding (and even support) of the punishment-based strategy to drive children's academic performance may have been enhanced by the fact that they were, at the time of interview, graduates from good universities and had a respected professional job in the UK. It is not impossible that these respondents may have shown more negative emotions towards the strict parenting had the interviews taken place during their school years. What we see here is how some only children, over time, rationalised their experience with acceptance and appreciation. However, not all the children talked about "pushy parents" in an appreciative way.

b. Strict parents and critical children

In contrast to the "well-behaved" children's largely positive reflections about parents' "push", "punish" and "control" strategies during their school years, around half of the

only children who reported strict, academic-centred parents were more critical about such a dynamic between their parents and themselves. The level of *directly reported* negative impact of authoritarian parenting was found to be much higher among females:

> *"No matter study or life, how to put it, it's difficult to describe, they wanted me to be better than other children in all aspects…I felt very depressed when I was at home…They always compared me with other children"* (Zhipin, female, 33, ordinary school, account assistant).

While Zhipin put up with the pressure by silently absorbing the negative emotion, some daughters showed clear resentment and even protested to their parents:

> *Tao (female, ordinary school): "My Dad was very strict with me in everything. He demanded that I study hard, but I didn't do well in school; he didn't allow me to date boys, but I was a rebel."*
>
> *Researcher: "How did you rebel against him?"*
>
> *Tao: "We had quarrels. I had relationships with boys, so my Dad locked me up. We were upset with each other for a while, but it's fine now."*
>
> *Researcher: "When did you stop rebelling?"*
>
> *Tao: "Until I went to university and no longer lived at home. They [parents] couldn't control me, so I stopped rebelling."*

Parental punishment of children for academic failure and the shaming of the child by comparing them with "other children", all confirmed the traditional control hierarchy assumed by parents. Although males reported more incidents of parental punishment, intense verbal or physical conflict with parents was not found among male respondents. Based on the small sample of respondents, the children's response to parental authority related to academic performance showed a mixed profile: at one end of the spectrum, adult children (mainly sons) seemed to support the traditional

parenting style; at the other end of the spectrum, adult children (mainly females) were critical and even rebelled against parental authority.

c. Child-self-motivated, parent-facilitated academic pursuit

Nearly half of the one-child respondents recalled a relatively more relaxed attitude from their parents with regard to academic performance. The "relaxed" attitude here did not mean that school work did not feature as the centre of the child's life; it was considered "relaxed" only relative to the previous cases where children felt great pressure from their parents. In this "child-self-motivated" study pattern, respondents specifically indicated that their parents did not exert (much overt) pressure (or strict *Guan*) in terms of academic performance in school. When asked whether they felt pressure from parents to study hard, respondents (largely females) usually said "no, I put pressure on myself". The source of their pressure mainly came from the competition they felt in schools and the wider society.

Meilin (female, 37, key school) was one of the older respondents who went to university in the '90s before the massive expansion of university admission. "It was very difficult to get into a university back then, unlike nowadays". Growing up in southeast China, Meilin described her self-motivation and the competition among high school students: "You know in Zhejiang province education has always been valued highly…I think because I'm a girl, I have better self-control. I study hard". Meilin was accepted by a prestigious university in Shanghai.

In terms of school performance as a child, nearly half of the children with less demanding parents went to a key school (6 out of 13). It is difficult to say that the relaxed family environment *helped* children's academic performance, or was *because of* the child's high academic performance. However, similar to some children of strict parents, a number of academically successful children in this category also attributed their achievement to their parents, but, in this case, to the more egalitarian parenting

style.

Delun (male, 22, ordinary school, student) went to an ordinary high school but got into a prestigious university in China. He described a "democratic" relationship with his parents where he would "talk to them about everything", and he thought that his parents created a more relaxed family environment which helped him to develop a stronger mentality towards achieving a satisfying performance in the university entrance examination:

> *"They [classmates] were good students but didn't do well in the university entrance exam, probably because they were under too much pressure … I did better in the university entrance exam than any other exams, thanks to my parents, they gave me little pressure, I was in a good psychological state."*

Yizi (female, 31, key school, advertising manager) was among the top range of students throughout her primary school to go to university. She regarded her mother's views as being "very open", and her father was "even more relaxed"; he would ask Yizi to "come and watch TV, don't make yourself too tired [studying]".

However, the frequently reported "relaxed attitude" from parents did not mean these parents cared about their child's schooling any less than the "strict parents", rather, their influence on the child tended to be more indirect. For example, Yizi had been a "model child" without much direct parental involvement in her school work. In the interview with Yizi's mother (55, high school teacher), she described her covert approach to *influence*, rather than to *intervene* in her daughter's school work:

> *"Parental influence had better be at a subconscious level, not by force. Parents shouldn't say 'you must do this and that'. Once you helped the child to develop a healthy value system in her heart, you won't need to worry*

much about the rest, she won't walk into a wrong path."

From the child's point of view, Tian (female, 31, key school, lecturer) believed that her education and career had benefited from her up-bringing with parent-guided self-discipline:

"My parents never checked if I did my homework. My Dad always said homework is only a means to an end. Understanding the knowledge is more important than completing homework…I followed this principle. They mostly educated me about basic things like a sense of morality and responsibility. They have planted the tree in good soil, so they just left the tree to do the rest of the growing."

From the above cases it is clear that the notion of *Guan* (discipline) still existed in post-1978 middle class families, but the way to approach it became more subtle. In other words, some parents (and children) had started to re-examine and re-define *Guan* in Chinese parenting. Instead of prioritising "academic performance" for its extrinsic value, children's education advancement had been incorporated into the process of developing a "well-rounded" personality (this topic of "well-rounded" qualities will be discussed in the next section). Thus education's role had a lot to do with its intrinsic values. Compared to the earlier more traditional parental approach to disciplining a child's study, this covert strategy referred to by respondents (both children and parents) as "Westernized", "equal", "modern" and "democratic". These words were used as if they were interchangeable. It can be inferred from these value judgements that the so-called "Westernized parenting" was regarded as better (more acceptable) than the "traditional Chinese parenting".

Although a significant proportion of the sample (nearly half) reported that they had experienced a "relaxed parental attitude", and praised this "Westernised" style, it has to be noted that the sample of the research was recruited in the UK; most only

children came to the UK funded by their parents. This feature suggests a bias towards "Western culture" among the families in the research, thus enhancing the acceptability by parents and children of a pro-Western style parenting.

3.2.2 Developing "well-rounded" qualities

Raising the "well-rounded" child was first promoted in the Chinese government propaganda, developed at the turn of the century, as part of a campaign to promote "education for quality". According to the state, a "well-rounded" person is someone developed intellectually, morally, physically, and aesthetically (Woronov, 2009). In a separate survey of 600 households in Shanghai, Wu (1996) found the public's perception of a "good child" included having a good moral character, intelligence, and obedience, in addition to good health and personality. A qualitative study of one-child families in Xiamen, a southern city, revealed that the "ideal child" should be "smart, independent, happy and filial" (Goh, 2006:8). These conceptions of the "desirable child" are vague, and the much desired "good" qualities lack definition. However, what these government-promoted and research-generated profiles have in common is that they all highlight a range of qualities beyond *academic* performance which contain both more traditionally desired qualities and more "modern" ones. This section will elaborate on two areas of personal quality development that have been understudied in research about Chinese families but were referred to during the interviews.

a. Extracurricular interests

Extracurricular activities are not new among middle class children. In her research about middle class Hong Kong families, Johanna Waters described extracurricular activities as "a strategic form of investment in the development of 'charismatic' qualities in children, characteristic of the contemporary middle class" (2008:106) but her respondents expressed resentment towards "piano, swimming, drawing" classes. This kind of reluctance to attend parent-arranged extracurricular classes was also

found among a small number of respondents in this study. For example, Demin (male, 33, key school, lecturer) started learning piano from the age of four "because my Mum liked the piano" and "playing the piano" was regarded more as a "skill" rather than an "interest". Demin's childhood memory about learning piano was associated with "parental force" and "hardship". Demin is now a father and a lecturer. From hindsight, he was glad that he could play the piano at leisure, but he would not *force* his child to learn any musical instrument.

However, several respondents reported a child-led experience of extracurricular development. In these accounts, respondents emphasized that they were not *forced*, but were genuinely interested; they *initiated* the decision to go to extracurricular classes. In some cases, parents played a supportive role not just in terms of taking the child to these classes, but also in spending more time *with* the child on non-study related activities. For example, Jin (female, 23, key school, student) reported that her parents prioritized family outing time and would sometimes even leave their jobs to ensure they could take Jin out regularly: "compared to my classmates, they [parents] really spent much time with me." These parenting behaviours, such as regular games and family outings, were clearly felt by the child as somehow *special* and worth mentioning to the researcher. Jin's example contrasted positively against the image of Hong Kong middle class students in Waters' study whose lives were "thoroughly structured around school and schoolwork with very little time, if any, for nonessential, that is, leisure, activities" (2008:108).

Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that this kind of child-led extracurricular dimension in a child's school years was common during the 1990s and early 2000s. On the contrary, such initiatives were likely to be the minority among other middle class children who were more likely to reflect the extracurricular negative attitude of life like their Hong Kong counterparts. Indeed, in comparison with their peers, these respondents showed awareness, at a young age, that the level of freedom and the out-of-school activities they had had was relatively unusual. Baiwen (female, 33,

private school, legal assistant) was interested in drawing as a child, so her parents sent her to a weekend drawing course and encouraged her to practise,

"but when some other parents heard about it, they all said it [learning drawing] was useless, a waste of time, because it was no help in getting a job. Or, they'd say 'my child does better in school than yours' (laugh). But my parents were proud that I had such an interest…They also encouraged sports activities…unlike some other parents who locked their child at home to study…They [classmates] didn't know how to do a lot of things, like swimming or skiing, I found it difficult to hang out with them."

Baiwen's account refers back to the 1990s when she was a child. Clearly, at that time, although "some other parents" held a more strategic view towards extracurricular activities, families like Jin's and Baiwen's started challenging the "education-obsessed" Chinese up-bringing. Whether the 21st Century middle class only children experience more freedom and less pressure, or the opposite, it needs a more up-to-date comparison. However, what is curious about Jin and Baiwen's family is what made their parents particularly "liberal".

Baiwen and Jin are at different ages (born in 1981 and 1991, respectively), they originated from different parts of China (north region and central region), they had different academic performances in schools (Baiwen was a top student and Jin was middle-range). The parents of these two respondents had had different levels of education (university educated and non-university educated) and slightly different levels of income. Furthermore, this kind of "liberal attitude" towards extracurricular interests was also mentioned by 2 male respondents with different backgrounds. Therefore, although small in number, this unconventional, less strategy-driven "liberal" parental attitude found among middle class families showed a diverse profile; no one attribute can claim to be the dominant factor.

b. Independence

The ability to be independent means an independent personality (associated with self-regulation) and a practical sense of being independent, i.e. the ability to look after oneself. While the former quality has been consciously promoted by parents, the latter, practical independence, has largely emerged from the social and practical environment in urban one-child families. In so far as all the study respondents arrived in the UK by themselves and immediately managed their daily life in an unfamiliar country, suggested that these children must have already developed the ability to be practically independent before they left home. The majority of one-child families were in cities and had both parents working full-time around an inflexible domestic regime. In some cases, the child *had to* be independent because of the busy working hours of the parents. Ying (female, 29, ordinary school, accountant assistant) represents an extreme case where the only child had to live by herself when both parents were committed to their careers.

Ying's father was a doctor and her mother was a banker. Ying's parents "were both very busy", and she had been "an independent child since she was very young"; she lived by herself for half year when she was about 15 years old because her father joined an overseas volunteer programme and her mother was relocated to another city and could come home only one night a week. However, Ying did not regard the frequent lack of parental presence as parental neglect, nor did she indicate any criticism. On the contrary, she seemed proud of the fact that she was able to look after herself from an early age.

Similar reports of self-care (although not as extreme as Ying's example) were not uncommon among the respondents where both parents were engaged in the typical, sharply-competitive career race. Grandparents' help is considered crucial in filling the gaps following parents' unavailability (see Goh, 2011), but not all the parents, for

various reasons, had grandparents to help. In these cases certain aspects of childcare had to be compromised. Beiyao's (female, 30, key school, process engineer) mother (55, teacher) described the desperate measure she took when both she and her husband were working as high school teachers and their 4-year-old daughter refused to go to nursery. The mother had no choice but to leave her daughter alone at home. The mother's work place was nearby, so she went home every other hour to check on her daughter. This situation lasted a year. Beiyao did not mention the experience of being left alone at home in her interview, on the contrary, she felt her mother was much involved in her up-bringing, for example, by supervising her homework every day during her schooling.

Because of the small size of the one-child sample in the study, it is reasonable to assume a significant number of only children like Ying and Beiyao exist in cities where both mother and father are career-orientated. In addition to their parents' reluctance to compromise their career, cases like these also revealed a gap with the extended family members (grandparents) who lived in the same city but did not participate in child rearing. However, these families were largely ignored by the wide-spread stereotype of the one-child generation as spoiled emperors who are indulged by two parents and four grandparents. This research shows that the intense competition in career development and the replacing of the big family culture with the small nuclear family culture both contributed to the "early independence" of only children like Ying and Beiyao.

Compared to only children, non one-child respondents showed variations in terms of parents' (un)availability and the need to be practically independent. The majority of non one-child respondents (4 out of 6) reported a less intensive parental involvement in their education and other aspects of their daily life. Since half of the non one-child sample grew up in rural China, the relatively less intense parental involvement is likely to be the result of a cluster of factors: the division of parental resources among two children, the longer working hours among farmers (self-employed individuals) and the

stronger gender discrimination among rural families. However, the care and company from a sibling usually made up for the gap of parents.

In some cases, the older sibling shared a significant part of the daily caring role, thus reducing the parental presence with the younger child. Qiaolin's (female, 36, purchasing manager) sister, who was 8 years older, "was like a mother" to her; while their mother became withdrawn because of physical and psychological illnesses. In Feng's (female, 34, IT manager) case, although her mother was a full-time housewife, Feng reported little involvement of her mother in her life beyond daily care. Feng felt a sense of neglect because "I think she was biased towards my brother". As the only older boy in the sample, Chuanli (male, 31, research associate) felt that having a younger sister meant he needed to set a good example for her and took responsibility for looking after her. Therefore, the non-one-child families, gender and the order of birth may slightly vary the child's sense of parental attention, responsibility and their ability to be independent. In comparison, the only children were more likely to be exposed to more extreme situations of either full attention and care from parents and grandparents, or total reliance on themselves.

3.2.3 The changing norm of parent-child relationships in post-reform Chinese families

Chinese parents tend to monitor their children more closely, moralize more often, emphasize greater sense of family obligation, value grades more than general cognitive achievement, evaluate more realistically a child's academic and personality characteristics, be less satisfied with a child's accomplishments, and believe more in effort and less in innate ability as a factor in school success (Hidalgo, Siu, and Epstein, 2004:640).

European American mothers were concerned with making their children "feel loved", "building their self-esteem", "providing a stimulating and learning environment," and encouraging their children to be self-expressive (Chao,

2000:236).

"She [Mum] gave me a certain amount of freedom and independence. They were not very strict with me, honestly, they let me do what I wanted to do…They never pushed me to study or forbad me doing this or that. They'd support my decisions once I thought things through" (Yizi, female, 31, advertising manager).

The parenting description from Hidalgo et al. and Chao was written more than a decade ago. Comparative research between families in China and families in Western countries was largely congruent with the above summary (Porter et al, 2005, Tsui, 2005, Quoss and Zhao, 1995). Yizi's account appeared to indicate a so-called "typically Western" up-bringing. Yizi herself called her mother's parenting style "Westernised" as if such a feature was superior to the "traditional Chinese parenting style". However, the fact that she emphasized that her "freedom" was *given* by her mother showed a taken-for-granted parental authority. The two quotes from the two pieces of research also seem to favour the parenting style of "European American mothers".

This research did not attempt to ascertain which parenting method had a more successful impact on children; such an abstract framework of parenting and up-bringing assume a static state of family members and distort the reality of the family dynamic. The very value-laden contrast of "Chinese style"/authoritarian and "Western style"/egalitarian child-rearing processes puts families in an over-simplified binary opposition. As the parent-child interactions in previous sections show, no family was absolutely either "traditionally authoritarian" or "unconventionally egalitarian"; instead, the participants' up-bringing was usually a hybrid of "authoritarian elements" and "non-authoritarian elements" based on the different range and intensities of interactions between parents and their children. Such a mixture brings out two questions: how did the seemingly inconsistent elements co-exist among middle class

families in the same society? And how did they co-exist in the same family?

As discussed earlier, within two decades ('70s-'90s), the parents' generation born between the '50s and '60s experienced a fundamental ideological and institutional shift in the employment system during the early and middle stages of their careers. The assumed life-time continuity of their careers, in most cases, was interrupted and redirected. This kind of change was likely to impact on parents' expectations for their child's academic/career prospects and the way they brought up their child.

In the case of Ran (male, 27, key school), however, while his parents claimed they were "democratic" and "encouraging", he referred to their "authoritarian parenting" style, including physical and psychological punishment (see 3.2.1.a); he felt great pressure and it was difficult to communicate with his parents. Ran's parents were college-educated and worked in higher-management positions in a state-owned enterprise. Ran's father became self-employed after the business was privatized, Ran's mother also left the enterprise and became a successful business owner. Their experience of pre-reform collectivism and the climate and culture of post-reform competition may have shaped their parenting style into being part traditional and part "modern".

Ran's mother elaborated on their "democratic" parenting by saying that "ever since he was 10 years old, we included his opinion in all the family decisions, we will count him in *as long as he is right* [emphasis mine]". Clearly, Ran's parents *performed* a "democratic" practice, but did not completely *believe in* an equal parent-child relationship. In fact, they revealed later in the interview that they valued the traditional patriarchal hierarchy and were pleased about their son's etiquette towards the older generation.

The contradiction of the "democratic" element found in Ran's parents represented a dilemma among post-reform parents with regard to how to bring up their only child in a

modernizing China. On the one hand, the pragmatic, results-driven authoritarian parenting was more effective in improving a child's examination results, and thus likely to secure a better position for the child in the job market; on the other hand, middle class parents became more and more concerned to "raise well-rounded children apart from emphasis on academic achievement" (Wang, 2014:765). Parents sometimes expressed their sympathy towards their own child for their lack of play time; yet they also felt that compromises/sacrifices had to be made. Such a dilemma was similar to the one-child migrants' reconciliation between personal aspiration and filial obligations (see Chapter 6).

Another element of the dilemma concerns the hierarchy within the family. Since the '80s the state launched a campaign, "Raising the quality of the population" to improve "each person's ideals, morals, education, and discipline". One of the central messages of this campaign was that "children are autonomous human beings who should be treated as their parents' equals" (Binah-Pollak, 2014:29). Such a public discourse sharply contradicted the traditional parent-child hierarchy. Combined with the growing job market demand for individuals who were independent, innovative and self-motivated, Chinese parenting was faced with the challenges of both ideological and practice-based transformations.

The response of middle class parents towards these changing norms and policies in the '80s and '90s was divided. As shown in the previous analysis (3.2.1.c), only a minority of parents brought up their child in what seemed at the time to be an unconventional way. They were first-time parents whose own up-bringing in pre-reform China had very limited practical relevance in post-reform child rearing. These parents were reported to be getting help from reading parenting books. For the majority of parents of the one-child generation, raising their child in a changing China was a process full of experiment and risk.

At the point of interview, the parent participants were in their 50s or 60s. When looking

back at their earlier parenting behaviour, these parents articulated a change of attitude in favour of a non-authoritarian parenting style. Some parents criticized themselves for being too demanding. For example, Yizi's mother sent Yizi to study violin at age 4. The violin lessons stopped after two years because Yizi did not enjoy them. Yizi's mother blamed herself for following the trend blindly: "Like many other parents who sent young children to study a music instrument, I also did the same." Therefore, for the parents, bringing up a child in a fast-changing China is also a process of trial and error.

The parents' child rearing changes were not only brought out in interviews with parents; this kind of change was also revealed in interviews with the children. Jin (female, 23, key school, student), reported a change in her mother's attitude from being "strict", and taking her to extra mathematics class "just like everyone else", to a more "democratic" approach: "in high school they did not give me much pressure." Jin's parents were not university-educated, but according to Jin, her parent's changes followed her mother's "reading a lot of books about parenting".

Tian's (female, 31, key school, lecturer) father (57), a university-educated manager in a state-owned enterprise, described his parenting evolution from "strict" to a (in his words) "Westernized" style. In addition to the ageing process, he attributed his interactive parenting style to the change in society:

> "We are in a different time, although traditional culture is still deeply rooted in China, we are now more advanced…I like reading lots of books, maybe that helped me to accept new concepts…Chinese parents always say children should listen to parents, but I don't agree with it. Why should children always obey you? Are you always correct? Two generations surely will have different ways of thinking…I don't think the young should always listen to the old."

From hindsight, the benefits and limitations of the "authoritarian" and "egalitarian" elements became more clear and the parents in the interviews were able to make a

reflective evaluation. However, the stated tendency towards non-authoritarian, non-hierarchical parenting that emerged in the parents' interviews may have been inflated to some extent by the parents' wish to present themselves as "open" and "modern" parents in front of the researcher. Nevertheless, the fact that parents regarded a non-authoritarian style of parenting to be morally superior and politically correct demonstrates how well established the changed norms of parenting in the middle class Chinese families had now become.

3.3 Understanding gender difference in middle class one-child families

The policy eliminates the right of women to control their own reproduction, and inadvertently encourages female infanticide, but ironically, it may, in the long run, allow Chinese women to achieve the so-far unrealized goal of social equality (Hong, 1987:319).

During the early years of the implementation of the one-child policy the US Sociologist, Lawrence Hong, made the above claim about the policy's possible positive effect on women. Thirty years later, with the ratio of 118 boys born for 100 girls, China has a gender ratio imbalance "the most serious and prolonged" in the world (Reuters, 2015). The 2000 Chinese Census showed that the gender ratio in rural China was 121.7 (compared to the urban 114.2) (World Bank, 2006). Furthermore, social gender inequality in rural areas, where two-children families are more common, is more sharply manifest than in cities. China is the only country in the world where more women commit suicide than men; rural women were reported to be three times more likely to commit suicide than their counterparts in cities, mainly because of the maltreatment by their husbands and the often hard lives they led in the countryside (WHO, 2009, BBC, 2006).

In contrast to the frequently reported gender inequality in rural areas, Chinese cities have witnessed an increase in girls' educational levels, women's labour market

participation and daughters' status in the family (Hu and Peng, 2015, Lee, 2012, Fong, 2004, 2002, Tsui and Rich, 2002). The female university enrolment rate has overtaken the male rate since 2000 (World Bank, 2006). The gender ratio in higher income jobs in China has been very close to that of OECD countries (over 75%), and higher than the average Asian countries (World Bank, 2015). The improvement in female education and income level is arguably one of the benefits of the education and economic reforms. Meanwhile, the one-child policy certainly accelerated female status improvement in cities by allowing more family resources to be invested in daughters, and more time for mothers to develop their careers.

The urban female education and occupation profile demonstrated the increase in women's competitiveness. However, the gender gap is more ambiguous at the domestic level. There is no clear standard, such as education level or income level, by which to measure the way daughters and sons are treated in the family. By comparing housework load between sons and daughters in China in 2010, Yang Hu observed that the increase of female employment had not effectively led to children's more egalitarian domestic behaviour (Hu, 2015). Nevertheless, as Hu noted, there may be a gap between egalitarian domestic gender role values and the actual translating of these values into behaviour. This section will focus on the gendered attitudes, rather than the behaviour, of the older and younger generations in terms of career, personality and marriage.

3.3.1 Freedom and pressure in career choices

A crucially significant practical reason for the preference of sons in traditional Chinese families was the role of sons as the material supporter of the three-generation households (parents, the son and his wife, the son's off-spring). However, the material supporter role for parents became irrelevant as middle class parents no longer depended on their off-spring for material support but were more likely to continue supporting their adult child(ren) (see Chapter 5). In this context, parental expectation

tended to be less about material returns (what the child can do for his/her family), but more about the child's own accomplishment.

The one-child respondents in this study were either professionals working in the UK or postgraduate students in prestigious British universities. In the sample of 6 parents, 2 parents had sons and 4 parents had daughters. A widely expressed satisfaction was found among the parents about the career/academic achievement of their sons and daughters. However, in spite of the small number of the sample, a gendered difference emerged with regard to revealing their satisfaction to their child. Parents were more reluctant to reveal their satisfaction to sons than to daughters: "Can't say that to him, because he may be arrogant about it, but in my heart I'm proud of him" (father of Tengfei, male, PhD student). Not showing satisfaction about the child's achievement is similar to the "punishment instead of encouragement" parenting method used by "authoritarian" parents. Parents were afraid that by showing their satisfaction to the child the child would stop working hard.

Furthermore, the perception that "career is more important for men than women" was more pronounced among parents with boys. Ran's (male, 27, software engineer) parents brought him up in an authoritarian way with high academic/career expectations; but their high demand was gendered:

> Ran's Mother: "Even now I tell my son all the time that men are nothing without a career, you must work hard, you have no reason not to do well in your job."
>
> Researcher: "What kind of expectation would you have had if your only child was a girl?"
>
> Mother: "Perhaps, we would want her just to be happy, not having to work so hard."
>
> Father: "I wouldn't have such a high expectation on her…Just like the tradition goes, boys should be more career-oriented."

Ran's parents clearly maintained a traditional gendered attitude to career expectation on off-spring. However, for some parents, having a daughter is not a reason for low career expectation, but a reason to demand even *more* precisely because of females' "weaker" position in the job market. Beiyao's (female, process engineer) mother represents a parent of this type. As a gesture of protest against the gender discrimination from her husband's family since the birth of the girl, the name the mother gave to Beiyao literarily means "better than men". Beiyao's mother devoted herself to making sure of Beiyao's achievement: the daughter was a top student with two Master's degrees and a PhD degree from a high-ranking British university.

While some parents' high career expectation for their daughters was influenced by the gender inequality they had experienced themselves (like Beiyao's mother), some parents' motivation was less gender-related: Bolin's (female, export manager) father was a factory worker, his pursuit of higher education was ended by the Cultural Revolution: "I lost my chance [to go to university], so when I had my child, I was very strict, I wanted my daughter to do well." Zhaohui's (female, Master's student) family came from a small town dominated by traditional culture which regarded it as shameful if parents could not keep their children near them. However, Zhaohui's father encouraged his only daughter to find a job in big cities in spite of the mockery from neighbours about the father's failure to keep his only child near him, because "I had the chance to leave [the small town] when I was young, but I stayed for my parents, now I regret it".

The above accounts demonstrated two different attitudes towards the traditional gendered expectation, with the greater emphasis on a male's career than a female's. There appears to be a gap with regard to the gendered role by only-son parents and only-daughter parents. Although Ran's parents thought they would not have such a high expectation if they had had a daughter, it is difficult to say whether they would hold the same opinion if they actually had an only daughter. If Ran's parent's reduced expectation regarding an imagined daughter reflected the social norm of

career-oriented male and family-oriented female, then the only-daughter parents' high career expectations could be said to reflect the parents' personal aspiration for their only child.

Therefore, when it comes to career expectations for sons and daughters, parents' responses showed two levels of understanding: the micro-level (parental level) gender equality and the macro-level (society level) gender inequality. By placing high expectations on their only children (regardless of gender), parents with sons happened to behave according to the traditional gendered norm, thus appearing to be the supporter of the traditional culture; while parents with daughters behaved against the traditional gendered role, thus appearing to be the promoter of gender equality. Therefore the high parental expectations on both daughters and sons should not be considered as strong evidence to show gender equality in the society, rather it was more to do with parental personal aspiration transfer than the changing norm in the wider society.

3.3.2 The hierarchy of gender-associated personalities

The difference between sons' and daughters' personality was briefly mentioned in the earlier section on parenting. Sons appeared to be more submissive to authoritarian parents and daughters tended to believe themselves to have more self-discipline under more relaxed parenting approaches (see 3.2). Sons' and daughters' perceptions of qualities associated with their own gender were likely to have been shaped by the parents' gendered expectations of their children. For example, Fengshu Liu and Vanessa Fong's interviews with one-child parents in two north Chinese cities suggested a gendered parental perception of qualities that could actually be found among both males and females (Liu, 2006, Fong, 2004).

However, gender stereotype differences are not exclusive to China. A cross-cultural comparison confirmed that women were more likely to be perceived as having

openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, anxiety and vulnerability; less likely to be associated with impulsiveness, assertiveness, or to be excitement seeking. The findings were consistent across 26 countries (Löckenhoff et al, 2014). While the perception of gender difference and certain personal qualities may be universal, the notion of a hierarchy between gender-related personalities is more likely to be influenced by the local society and local culture.

In Chinese cities, the public discourse has been dominated by pro-gender-equality propaganda since the implementation of the one-child policy in 1979 (Greenhalgh, 2008). Public remarks that favour men over women are likely to be judged as politically incorrect, especially among the educated middle class Chinese. One-child respondents seldom reported any gender discrimination they felt in the family, and parent respondents (except for two) promoted equal treatment between sons and daughters. However, a gendered hierarchy exists in a more subtle form, sometimes even at an unconscious level.

Zhaohui's (female) father and Bolin's (female) parents all had high career expectations for their daughters (see 3.3.1.a) and claimed gender equality; meanwhile they also believed that certain stereotypically male-associated qualities were more desirable for their daughters. When asked if he would treat a son differently, Zhaohui's father answered: "No, I've always raised my daughter like a son." Zhaohui confirmed her father's words, and she felt proud of it, and attributed her early independency to her parents accordingly:

> "They didn't treat me like a girl; they demanded that I must do what boys do. They didn't spoil me… People usually mistook my name for a boy's name. My Mum took my study to be a priority, she never taught me how to cook."

Keeping a daughter away from traditional "female territory", like the kitchen, is only

one way of suppressing the female-associated qualities in daughters. Bolin's parents showed another way to 'de-feminise' their daughter:

> Father: "Now that we are only allowed one child, we never thought about 'if we had a son', we raised our daughter like a son. So our daughter has some boy's characteristics. I don't want her to be a spoiled child, we didn't allow her to dress up, have long hair, or wear a skirt."
>
> Mother: "We never really thought about it before. I've only just realized it since you asked today! Indeed, although we have a daughter, we raised her like a son."

This association between the being a girl and "being spoiled" reinforced the stereotype of a girl to be "weak and dependent". As Yizi's (female, 31) mother (55, teacher) put it, "girls are to be protected, while men should have a greater sense of responsibility and be the leader of the family". In contrast, the parental concern of "being spoiled" was less salient among male respondents and their parents.

Bolin's mother's attempt to blur her daughter's gender revealed the parent's (unconscious) denial of a daughter and their everyday influence to convert her into the boy they could not have without the daughter even realizing it. Bolin was in her late-thirties and a mother of two at the point of interview, when talking about the ban on girl-like outfits in her childhood, she said jokingly: "I was fat, short-haired and wore glasses. Even in university some people thought I was a boy [laugh]". Bolin did not regard her situation as being unusual, but blamed the general plainness of material life in the '80s.

However, without the comparison of the treatment of other children in the family as a reference group, gender inequality in one-child families tended to be covert, while respondents who had a sibling of a different gender were more exposed to openly gendered treatment in the domestic situation. The non one-child sample in this

research contains 3 women who had a brother and 2 men who had a sister. Although it is a small sample, their perception of their siblings showed a sharp awareness of the gendered difference in terms of the entitlement for family resources and the assignment of family responsibilities.

Feng (female, 34, IT manager) grew up in a semi-rural town where "it was normal to have more than one child" because most people "wanted a boy". Her mother was "a typical Chinese woman" who thought that "one ought to have a boy". The arrival of the brother when she was 6 had a negative emotional impact on Feng as a child: "I was jealous, everybody liked boys…Maybe I thought too much, I always prepared for the worst, I kept everything to myself… but after a while, I got to like my brother." Fortunately for Feng, her parents had enough income to fund both her and her brother's study abroad. However, as a boy born in an economically deprived rural family, Wenbin's (male, 36, entrepreneur) university education was made possible because of his older sister's sacrifice of her own education opportunities. Thus, although Wenbin was the younger child, the family directed all the resources to him instead of the older child. Respondents who grew up in urban two-children families also reported differences in the daily arrangements for the siblings.

The gender inequality in two-children families was more overt, while that in the one-child families was more covert. The level of awareness of gender inequality among only children was lower than children who grew up with opposite sex siblings. Therefore, while one-child urban families may have contributed to a seemingly more gender equal environment for girls, the fundamental belief in a gender hierarchy still persisted. In any case, it is not gender *equality*; it is male-based social engineering, where the female is disadvantaged. But the victimization through gender manipulation did not end when the daughter became an adult, as will be clear in the next section.

3.3.3 "Leftover women": the pressure to marry in the 21st Century

Dahong (female, 27) had just finished her 5-year university education in France and England; she was funded by her parents. She started her first job as a market analyst in London. She wanted to start her own business but her father was strongly against it, because a business woman was unconventional, and as such it would be difficult to find a spouse:

"He said that I should get married as soon as possible. A girl should not run a company. Even if you succeeded in having a business and have a high income, your status in the marriage market would be lower than a girl working as a clerk in a bank. Working in a bank sounds decent, but a businesswoman sounds [Pause]. My Dad doesn't like girls to be too strong. He said if I really want to start a company, I may do it after I get married, not before."

There is a contradiction in the outlook of Dahong's father. On the one hand, he supported his daughter's overseas education to Master's degree level; on the other hand, he "doesn't like girls to be too strong"; he valued his daughter's potential marriage prospect more than her career development. The clash between career development and marriage prospects in parental expectation placed great pressure on the younger generation. Yizi (female, advertising manager) was 31 and was regarded as "old" in the marriage market. She said her relatives frequently enquired and gossiped about her unmarried status; which was one of the reasons she did not want to return to China.

Both Dahong and Yizi were subject to the discrimination of the so-called "leftover women crisis" in China. The term "leftover women" referred to single women who were over the age of 27 and unmarried. As the education period became longer and the age of marrying was delayed, there was a rising number of highly educated professional women who found themselves single in their late twenties and thirties. However, this kind of social development has been seen pejoratively; women who

were financially independent and did not conform to the traditional role of a wife and a mother were subject to criticism.

The female respondents who were single in the research showed irritation, resentment or even fear with regard to the "time-pressing" nature of the marriage pressure imposed on them. Dahong and Yizi were "leftover women" by Chinese standards; while the younger respondent, Jin (23, Master's student) was already concerned that concentrating on her career in the next few years would pose a problem on her chance to get married. Although the pressure for women to marry is widespread among women who live in China, the pressure is also found to be pervasive among the female demographic who moved outside of China. Geographical distance seemed to have failed to fully disengage these females from the marriage system in the Chinese society.

The notion of "leftover women" is believed to have been initiated by the Chinese state. In 2007, the state media started a campaign to stigmatise educated unmarried women. Using the Women's Federation Web site, the state published articles to promote the patriarchal value system, which blamed the female for not marrying (Fincher, 2012). The Chinese Ministry of Education attributed the unmarried status of these women to their own "overly high expectations for marriage partners" (To, 2013). The intention behind the state's attitude was said to encourage educated women to have children and improve the "overall quality of the population" (Magistad, 2013).

Although it is not clear to what extent the state initiated the "leftover women" phenomenon, the fact that the notion was widespread, widely accepted and continued to victimise a significant number of accomplished women, shows the deeply-rooted gender inequality in Chinese society, including that among the educated middle class cohort in this research. Middle class daughters' imposed marriage expectation reveals a contradiction in Chinese families: these daughters had been brought up with high expectations for their career and education achievement where "boy-like qualities"

were desired. However, they were also expected to be submissive, and conform to the traditional inferior female role when it came to marriage.

3.4 Summary

The second half of the 20th Century witnessed dramatic socioeconomic changes in China, which shaped the lives of two generations: the one-child generation and their parents. The middle class one-child families found themselves in the middle of sharply competing pressures and norms in a changing society: the traditional and the "modern"; the authoritarian system and the rise of individualism; state-controlled security and the opening of the market economy. As a result, well-educated parents tended to shift away from the traditional parenting style; only children who grew up in the society in transition also had an up-bringing which combined experiences including the pressure to study, opportunities to access education resources, and growing attitudes towards greater gender awareness and equality.

The complex history of China's recent political changes meant that Chinese middle class families have emerged from distinctly variable backgrounds. What this class shares, however, is the objective for their children: to "have a good life". The new middle class lacks the traditional expectations to do with material support from their child(ren); they expect to continue to support their offspring. The notion of the "good life" may vary from family to family; the research revealed gendered differences in what that meant. Certainly the "good life" centrally incorporates the transition from a culture where the parents were the priority to the current convention of the child being the major focus of familial investment.

Finally, Hong's (1987) reference to the one-child policy being the means for women "to achieve the so-far unrealized goal of social equality" turned out to be only partially true. The public discourse of the desire for equal status for men and women is supported by the statistics of the rising socioeconomic profile of urban females. However, at the

domestic and individual level, attitudes towards gender are more diverse and difficult to measure. Evidence of gender inequality in 21st Century China revealed something altogether more sinister: female children disadvantaged in the male-centred up-bringing process at one end of the spectrum, and adult women committing suicide at the other end of the spectrum.

Chapter 4. One-child migrants in the UK: the decision-making process, mobility trajectory and parental involvement

Growing up in a modernising China, the one-child generation has experienced a rising living standard and educational opportunities that were not available to their parents' generation in pre-reform China. The domestic change in China was accompanied by changes in the international sphere as well as China's relationship with the rest of the world. The opening of China's border not only facilitated domestic economic growth but also transformed Chinese people's perception and participation in international migration within three decades.

The sharp increase in the number of Chinese international students since 2000 coincided with the coming of age of the one-child generation. The value of international students has been highlighted by sending and receiving countries, but the outcome of their education has received limited (yet increasing) attention. How are the post-study-migration decisions made? What are the decision-making implications on migrant's transnational mobility? These questions require a temporal context and a familial perspective.

The cohort is made up of members who are at different stages of their lives with different goals, obligations and priorities. Such diversity provides a unique opportunity for the study to capture whether, and how, the impact of parents may shift as the life of the migrant progresses over time.

The chapter starts with a broad contextual setting that includes the development of migration from China to the UK, pre and post-1978 reform, before generating a migration mobility framework (which the rest of the analysis will be based on). Finally, the discussion will focus on one-child migrants' personal aspirations and parental involvement in the migration decision-making process in order to reveal the details of the changing intergenerational give and take, and negotiations, between these

migrants and their parents.

4.1 The recent development of migration from China to the UK

4.1.1 From elite to common: legal migration out of the People's Republic of China (PRC)

The second half of the 20th Century and the first decade of the 21st Century witnessed two extreme features of Chinese migration: from the closed border under Mao's government, to China being the leading overseas student-sending country. Family reunion migration, labour migration and illegal migration also contributed to the growing migration wave after 1978. However, it was the study-abroad migration demographic that marked the most significant increase (see Figure 4). The transition of China's position in international migration started largely as a top-down process which involved changes in state policy and the establishment of a study abroad market. The post-reform migration pattern can be seen in two periods: the emergence and steady increase from 1978, and the rapid take-off at the turn of the century.

The economic reforms and the "open-door" policy not only changed social stratification in China (see Chapter 3), but, arguably, shifted attitudes and the perception of Chinese society towards the "West". In Mao's China, the public discourse of the West was associated with negative "capitalist values" which opposed the state's communist ideology (Friedman, 1994, King, 1978). During the last two decades before the "open-door" policy, people in mainland China were not allowed to go abroad, nor were overseas Chinese allowed to re-migrate to China. Individuals who wanted to leave China remained silent for the fear of being regarded as anti the Chinese socialist system (Liu, 2006:138).

Legal migration from mainland China developed after 1978. However, emigration was strictly monitored by the state. Apart from those seeking family reunification (also

called "settler migrants" by Skeldon [1996]), a significant proportion of the early emigrants were state-sponsored students who were sent to the US and Europe following Deng Xiaoping's speech in 1978: "We are going to send thousands or tens of thousands of students to receive overseas education" (Qian, 2009). Compared to the state-sponsored students, self-funded overseas education during the late '70s and '80s was extremely limited to the elites who had the financial resources and overseas connections. In 1978, only 8 self-funded students applied to study abroad. The number increased to over a thousand a year in the early 1980s (Dai, 2008). At the practical level, two features slowed down the progress of migration: the complex bureaucratic process involved to obtain a passport and the undeveloped transport system (Skeldon, 1996).

In 1993, the state's principle of "supporting pursuing studies abroad, encouraging returning to the homeland and free to come and go" was established, which subsequently led to the start of the self-funded study-abroad demographic (Hong and Lou, 2011:108). Among students who went abroad annually, the percentage of private-sponsored students rose from 65% in 1996 to 90% in 2001 (Li, 2010:283). In 1998, the state legalized the operation of study-abroad agencies (Dai, 2008); these agencies have played a crucial role in the expansion and commercialisation of the study-abroad market. With more information, service and facilities available (mainly provided by study-abroad agencies), study abroad was no longer a privilege limited to an elite of well-connected and well-informed individuals. The Chinese public rapidly became familiar with the notion of overseas study, and newly emergent middle class families started to join this movement and to send their children abroad. The turn of the century marked a significant increase in international students (see Figure 4); it was also the time when the children born after the 1979 one-child policy turned into their 20s.
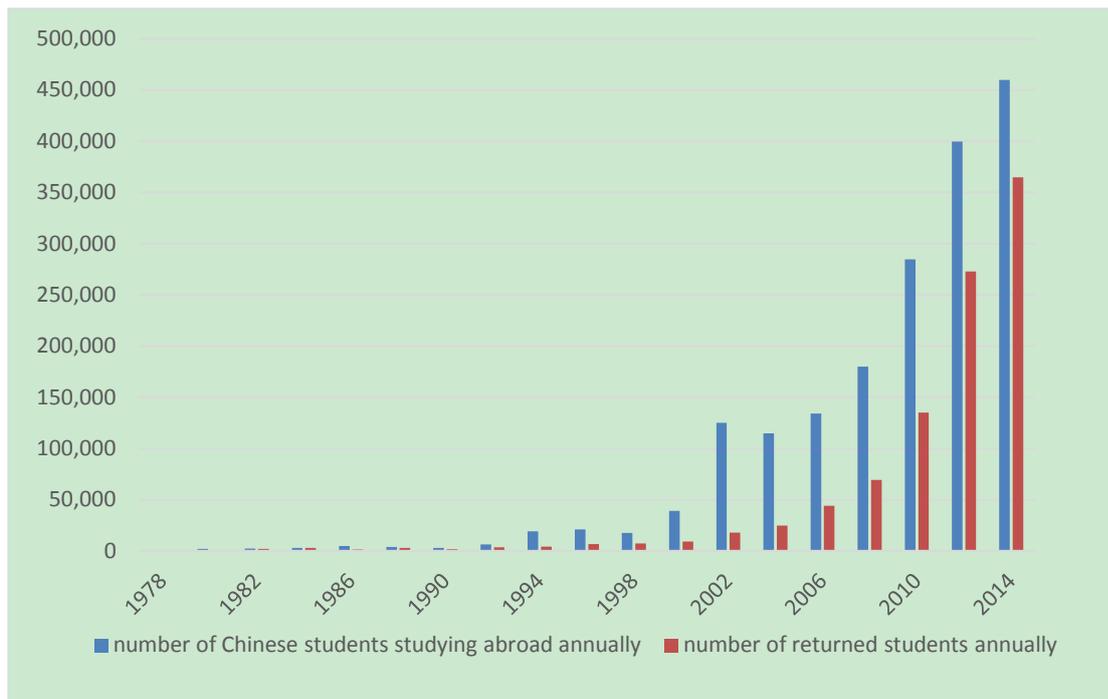
Figure 4: Number of study-abroad population and return population

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of PRC, 2015

The majority of overseas Chinese students have been postgraduate students. The percentage of students who went overseas for postgraduate degrees has remained higher than 25% of all Chinese postgraduate students for most years since 1994 (Li, 2010). Therefore, it was not uncommon for students who completed an undergraduate degree in China to continue into postgraduate education overseas. Meanwhile, fewer people in the later wave worked before they left China. In addition to the rapid increase, students who went abroad for undergraduate[19] and secondary school education increased rapidly (Wang, 2013, Dai, 2008). The average age of overseas Chinese students has become younger.

Accompanying the large volume of migration from China is the increasing number of returnees (see Figure 4). In 1978, as a returnee who studied in Paris in the 1920s,

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[19] A higher number of undergraduate students came under the Transnational Education (TNE) scheme (cooperation between operating or management of higher education institutions in China and foreign countries [Hong, 2003]). According to a Universities UK briefing in 2013, British universities were behind 25% of all sino-foreign joint degree programmes, which makes the UK the largest provider of joint degrees in China (Universities UK, 2013).

Deng Xiaoping hoped state-sponsored students would return after their education and contribute to the modernization of China (Xinhua News, 2004). However, from the period 1979-1990s, the approximate return rate was only 30%, and only one in five of the students who went to the US returned to China (Skeldon, 1996). This situation started to change from the late 1990s (see Figure 4). The return rate remained lower than half until shortly before 2010. The increased return rate was largely the result of tightened migration policy, limited job vacancies after the 2008 financial crisis in the host country, and the expanding economic opportunities in China.

The recognition of an international degree by the state, and the policies carried out to attract returnees added political and social value to the attainment of a Western university degree, which in turn helped returnees to transform their cultural capital to economic capital (Biao and Shen, 2009). However, in reality, the returnees' career prospects in China showed a mixed profile: on the one hand, returnees were associated with privileged positions in both the private and public sectors; the state provided financial rewards to attract "outstanding students" and supported their entrepreneurship in China (Biao and Shen, 2009); US and European returnees also made up 15% of the fifth generation of Chinese leaders (Liu, 2011).

On the other hand, as more overseas degree holders entered the job market, the advantage of an overseas degree perceived by employers lessened. Without any work experience in China or overseas, the graduate returnees' job-search process was as difficult as it was for their locally-graduated counterparts. However, returnees who were waiting for a job were commonly labelled by the public as "haidai" (seaweed); it is a negative reference that compared the returnees to seaweed washed ashore. Public media in China and abroad have been highlighting the "over optimistic" career expectations among returnees since the early 2000s (China Central Television Channel, 2014, Fischer, 2014, Melik, 2012, Xinhua News, 2007, 2003).

In spite of the fact that the average starting salary for returnees remained significantly

higher than home-educated graduates (Xu et al, 2014, Zweig and Han 2011), the large gap between study-abroad costs and the starting salary for returnees casts doubt on the value of overseas education. In 2013, for example, the annual study abroad cost in the UK was around £20,000, while the average starting salary of Chinese returnees was £9,675 in 2011 (Universities UK, 2014, Archer and Cheng, 2012). From a pragmatic investment-return point of view, studying abroad became a more risky investment for families in China.

As study abroad changed from an elite to a common phenomenon, the education quality, overseas experience, and the prospect for Chinese job applicants with an overseas degree, all added to the increasingly complex nature of formal education success and employment. Students in the host country were also subject to a cluster of impacts. The following section will briefly describe the sociopolitical situation of recent Chinese arrivals in the UK.

4.1.2 Study, work and settlement in the UK

The migration from China to the UK sharply increased between the 2001 Census and the 2011 Census (see Figure 5). In 2012, 40,000 Chinese migrants arrived in the UK, and China ranked the top of migrant-sending countries to the UK for the first time (ONS, 2013b). The arrival of the new Chinese migrants from mainland China has changed the Hong Kong (Cantonese) dominating profile of the UK Chinese. The percentage of people from mainland China among the ethnic Chinese population in the UK rose from 13% in 1991 (Cheng, 1996) to 40% in 2011 (ONS, 2012b).
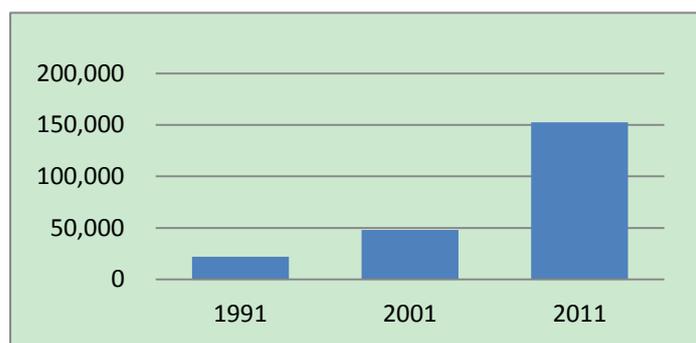
Figure 5: China-born residents in the UK (Census)

Source: ONS, 2013a

The demographic profile of the new arrivals has been consistently found to be younger (Biao and Shen, 2009). The large number of recent young arrivals reflected the high proportion of students: students aged 16 and over made up 45% of the Chinese who arrived between 2001 and 2011 (ONS, 2013a) and the number has been increasing (see Figure 6). Following the US, the UK is the second most popular destination for Chinese students, particularly for postgraduate studies (Ernst and Young, 2014, China Daily, 2013). By 2012, China provided the largest number of international students in UK universities (Universities UK, 2013, Home Office, 2013a). In 2013, while China was the top UK visa receiving country, 76% were student visas (Home office, 2014, 2013b, 2013c).
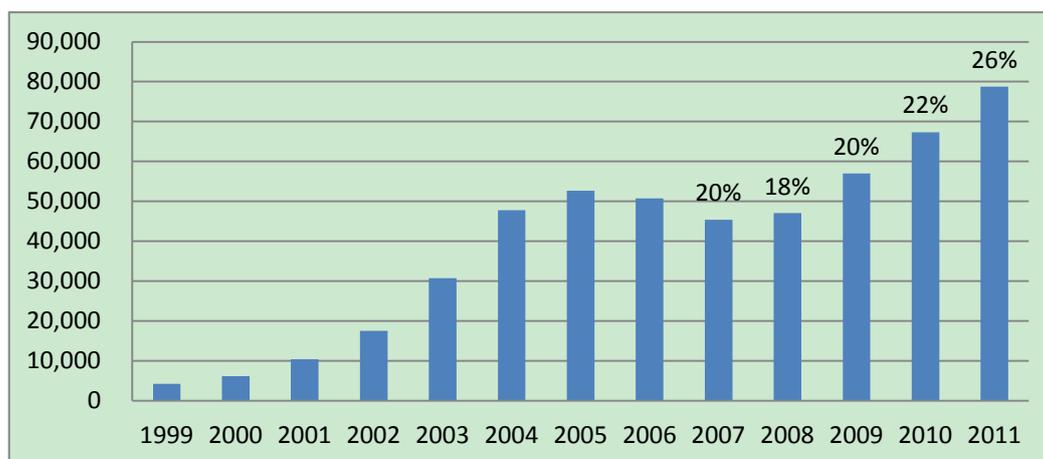
Figure 6: Number of Chinese students in the UK

Source: Universities UK, 2013, Li, 2010. The percentage shows the proportion of

students from China among all non-EU countries after 2007.

In this study, all respondents but one arrived in the UK after 2000. They were all below the age of 30 at the year of arrival (see Figure 7). In fact, only 2 respondents were born before 1979 when the one-child policy was officially enforced. Most of them came to the UK as students (see Table 5). The minority who came to do an undergraduate or pre-undergraduate course eventually continued on to complete a postgraduate degree. Only a third of the respondents worked in China before coming to the UK, ranging from 1 year to 3 years. The general lack of (or short) work experience reflects the young age of the arrivals. The respondent who came by marriage met her husband in China. One of the respondents who came with a work visa was recruited by a Chinese traditional medical doctor scheme based in the UK, and the other one was recruited by a British university as a postdoctoral researcher.
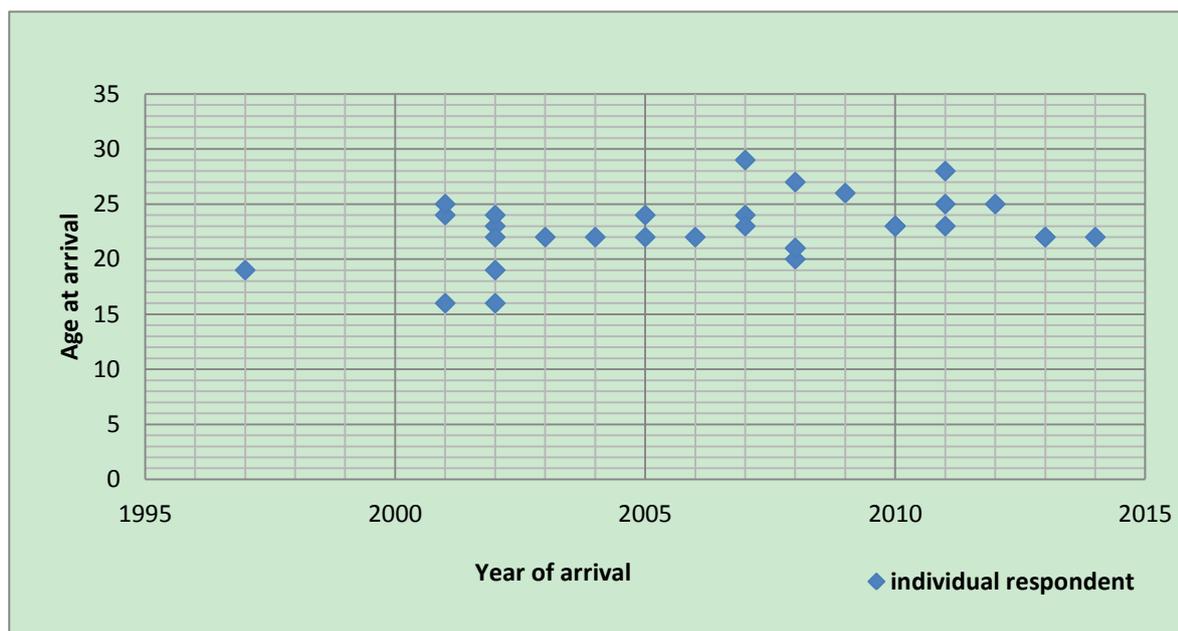
Figure 7: Year and age of respondents when first arrived in the UK

Table 5: The route by which respondents entered the UK

student			work	marriage
postgraduate	undergraduate	A level	2	1
18	9	3		

Therefore, most respondents in the sample had no direct connections in the UK before they left China. This feature distinguishes the current wave of Chinese migrants from the previous wave (Hong Kong migrants in the '50s-'60s) who tended to be part of a migration network based on relatives and clans (Watson, 1977). The lack of social/family connections in the host country adds to the difficulty of the extension of the new migrants' initial temporary visas, especially among most new postgraduate students whose visa lasted for only a year because of the one-year length of their Master's course. Apart from the minority who married a British citizen, for the overseas students who want to remain in the UK after their study, the most common way was to find a job which enabled the individual to switch to a work visa.

From 1995 to 2012, the work permit granted to the Chinese each year has increased from 657 to 4873 (ONS, 2006, Home Office, 2013). Data from the 2007 and 2009 Chinese graduates survey showed that 20% of the students who graduated in 2007 and 2009 remained in the UK for work (Archer and Cheng, 2011:22). However, the level of difficulty for students switching to full-time employment in the UK has increased since 2007. Apart from the increasing competition in the British job market after the 2008 financial crisis, state policy has made the UK unwelcoming to non-EU job-seekers. Restrictions on work visas were introduced including the requirements of the minimum salary, the lack of freedom in job choices, and the increasing complex application procedure (Home Office, 2015). A change of migration policy is usually the most effective way to influence migrants' decision to remain or return in the short term. With the cancellation of post-study work visa (PSW) in 2012, the number of students who obtained a work visa after study immediately dropped by 87% (Universities UK, 2014).

The Home Office granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR) to those who wanted to settle. The grant is based on different criteria, and the most common base is the length of residence, which requires applicants to have lived in the UK for at least 10

years (study and/or work) or worked and paid a required amount of tax for at least 5 years (Home Office, 2015). After being an ILR holder for a year, individuals will be allowed to apply for British citizenship (Home Office, 2015). Based on this route, a Chinese person who came to the UK as a degree student will need to work for at least 5 years before being granted an ILR.
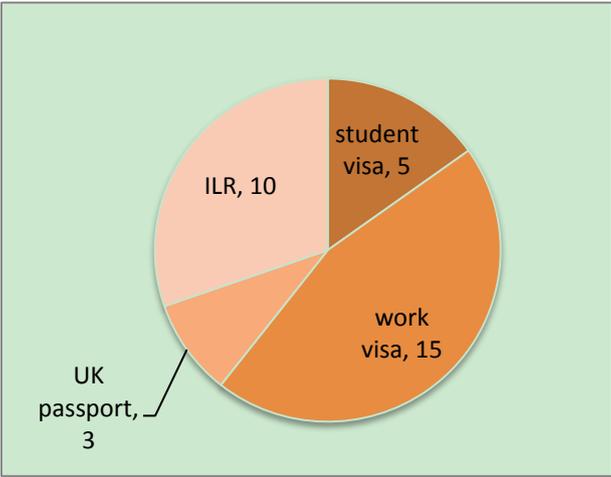
Figure 8: Respondents' legal status

The legal status of respondents in this study is shown in Figure 8. The majority of the sample are temporary residency permit holders (student-visa and work-visa). This group of migrants is vulnerable to any changes in government policy. Under the current visa system, work visa holders are not allowed to work for a different employer unless the new employer is qualified to sponsor foreigners and is willing to go through the complex process to apply for a work permit for the migrant. This requirement has limited the job choice and also made current students' job search difficult. However, the work restriction does not apply to ILR holders. Furthermore, ILR holders are entitled to the welfare benefit in the UK, and their children are also entitled to enter the British education system.

Therefore, ILR means long-term residency security for migrants. It is viewed as the "Green card" for the UK. Although most unsettled respondents in the study desired an ILR, not many of them wanted to become a British citizen. The Chinese state does not

recognize dual nationality: becoming a British citizen means giving up Chinese citizenship. As a result, the majority of ILR holders (9 out of 10) in the study did not apply for British citizenship in spite of the fact that all these 9 respondents were qualified to do so.

As the migration policy in the host country becomes stricter, it is not surprising that an increasing rate of recent arrivals returned to China after studying, hence the rising return rate (see Figure 6 in Section 4.1.2). However, a significant number of the former-international students remained. The "student switchers" (Robertson, 2011) make up the majority of the sample. As the sample was *not* selected with a preference for former students, the high proportion of "student switchers" suggests that the post-study migrants are likely to represent the majority of the new Chinese migrants living in the UK at the time of this study.

The sudden rise of international student mobility is a relatively new yet widespread phenomenon. The cross-border student population increased by 70% between 2000 and 2008 (Robertson, 2011) which intensified the global talent circulation associated with brain gain and brain drain for different regions. The career outlook and post-study settlement of this highly qualified demographic thus became crucial for the host country and sending country. However, the understanding of the decision-making process of this highly mobile, highly qualified group of migrants, including the decision to study abroad, to remain in the host country, or to return/re-migrate, is relatively limited. The next section explores the key factors involved in the one-child Chinese migrants' transition from international students to long-term residents in a transnational context.

4.2 From international students to working residents: changing mobility and personal aspirations

International students have been treated ambiguously with regard to their designation

as *migrants*. If the word *migrant* "broadly covers everyone who leaves home without intending to return" (Wang, 2007:167), then around half of the sample in this study could not be classified as "migrant": the respondents left China with different initial plans that ranged from a firm intention to return to China after study (12 out of 33), to a strong commitment to remain overseas (1 out of 33). Tao (female, 27, social media manager) came to Kent as a postgraduate student in 2010 and was determined to remain permanently. She married an English fellow student and has lived in the area since then. This is the only example of a *planned* settlement found in the research. A large number of the cases were between the two ends of this spectrum, with a significant proportion who either did not have a clear preference to return or to remain in the UK (15 out of 33) or who wanted to have some work experience before returning (5 out of 33).

The majority of the respondents who were working residents at the point of interview had experienced at least one major change in their travel plans. This kind of changing nature of post-study plans shows a flexible continuity from student to "migranthood" (Wang, 2007: 168) which distinguished student-turned-migrants from traditional migrants. The blurring of boundaries in migrant types and decision-making stages requires a framework that captures an individual's evolving mobility trajectory as it unfolds with changing circumstances at different levels; such takes place not only in a relatively more changeable period of a person's life (from education completion to career/family establishment), but is also embedded in a transnational context.

4.2.1 The mobility trajectory and associated factors of student-turned-migrant over time and space

Studying abroad is not a decision made entirely by an individual as a one-off choice. It is "an on-going interaction between micro-level and macro-level factors and considerations" (Mosneaga and Winther, 2013:183). This description puts migration decision making in both a relational and a historical perspective. The relational

prospective includes the factors in an individual's family, affiliated groups and host/home countries which directly or indirectly affects the individual's decision making. The historical perspective provides an understanding about how migration decision making proceeds or follows other events (Carlson, 2013); it can be the outcome of previous mobility experiences, it can also be the factor that influences an individual's mobility later in life.

The complex relationships of migration decision factors and their impact on the migrant mobility trajectory of the migrant are presented in the framework (Figure 9, below). This framework was generated based on a diagram in Ana Mosneaga and Lars Winther's study (2013) about international students' career trajectory in Denmark. The present author borrowed the basic structure of their diagram but modified the content to reflect the Chinese cohort. For example, *migration policy* was added for its application exclusively on non-EU students; *parental factors* was highlighted as the majority of the Chinese students were funded by parents, hence the significance of parents in decision making. Furthermore, the circulation of "*disposition to go abroad→ destination choice → extension of stay → disposition to return*" was added to indicate the on-going nature of decision making. The rest of the section will explain the framework in terms of its relational and historical structure; the focus will then turn to elaborating on the crucial factors that directly impact on the migrants' decision-making process.
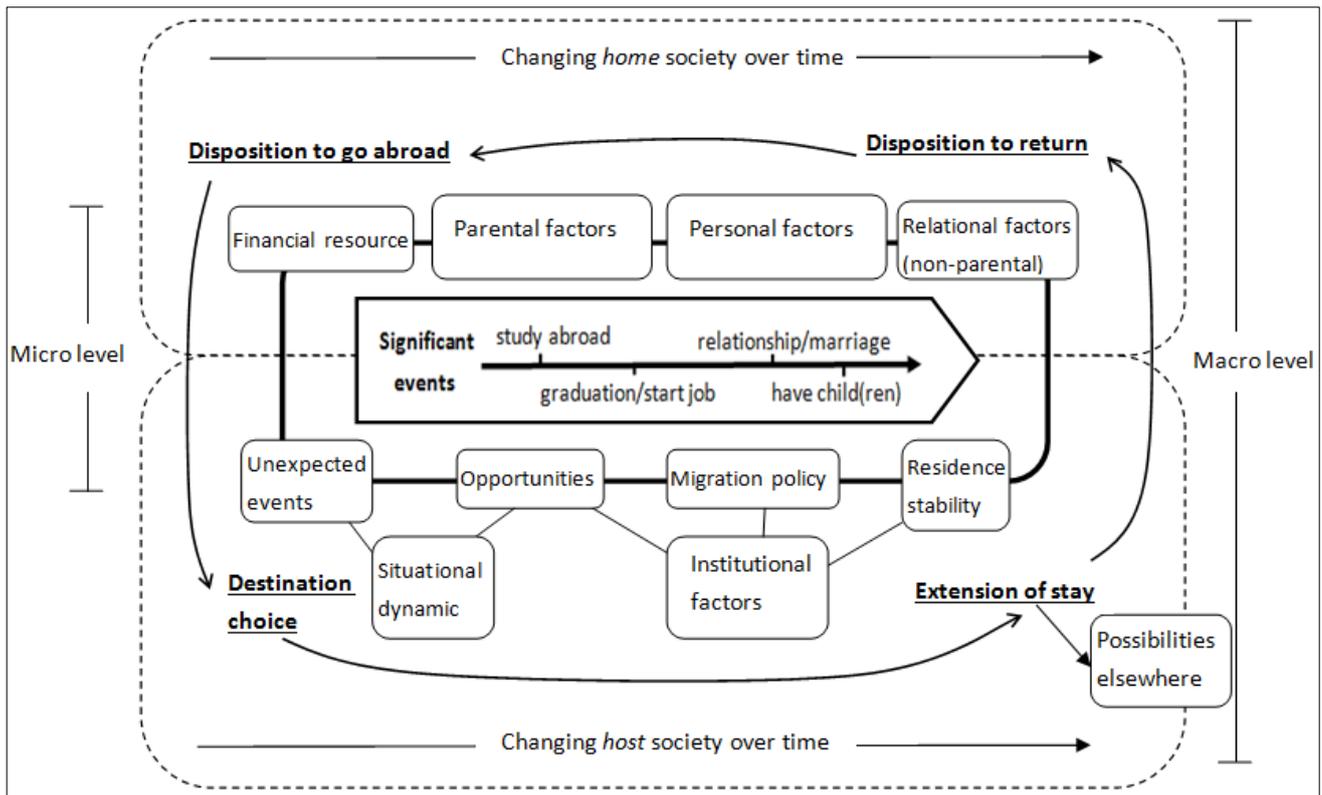
Figure 9: Life mobility trajectory in micro-level and macro-level context

[Adapted from Mosneaga and Winther's study (2013)]

a. The structure of the framework

The boundaries of the micro-level and macro-level factors are blurred, they have been referred to as "individual-related factors" and "setting-related factors"; the latter involves "impetuses, events, persons or contexts that make mobility a workable possibility" (Guth, 2007:1). Furthermore, based on the forms of an individual's relationship with other actors involved, the factors were also divided as "relational embeddedness" (dyadic [pairwise] relations) and "structural embeddedness" (structure of the overall network of relations) (Carlson, 2013, Granovetter, 1992:33). These descriptions of the interactive relationships between individuals and their surrounding social elements reflect Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" and "social embeddedness".

Students are complex subjects whose life objectives go beyond higher education: they are simultaneously family members, friends, citizens of a particular country (King and Raghuram, 2013), or in some cases (former) employees of an institution. Because of

the multiple identities of a (potential) migrant, their decisions are likely to be influenced by the local economic/social/cultural environment through the social groups these individuals are affiliated to: family, peer group or institutions. These social groups are also subject to the changes in the socioeconomic situation in the home country, host/destination country, and the global environment. The previous section (see 4.1) demonstrated how domestic and international changes initiated and facilitated the migration/study abroad wave from China.

The historical development in Figure 9 introduces, in a chronological order, the significant life events which tend to be points of decision, and factors related to them. When talking about their past decision making and future plans, respondents' narratives usually evolve along significant life events: *study abroad, graduation/start job, relationship/marriage and have child(ren)*. The factors that operate at a micro-level or a macro-level are all, to some extent, involved in influencing the decisions. However, for different events the dominating factor may be different. For example, the parental factor may play a more important role in the decision to *study abroad*, but the institutional factors (in this case, job opportunities) may play a greater role in the decision to *start a job* in the UK. By looking at the framework in a timeline, the factors related to the individuals are no longer fixed in a static condition. Rather, they work dynamically in different conditions, with different levels of importance, at different life stages of the individual.

The importance of time in understanding the migration trajectory was also highlighted in Johanna Waters' longitudinal research about middle class Hong Kong and Taiwan women in Canada (2011). Slightly different from this study, Waters' participants entered her research in 1999 as mothers with young children who migrated to Canada as "astronaut wives" while their husbands worked in the home country. Eight years later, these women's lives and outlooks changed with the growth of their children, the reunion with their husbands and their own changing sense of belonging to Canada and Hong Kong/Taiwan. Important life stages such as "children becoming 18" and their own "retirement" were significant marks in their future re-migration and settlement

plans. Waters' research not only suggested that "transnational migration is cyclical", but also indicated that the impact of the life stages of close family members can also shape a migrant's decision. In the case of Waters' research, her participants were largely influenced by their children's and husbands' needs. This research, with a younger cohort, explores the (potential) impact of parents as well as spouse and offspring on the migrant's decision-making process over time.

Similar to life events, which were most obvious to the respondents, the migrants' dispositions to go abroad, to remain, or to return can also be better captured by looking through a developmental perspective. In the case of migrants arriving as students, their decision-making outcome usually started with the *disposition to go abroad* and *destination choice*. Their mobility trajectory continued with the *extension of stay* at the point of graduation, which may develop into permanent settlement in the host country or the decision to re-migrate. The latter involves the *disposition to return* to the home country or going to another country. However, the trajectory does not end with return migration; individuals may decide to migrate again, and thus continue the cycle.

The stages of decision making may overlap or take place simultaneously. For example, at the point of going abroad, some respondents planned to work for a few years after study in the UK before returning to China. Their initial plan may be shortened because of the lack of job opportunity or may be extended indefinitely because of meeting a partner and subsequently establishing a family in the UK. These variations of post-study migration phenomena (including return migration and remigration) were found among the 30 respondents (who came as students) in this study. The highly diverse migration decision-making process found in a relatively small sample showed the heterogeneous profile of transnational mobility among these Chinese migrants.

b. Important external factors in decision making

Why did the diversity in migration patterns occur? To what extent is migration decision

making controlled (or not) by human agents? Before focusing on human factors (see 4.2.2 and 4.3), the rest of the section will explain crucial non-human factors (which are often overlooked by migration theorists), and how they impact on migrants' decision making during their migration process.

Respondents expressed different levels of passivity in their past migration decisions and future plans. The remarks that particular aspects of life were "uncertain" and one could plan only "one step at a time" were commonly found among new student arrivals and well-established migrants. The respondents' remarks referred to the ways in which various external factors shaped the migration process. If the *decision-making agents* are the key *motivators* for migration, then actions at crucial steps of migration cannot be completed without the non-human-agent factors, specifically, *institutional factors* and *situational dynamics*; such could be the facilitator or obstacle during the process that translates migration motivation into practice, thus leading to the variations of migration patterns.

Institutional factors influence migration decision making through universities which provide courses, study-abroad agents who help with the course and visa applications, the host country's migration policies, as well as the employment opportunities offered by the host country companies. Institutional factors are particularly influential in destination choice. In this study, most respondents either initially wanted to go to the US or did not have a preferred destination country. More than half of the applicants chose to study in the UK mainly because both the course application and visa application were easier[20]. Study-abroad agencies were the most frequently mentioned information source for the respondents: more than a third of the respondents (12 out of 33) relied heavily on study abroad agents, including choosing the course and the university.

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[20] Respondents compared course and visa application to the UK with the US. The US was generally the preferred destination. But the postgraduate course application to a US university is more complex, and the refusal rate of visa application made to the US is also higher.

Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents (4 out of 9) who arrived as undergraduate students came as part of a TNE programme[21]. Spending the final one or two years of the undergraduate course in a British university was part of TNE programmes. Two of the TNE students joined the programme *because* of the period they could spend abroad, while the other two were initially indifferent about the overseas study period; but they *became* motivated to continue their postgraduate study in the UK *because* of the period of time they spent in the UK as undergraduate TNE students. Therefore, the causal relationship between taking part in a TNE programme and the aspiration to study abroad can work in both directions.

The above evidence suggests the importance of institutional factors in sustaining migration flow, redirecting the migration path or even generating migration aspirations. However, as the migration journey unfolds and migrants' needs change, institutional factors can become barriers to migration. Upon the completion of study the top reason for respondents to remain in the UK was the being offered a job, and that is, for the migrants in this study, also the only legal way to remain in the UK, apart from marriage. Likewise, limited job prospects was a major reason for the graduates to return[22]. Meanwhile, the possibility of finding a job was closely associated with the British migration policy, which directly effected the level of residence stability (i.e. type of residence permit) (see 4.1.2).

In contrast to the relative stability of institutional factors in long-term migration planning, the *situational dynamic* represents the unexpected, uncertain elements in decision making. Borrowed from Mosneaga and Winther (2013), this term refers to the specific timing of specific opportunities and the unexpected events. For example, Wenbin (male, 36) wanted to study in the US, but the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001 resulted in the immediate tightening of the US visa policy, which led to his doubting the level of

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[21] A report in 2014 indicated that approximately 60% of the Chinese undergraduate students in the UK came under a TNE scheme (Ernst and Young, 2014).

[22] 4 out of the 5 students in the sample attempted to find a job in the UK but failed, they all returned to China shortly after the interviews were conducted. The only one remained was the PhD student who was later offered an academic job in his university.

social stability in the US. At that time Wenbin met a professor from a university in London in a study abroad fair in China. After a conversation with the professor Wenbin decided to apply for that university in London instead.

These kinds of unexpected situational phenomena were usually ignored in the earlier theories of migration decision making. Moreover, other than shaping the destination choice, situational dynamics can sometimes be the crucial factor which triggers or terminates a migration plan. The following example shows a change of study plan over night triggered by a dinner conversation: Dahong (female, 27) was about to start her undergraduate course in fashion design in China when she met her relatives from France who came to China for their summer holiday:

> *"They [relatives] said I should go to study in France, because it has the best fashion design courses. We were having a family dinner, everyone was there. So my parents decided, well, actually there was no need for discussion. That same night, [parents] asked if I wanted to go. Because we have relatives in France, I can live with them, there is nothing to worry about. So the next day we started the process with a study-abroad agency."*

This ad-hoc decision was made in the context that Dahong's family lived in a city where going abroad was popular, which to some extent helped to build a sense of security about the notion of studying abroad. The availability of study-abroad agencies in her city also facilitated the transformation of the migration decision into migration action within a short time. Furthermore, Dahong's parents also had enough financial resources to fund their daughter's immediate study abroad. Given all of the conditions, the relative's words acted as a trigger that initiated Dahong's migration process. However, in a different situation, circumstances can put a sudden halt to a seemingly smooth migration process.

For example, following her graduation from a reputable British university in 2010, Yizi

(female, 31) started a highly paid job in London and was soon promoted. In the third year of her job, Yizi's mother was diagnosed with cancer. She immediately went back to China to be with her mother and give moral support to her family: "I packed up everything of mine in London. I said to my friend 'if anything happens to my Mum, post my stuff to me, I'll not return to England'. That's what I decided to do at that time." Fortunately Yizi's mother survived the cancer and Yizi's overseas life resumed.

It can be argued that Yizi's limited attachment (thus flexibility) to the UK (single, temporary residency permit holder, not a property owner) made her commitment towards China stronger, in particular, to her parents, thus allowing the impact of the unexpected condition of her mother to sharply alter her migration plans. There is no parallel situation found among more established respondents (married, long-term residency permit holder, property owner). However, the latter group, especially those who had children, showed a clear commitment towards sustaining their overseas life for their own family in the UK (as opposed to their parents in China). Shifts in commitment towards their own nuclear families among married migrants is discussed more substantially in Chapter 6.

Having analysed how *institutional factors* and *situational dynamics* impact on the migrant's mobility trajectory, it is clear that these factors functioned differently in the migrant's life over time in different social/cultural environments. What was also clear in the cases presented above was the role of personal aspiration and the involvement of parents in the decision-making process at different stages. The following sections will discuss "human complexity" (Mosneaga and Winther, 2013:183) in the migrants' mobility trajectory by focusing on personal aspirations (see 4.2.2) and the role of family in shaping migration (see 4.3).

4.2.2 Changing notions of success: career development and lifestyle choice

As was shown in Chapter 3, the one-child generation grew up in a highly competitive

environment and a significant number of only children were subject to strong parental expectations: to achieve success. However, what constitutes success? Before the completion of university-level education in China, the standard of "success" was clearly marked by the type of school (key school or ordinary school) and the ranking of the university that the students attended. However, the notion of "success" became blurred beyond university life.

Although career advancement, measured typically by job type and income, still plays a significant role in defining "success", a mixture of more abstract features became influential as individuals entered the wider society, thus shaping the idea of "success". Such criteria included a sense of happiness, level of freedom in life, and balance of career and family. These lifestyle choices represent non-economic factors in the respondents' migration decision making. Furthermore, as migrants enter a different society and are exposed to a different culture, how will their personal aspirations change?

a. Life stage and migrants' aspirations

The participants left China at different stages of their education or work (see Table 6): the most common point of departure was at the end of their undergraduate degree course and before starting a job in China, while a few left before or during their undergraduate course; a small number of respondents left even before the completion of high school. At the other end of the time line, a significant number of respondents left China after having worked for a short length of time (1-3 years): among them 8 came to the UK to do a postgraduate course, 2 came to work and 1 came by marriage.

Table 6: Migration point and work experience in China

Level of life stage when arrived in the UK	never worked	had a high profile job*	had an ordinary job**	Total
postgraduate study	10	4	4	18
undergraduate study	8	0	1	9
A level/language course	3	0	0	3
marriage	0	0	1	1
work	1	1	0	2
Total	22	5	6	33

*High profile here means jobs with a high social status or high income, or both (e.g. accountant, lawyer and doctor).

**Ordinary job here means a professional and semi-professional job (e.g. recruitment consultant, insurance salesman or customer service operator) with less prestige, autonomy, and income than 'high profile' jobs.

Given the difference in their age, life stage and experience in Chinese society, it was not surprising to find that the younger group's (undergraduate level students and A level/language course students) study-abroad plan tended to be more parent-led, while the older group showed stronger personal aspirations including career development and lifestyle choice.

However, the career and lifestyle aspirations have different implications for different migrants. As reported by some respondents, an overseas degree meant subsequently a higher income job or a wider choice in the future career path; for others, especially among new graduates, it was often mentioned as an excuse to avoid starting work "so soon". For some, study abroad satisfied a sense of curiosity about the "world outside"; while for others, especially among those who had a job, it meant a "long holiday" to get away from the "pressure in China".

While the majority of respondents reported a mixture of aspirations to study abroad, a significant number of study abroad plans in the sample were triggered, to a large extent, by *not having* a clear goal but having the desire to clarify it. Demin's (male, 33,

lecturer, arrived 11 years previously) account about his study-abroad aspiration represented a commonly found uncertainty especially among new graduates:

"I didn't think too much about it [study abroad] until I was about to graduate. What do I do next? I failed my postgraduate applications in China, I didn't know what kind of job I wanted to do. So I had the idea to have a look outside (of China)."

Distinct from respondents who applied for an overseas course straight after their education in China, were those respondents who had worked for a period of time (from half a year to 3 years) before going abroad; they showed slightly (but not significantly) less uncertainty about their career/life aspirations, and put more emphasis on their dislike of the social environment in China; particularly the complicated nature of many interpersonal relationships, the unfair treatment they experienced, and the potential corruption that may disadvantage their career advancement.

Potential migrants with different life experiences in China may be influenced, at different stages, by both the "pull" factors (such as the value of a British qualification and the attraction of an overseas experience) and the "push" factors (such as the negative elements of Chinese society). Likewise, the influence of different factors on the same person can be felt at different stages of her/his life. The two attempts of study abroad made by Tian (female, 31, lecturer, arrived 9 years previously), first attempt at age 18 and second attempt at age 22, provided a good example of how various factors, at different times, can take priority in shaping an individual's decision making concerning migration.

Tian's uncle went to study in the US in 1991, and she was also influenced by her father's pro-study abroad ideas. Tian was first motivated to study in the US when she was in high school: "I could not see that far back then, I only knew an overseas degree had more value than a Chinese degree". After her US visa was rejected Tian went to a

prestigious university in China for her undergraduate degree and subsequently started working in a state-owned IT company. However, Tian did not enjoy her work or the social environment. After having worked for half year, Tian came to the UK for a postgraduate degree which then extended to a PhD course:

"I felt my life was like a stagnant pool of water…I wasn't happy. Why shouldn't I do something I really enjoy? Life is short. So you can say I was ambitious, or you can say I wanted to make my parents proud, or I wanted to escape from the reality in China. All of the above."

The comparison of two stages in Tian's life clearly demonstrated the changing definitions of "success", from a more "valuable" overseas degree to the question about "happiness" in life. Similar to Tian, four other respondents who had "high profile" jobs in China all expressed different levels of frustration about the negative social aspects in China and the desire to explore new possibilities in life. By giving up a "successful" job in China, these respondents showed the significant impact of non-economic elements in a migrant's decision making.

b. The "devaluation" of a Western degree and its impact on career expectations

In her high school days, as shown in the case above, Tian took for granted that "an overseas degree had more value than a Chinese degree". It was in the '90s and many people in China at that time, and around a decade following it, also believed in the *superiority* of a "Western degree", which was reflected in the remarks among earlier arrivals:

"I had the idea of studying abroad for a Master's degree when I was an undergraduate student. Studying abroad looked good in many people's eyes. Although at that time, it was quite common and didn't prove [your ability], but it was considered prestigious" (Liwen, male, 30, engineer,

arrived 7 years previously).

"My Mum is from Shanghai, Shanghai people generally thought study abroad would gild one with a layer of gold. She was supportive of me studying abroad…I also thought that an overseas degree would help."
(Meilin, female, 37, accountant, arrived 13 years previously).

The higher social status associated with study abroad clearly acted as an important motivator. The high social status was partly to do with the high-status jobs returnees were able to get when overseas degree holders were rare in China. However, as the returned graduates increased in China's job market the advantage of an overseas degree became less obvious. The level of expectations of economic return or career prospects among more recent arrivals has clearly dropped, the emphasis of a lifestyle choice increased, and the mention of high social status was absent:

"I know I won't learn much professional knowledge in this one-year Master's course. I don't have much enthusiasm for study. I'm more interested in the overseas experience" (Delun, male, 22, student, arrived 2 months earlier).

The shift from pursuing "high-status" and "employment advantage" to the emphasis on "overseas experience" was also found in the interview with Yizi's (female, 31, advertising manager, arrived 5 years previously) mother (55, teacher).

Researcher: "Why did you support your daughter's studying abroad?"
Yizi's mother: "I believe the younger generation is globalised. China is not the world. I think she should have a look outside, to experience life [overseas]. I didn't think too much. But it was never about the glory of being an overseas returnee."
Researcher: "Was there anything to do with the possible advantage of a British degree in the Chinese job market?"

Yizi's mother: "No. I didn't think of it that way."

Yizi's mother did not deny the association of an overseas education and better career opportunity and status in China; however, she clearly wanted to distinguish her motivation from these "popular" reasons for overseas education.

In her interviews with university students in Beijing who wanted to study abroad from 2008 to 2010, Anni Kajanus discovered a sense of "ambiguity" that her participants had towards the more concrete benefits (higher income and better career opportunities) overseas education might bring. Instead, studying abroad was viewed as a "cosmopolitan project". Some students and parents saw "cosmopolitan competence" to be derived from the "project" in utilitarian terms, while some cared more about its intrinsic value (Kajanus, 2015:9-10).

In this study, the younger respondents' motives for studying abroad shared similarities with the "cosmopolitan project" that inspired Kajanus's Beijing cohort. As the number of returnees increased, a Western degree alone becomes less competitive in a job market where demand for skills and talent becomes more diverse. It is less straightforward to convert cultural capital acquired overseas into economic capital in China without other forms of "cosmopolitan competence". Therefore, the respondents' emphasis on "overseas experience" is, to some extent, a response to the changing demands in the Chinese job market.

The "devaluation" of Western degrees in China not only changed the career aspiration of the more recent arrivals, it arguably led to the extension of the earlier arrivals' migration plan in the UK. In response to the possible difficulty of looking for a (good) job in China with *only* an overseas degree, respondents commonly expected that a certain length of job experience in the UK would give them a greater advantage over their fellow returnees.

However, as migrants decided to extend their stay in the host country for career opportunities, their adjustment to a British lifestyle was also a key factor in their deliberations. As individuals spent more time in the host society, with increased social connections established, and became more used to the host country's living standard and culture, many respondents found it more and more difficult to leave their "comfort zone" in the UK and go back to China. Thus the original career aspirations (to delay return) were replaced by a lifestyle choice (to further extension; to remain).

This kind of migration plan extension in order to advance education/career benefit was more likely to be found among the respondents who came as undergraduates or A Level students, partly because they were more likely to find a job in the UK than the Master's students who spent only a year here.

Ying (female, 29, account assistant, arrived 13 years previously) arrived in the UK at the age of 16 as an A Level student. Her migration decision pattern can be summarised by the temporary extensions made at each step of her education which eventually led to permanent residency:

> *"I didn't plan long-term, I just thought I'd complete an undergraduate degree here. After that, I started to want a Master's degree. When I finished my Master's degree it [an overseas degree] seemed ordinary in China, so I thought I'd get some work experience before going back. After I started working, I felt the income level is much higher here, so…"*

Compared to the smooth career success and the psychological impact of the financial security of Ying, Ran (male, 27, software engineer, arrived 7 years previously) was aware of the migration extension's double impact on his future mobility. Ran was career-oriented and described himself as "very lucky" in being offered a high quality job in London after completing his Master's degree. In the third year of his job, Ran expressed doubt about his changing states of mind:

"When I just started working, I thought I'd return [to China] after 2 years. In fact the longer I live here, the more I am used to life here, the easier it will be for me to continue staying here, and the more difficult it will be for me to leave. I keep saying to myself that I won't stay here forever, but deep in my heart I am aware of the possibility of remaining where I am… but I know my thoughts may change, just like my circumstances change. The main point is not about what I will have to give up in the UK, it is about what kind of beginning I will have in China. How can you find a job in China that will promise you the same living standard like you have now in the UK?...I don't know. It's hard to tell."

Ran's struggle showed an awareness of the changing nature of living the reality of the migration decision; it also represents the combined impact of the labour market in both the host country and home country on a migrant's career path. The desire to gain work experience in the UK in order to be better equipped in China was common among earlier migrants and more recent migrants. Those who successfully found a job after graduation tended to be the better-qualified and more career-motivated ones.

Unlike the widespread problem of under-employment found among mainland Chinese migrants elsewhere (Teo, 2007, Gao, 2006), the majority of the respondents who remained to work had a professional job and income which matched their qualifications. Although a minority of Master's degree holders had a salary below 25k, none was found doing physical labour or low-skill jobs, as reported in the aforementioned research. This professional profile may be the result of several factors: the prioritizing of the professional experience of the job for individual job-seekers; the limited middle and lower-middle range jobs available to foreigners in the UK; the rising economy in China; and the generally affluent family background of the new Chinese migrants.

The factors to do with work experience at a professional level, and the restrictive access in middle-range jobs for foreigners acted as micro-level and macro-level filters that limited the job choices largely to professional opportunities offered by established companies. The growing Chinese economy contributed to a wider job availability in the Chinese job market than in the UK. In addition to the benefits of parental social networks at home, working in China became a relatively easy (but not necessarily more desirable) alternative than to find a job in the UK. Therefore, the career aspirations of this group of highly-qualified graduates was influenced by personal, parental and institutional factors from a transnational field. Meanwhile, the on-going intra-personal negotiation of lifestyle choices also shaped the individual's response to the pressures or opportunities in the transnational career field.

4.3 The changing parental involvement in migration decision making

This cohort's migration pattern typically involved the child leaving home to go abroad for education, career or marriage while the parents remained in China. At no point in the initial stage of decision making was it mentioned that the parents were to travel with the child, even among the respondents who came as teenage A Level students. This feature distinguishes the cohort from the "astronaut family" commonly found among Chinese and Korean transnational families as mentioned earlier (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, this cohort's household migration decision-making process is also distinct from the middle class Hong Kong family's "transnational family strategy" found by Johanna Waters, where the children's study abroad (in Canada) was the objective of the household migration (Waters, 2006, 2005).

Therefore, at the point of going abroad, the majority of the respondents in the present cohort and their parents saw it as a temporary separation period. The subsequent extension of the migration plan, as shown in the previous section, was the outcome of the interaction between complex human agents and external factors. Parents are not a static element and their minds are subject to changes from their personal situation and

surrounding environment. Therefore, parents' attitudes towards their child's overseas settlement may also change. How do parents respond to their child's migration and to what extent have parents contributed to the shaping of the migrants' mobility trajectory?

The rest of the section will examine the parental involvement at the start of migration (decision to study abroad), the changes of parental involvement over time, and how gender-related issues shaped aspects of the parent-child interaction.

4.3.1 Parental involvement in the decision to go abroad

Parental involvement has been strong in migrants' decision making at the stage of leaving China. The one-child respondents reported significantly greater parental support than non one-child migrants (Table 7). More than half of the one-child respondents had their migration plan initiated by their parents, while parental initiatives about going abroad were absent among the non one-child respondents. Although the sample is small (especially for the non one-child participants), the contrast in the narratives between these two cohorts cannot be overlooked. This contrast is arguably a continuation of the difference in parenting style found in the up-bringing of the respondents (One-child respondents tended to report more overtly involved parenting than non one-child respondents, see Chapter 3).

Table 7: Parental involvement in the study-abroad decision*

Parental involvement in the decision to go abroad	non one-child	one-child
initiated by parents	0	10
ambiguous decision process	0	6
initiated by child and supported by both parents	2	9
initiated by child but opposed by at least one parent	3	2

*1 non one-child's migration was entirely planned by the older sibling, thus it is not included in

the Table.

In the decision about studying abroad, the limited initiative from parents with two children may be the result of financial pressure to fund two children as well as the largely rural origin of non one-child families that limited parents' exposure to knowledge and promotions about study abroad. For example, Feng (female, 34, has a younger brother) came from a rural background and joined a TNE programme. Her father hesitated at the beginning of the programme although the family could afford Feng's study abroad: "my Dad's business was going down at that time, he was concerned about money. He thought if I studied abroad, he must prepare for my brother's study abroad."

The emphasis on equal opportunity for both children also created obstacles for the younger child's study abroad. Gaomei's (female, 27, has an older brother) wish to study abroad was opposed by her older brother: "because he thought he didn't study abroad, why should I?" This kind of strict balancing of resources and emotional commitment towards both children does not apply in one-child families; such circumstances made the parents' initiation of study abroad more straightforward.

However, the two-children parents' relatively passive role in the study abroad decision-making process was not always the result of limited resources for both children. Instead of being a competitor of parental resource to study abroad, (older) siblings could also be a supporter of their younger siblings. Thus a sibling's role could mediate the level and nature of parents' influence over the decision to go abroad. One odd case that was not included in Table 7 is an extreme example of an older sibling performing the role of parent to the younger sibling. Qiaolin (female, 36, who had an older sister) experienced her parent's divorce and the loss of her brother when she was a young girl. Qiaolin's sister, who was 8 years older, became Qiaolin's main carer and supporter since their mother became withdrawn after those events. The sister also initiated and funded Qiaolin's study abroad and looked after Qiaolin's post-study

financial needs (see Chapter 5 for the continuing family support after education). Although such heavy financial support between siblings is rare, it was not unusual to find siblings who had supportive or indifferent attitudes towards the other child's study abroad.

Without siblings' input in the decision-making process concerning the migration, the parent-child interactions were found to be a more intense two-way process (see Table 7). At one end of the spectrum, parents were the dominant decision maker in sending their child to study abroad; at the other end of the spectrum, the parents' opinion conflicted with their child's migration aspirations. (The cases where parents opposed the child's initiative will be analysed in 4.3.3 as they showed a distinctive gendered dimension.) The small number of cases where parents were against their children's going abroad resulted in the compromise made by parents (hence the respondents being in the UK).

As is shown in Table 7, the majority of parents fully supported their child(ren)'s going abroad (in most cases study abroad). Acting as the financial resource provider for their child(ren)'s overseas study[23] was the most direct and common way for parents to support their child. There was a sense of taken-for-grantedness among child and parent respondents that parents should pay for the child's overseas education[24]. Parents who were the migration initiators tended to have a higher income and a higher level of education. Nevertheless, parents who were relatively less affluent also funded their child's study abroad in response to the child's initiative.

In the case of the least affluent one-child family where the parents were both factory workers, the mother recalled the day when her daughter said that she wanted to study for a Master's degree abroad:

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[23]Among the 30 respondents who arrived as students, 27 were funded solely by parents, 1 received a full PhD scholarship, 2 non one-child respondents were funded jointly by their parents and sibling.
[24]This notion changes among PhD course applicants who tended to turn to scholarships rather than parental funding.

"My first response was, how much money? We didn't have much savings. So how much was our flat worth?... I borrowed bit by bit from relatives…I just thought, if she wants to study, then I must support her education … my daughter always knew I'd support her study no matter what."

The possibility of a student loan from banks or other institutions was absent from this cohort's decision making. This was partly to do with the lack of an established student loan system in China and the lack of student loan experience among Chinese families. Moreover, the emphasis on education in the traditional Confucian culture has been to place the family as the prime supporter for its members' education (Bodycott, 2009, Fong, 2004, Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002).

The willingness of parents to invest in their children's education was not exclusive to Chinese parents. Students from other East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea, funded by their parents, also make up a significant part of international students in Western universities. Although education has been perceived as important for an individual's socioeconomic mobility in most countries, the Confucian Asian societies place a particular emphasis on the value of education for the family. Thus, gaining entrance to a high status university is not only the individual's achievement, but it is also a success for the family, and the failure to obtain such value would bring shame to the family. Therefore, the "practical and economic value of education, in conjunction with the value placed on family success, has traditionally provided a strong motivation for families to invest heavily in the education of their children" (Choi and Nieminen, 2013). Following this argument, parents are *expected* to support their children's education as much as they can in order to meet the culturally assigned obligations.

Such cultural factors are likely to contribute to the taken-for-grantedness of the parental financial role found in the study abroad decision among the respondents.

However, it is difficult to show something which is unconsciously influencing people's decision making. Nevertheless, the absence of any parents suggesting that the child look for funds elsewhere, including the small number of parents who were initially opposed to study abroad, shows the continuity of such a culturally defined role among 21st Century Chinese parents.

Apart from financial support, and perhaps less directly, some parents positively contributed to their child's migration motivation by providing a sense of security and freedom. This kind of parental support was well-summarized in Yizi's (female, 31, advertising manager) response to the question about why she was motivated to leave her high-profile job in China and come to the UK:

> *"It's difficult to say…I haven't really thought about it. To some extent, it was because of my family, my parents had given me a great sense of security. That is to say, even if I have failed, I can always go back home, they are always there for me."*

However, it cannot be said that parents and children in these families explicitly negotiated the decision to study abroad; rather, the negotiation process was embedded in daily communication, and sometimes throughout the child's up-bringing. Respondents from these families described an "ambiguous decision process" where they could not recall any specific points of "decision making" (see Table 7). Rather, the disposition to go abroad, as Shan (female, 32, post-doc researcher) said, was "always there" and was almost taken for granted. Therefore, for potential international students like Shan (and her parents), study abroad was a natural outcome in her life. Whereas in families where parents initiated the process, study abroad was more of a life-changing event for the child. Likewise, in families where the child initiated the study-abroad idea, parents were under pressure to respond to the new proposition. As a result, some one-child families were better prepared for the long-distance separation than others.

It is perhaps not surprising to find that respondents from the "better prepared" families were also more likely to have reported an "egalitarian parenting" experience in childhood (see Chapter 3). However, it is worth noting that half of the "authoritarian style" parents were also liberal and supportive towards their child's wish to study abroad.

The tendency towards a more egalitarian parent-child relationship in the study-abroad decision-making process found in this study is in sharp contrast to the findings of a mixed-method (questionnaire and interview) research conducted among mainland Chinese students studying in universities in Hong Kong. Peter Bodycott and Ada Lai's research (2012) showed an overwhelmingly parent-dominated decision-making process and a frustrated student demographic who were pressurized into doing an undergraduate degree in Hong Kong. The authors found that "100% reported and described parents using strategies ranging from gentle cajoling to heavy-handed coercive approaches during family discussions" (Bodycott and Lai, 2012:262). The parent-child relationship in their research was regarded as following "Confucian cultural roles":

> On the one hand, we see the adolescent child, often in contradiction to his or her own desires, adhering to the cultural values, expectations, and choices of his or her parents. On the other hand, we see how parents use their culturally derived status and power to manipulate decisions in order to achieve what they believe is the very best education for their child and in so doing ensure their own and their family's longer-term status and security.

However, in this study, only 2 respondents reported a similar hierarchy, as quoted above, where their parents entirely decided and planned the study-abroad decision following the child's high school completion. Furthermore, 3 respondents who came to the UK to do a postgraduate degree course reported that they had rejected their

parents' advice to do an undergraduate degree course overseas as they felt they were not ready to go abroad back then. Finally, among the 2 cases where parents opposed their only children's wish to study abroad, the respondents emphasized their "only children" status as the reason why parents "couldn't do anything about it". This sense of entitlement and privilege among only children, which was also found in their up-bringing (see Chapter 3), was absent from the reportedly submissive profile of young Chinese students observed by Bodycott and Lai.

What motivated parents to encourage their child to go abroad? The findings revealed reasons beyond the scope of a calculated return on an overseas education. A common feature found among the 6 parents respondents who initiated or actively supported their child's study abroad, was the belief that "Western countries" were better and that their child's life experiences could be broadened by studying and living overseas. However, what did the parents mean by "better"? The parental response showed a variable focus, and levels of understanding about the "West":

"I went to Canada for a training course the year my daughter entered university in China, so I truly felt the world outside was different… I always had doubts about the higher education system in China. What I saw in Canada confirmed my doubts… So I wanted my daughter to have a look outside, too" (Yizi's mother, 55, teacher).

"I have a good friend who went to the US. Every time she visited China, she'd say how good life in the US was, and that we should send our son to the US. I saw her two sons who were brought up in the US, they seemed like decent, well-behaved boys. So I thought she was right, if I can afford my son's education overseas, why not?" (Ran's mother, 51, businesswoman.)

"I've never been abroad, but I don't randomly support my son's decision. If he wants to go abroad, it has to be a country much better than China. Better

technology, better policy, better economy. Maybe the US and some
European countries are decades, even hundreds years more advanced
than China. Some people went to Russia. Russia is not any better than
China, what's the point [to go there]? US or UK is much better, something to
learn from there" (Tengfei's father, 58, retired accountant).

These selected responses show an individualization of parents' understanding about the "West" and the sources of their information. Such findings contradicted the widespread uncritical acceptance of the notion that Western countries are "paradise" (Fong, 2011: 10) found among the Chinese citizens in Vanessa Fong's research. Fong blamed the Chinese state's propaganda that portrayed Western countries as "the imagined community of the developed world", and the limited information resource her cohort had access to for this unrealistic assumption. In contrast, parental understanding about the "West" in this study contains different degrees of rational (and non-rational) interpretations from a variety of information resources. Notwithstanding the small number of the parent sample, such a diversity of perceptions indicated the complexity of the parental motivation in supporting children's study abroad.

The largely pro-migration perspective of these parents was reflected here in the sample recruited among children who were already in the UK; thus it does not represent parental attitudes more generally in China. However, what the parental involvement profile showed is that different levels of agreement and conflict take place at the start of the migration-decision process. As the migration-decision process developed, parental attitudes and influence were subject to negotiation and changes from different sources.

4.3.2 The changes in parental involvement over time

When Bao (female, 31, purchasing manager) finished high school in Shanghai in 2002, "following the study abroad trend", her parents asked if she wanted to go to study

abroad. Bao did not want to go "because I thought I was too young". Instead, Bao went to a university in China far away from home to get away from her parents who "wanted to control every aspect" of her life. She came back to work in Shanghai after graduation and lived with her parents. Two years later, she decided to do a Master's degree abroad because of the pressure of living with her parents. "I wanted to stay abroad for a couple of years, as a long holiday." Her parents were strongly against Bao's idea because they thought she "shouldn't give up a secure life in Shanghai", but she "insisted for a long time, and they couldn't do anything about it, I'm their only child, so they compromised." Funded by her parents, Bao came to the UK as a postgraduate student and found a job as a purchaser afterwards. In the third year of Bao's stay in the UK her parents changed their minds and encouraged Bao to remain overseas:

> "Because something happened in my family, my grandparents passed away, the relatives turned into enemies. Also the pollution and corruption going on in China during the last couple of years were really bad. The situation at home was nothing like this before I went abroad, now the big environment and small environment both changed, so they don't see the point for me to return."

Bao's case showed the kinds of multi-level changes which could shape intergenerational negotiation. The first level is the *individual pathway* of the migrant (or potential migrant). In this case Bao's university experience far away from home and her growing independence since she started working, contributed to her confidence in making a significant decision about her commitment to going abroad. The second level reveals how parental opinions changed in response to the micro-level and macro-level factors around them (in this case family issues and problems in Chinese society). Finally, intergenerational conflict (or agreement) became manifest at the decision-making point of the migration process. In this case Bao and her parents experienced the first (mild) conflict in opinions at the end of high school, the second (strong) conflict at the decision to study a Master's degree abroad, and finally at the

point of visa extension, Bao and her parents were of the same view about her future plans (to remain in the UK).

Children's motivation to study abroad can be directly or indirectly influenced by parental involvement at earlier stages of the child's life. In Bao's example, her parent's suggestion of overseas undergraduate education later became part of the reason that inspired Bao's decision to study abroad. However, some parents had the idea of sending their child abroad much earlier when the child was little, or even before birth. When pregnant in the 1980s, Beiyao's (female, 30, process engineer) mother (55, teacher) started to read "self-help parenting" magazines which were largely based on American experience: "from those magazines I realised our country was underdeveloped. So even before she was born, I thought of sending her abroad to have a look outside." Consequently, Beiyao grew up under her mother's pro-study-abroad influence. She described her route to study abroad as something "designed by my parents, they wanted me to go abroad, they pushed me out". Having experienced a successful education and career development, Beiyao was appreciative when referring to her mother's "push". Beiyao's case showed how far back in time the source of an individual's study-abroad aspiration can be traced.

Moving forwards along the migration timeline, the three levels of decision changes (individual pathway, parental opinion change, and intergenerational interaction) were found in most respondents' interactions with parents with regard to post-study migration plans. However, the content of the changes and the level of influence of the changes on the child's migration trajectory varied. A strong influence of parental involvement still existed, especially among respondents who were single.

Delun (male, 21, student) had an "open, democratic" relationship (see Chapter 3) with his parents, and they were supportive of his study abroad plans. However, Delun decided to return to China upon graduation in response to the demand of his parents that Delun "must return to his home town, not any other city in China, but the city

where they [parents] live, as near as possible." The near-authoritarian insistence of Delun's parents upon their son's return was a distinct change in their otherwise open and supportive attitude towards their son's other important decisions. Delun responded calmly to this demand; he believed the anxiety of his parents was triggered by the death of the only child of his parent's friend. He was understanding about the impact the incident had had on his parents and emphasized the fact that looking after his parents was his filial duty. Furthermore, he listed a number of advantages of living in his home town, such as the help of parental social connections on his career, the relatively cheap cost of housing and the less hectic lifestyle (compared to major cities). Therefore, having no strong preference about a place to settle, Delun showed no resentment about the insistence of his parents that he return to be near them.

In sharp contrast to Delun's experience was that of Liwen (male, 30, tele-communications engineer). He had a strong desire to return to China after his PhD but his father, who was initially supportive of the son's study-abroad decision, persuaded Liwen to remain in the UK: "If it was up to me to decide, I'd be in China now. But my Dad didn't want me to return, because he thinks the social environment in China is not good for me." While the changes in the opinion of Delun's parents appeared to be motivated by both concerns about their son's well-being, as well as a "selfish" desire to have him near them, the parental perspective, however, in Liwen's case seemed entirely about wanting the best for their son. However, Liwen expressed a high level of frustration about obeying his parent's wish to remain in the UK, a place which he found "boring".

The cases of Bao, Delun and Liwen showed the potentially multiple changes in parents' attitudes and feelings about their children living abroad. The main causes of parental attitude changes could be macro-level (e.g. the unfavourable Chinese social environment) or micro-level factors (e.g. worsening extended family relations or a friend's loss of child). Such seemingly distant factors/events in China indirectly but profoundly shaped the migrant children's post-study migration plans.

The narratives of respondents' accounts of their migration journeys are usually marked by significant life events: study abroad, graduation, starting a job, getting married and becoming parents. As migrants became wives, husbands, mothers and fathers, parental involvement tended to show a gendered dimension. The following section investigates the extent to which parental involvement was significant in the transfer of gender role expectations (through their children) from China to the host country.

4.3.3 Gender and parental involvement

To some extent the gender-related features of parental involvement in migration decision making reflected some of the gendered features found in the up-bringing of the one-child generation (see Chapter 3), namely a high career expectation for only daughters and the age factor in daughters' marriage. In the context of the migration decision-making process, these features directly or indirectly facilitated women's going abroad and remaining overseas.

In most cases parents shared similar views with regard to whether they were supportive towards the child's going abroad, but conflicts in parental opinions existed in a small number of cases (2 one-child cases and 2 non one-child cases). These 4 cases involved the mothers being supportive of the daughters' study-abroad plans while the fathers showed different levels of negative opinion in each case. The reason for the fathers' negative response was largely to do with the gender stereotype of daughters and family-orientedness. Nevertheless, the 4 daughters went abroad after the family negotiation[25]. The fathers' compromise on the study-abroad decision did not necessarily mean that their gender views were not held strongly.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.2), the hierarchy of gendered personality

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[25] In all 4 cases, the fathers compromised and provided financial support after the daughters' decision to go abroad.

still exists and some parents (unconsciously) wanted their daughter to develop the "superior" male-associated qualities in order to succeed in a highly competitive society. The mothers and fathers in these 4 cases had had very different educational and career backgrounds[26]. The negotiation between these parents further indicates the nuances behind the decision making of a daughter's studying abroad. The daughters in these cases went abroad *not because of* gender equality, but *in spite of* the persistence of gender inequality.

The only case where the son's going abroad decision was received negatively was reported by Chuanli (31, post-doc researcher) who came from a rural family and who had a younger sister. Chuanli's father was a teacher and his mother a farmer. Three years prior to the interview Chuanli finished his PhD in China and was offered a post-doctoral position in a British university. Having been brought up with high parental expectations, however, Chuanli was asked by his parents not to leave: "My Mum reacted, she said 'what's the point of going abroad? You can find a good job in China, too.' I managed to convince my Dad quickly, but my Mum still hasn't quite accepted it even today."

To what extent the occupational and educational levels determined the different attitudes of Chuanli's parents was not clear; his father was much more educated than his mother. What this case shows is the possibility that financially-independent male off-spring could still be faced with unsupportive parents when the child made a decision beyond the level of freedom that the parents were willing to give.

So far the gender issue has been discussed among the cases of single respondents. Having a spouse adds an important aspect to the migrants' decision-making process. Married women in the sample showed a shift towards prioritizing their husbands in their future migration plans over their parent's concerns. The most fraught re-migration

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[26] The 4 cases included urban professional couples (mother a banker and father a medical doctor) as well as relatively less educated rural couples (mother a housewife and father a businessman).

decision making took place in Meilin's case (female, 37, part-time accountant): Meilin's husband, a fellow Chinese student she met in the UK, wanted to re-migrate to the UK after 4 years of their settlement in Shanghai. Meilin had a successful career in Shanghai and did not want to leave. The clash between their aspirations was pushing the marriage to a critical level. At that time Meilin's parents suggested that their daughter follow her husband: "People in their generation all think like that, that I shouldn't be separated from my husband…society taught them that divorce is not a good thing…my Dad is a very traditional person." Meilin left her job in Shanghai and joined her husband in London "for the sake of our son".

Similar cases where returnees re-migrated following their husbands' career plans were also reported by 2 other female respondents; parents in these 2 cases withdrew from the decision-making process. However, when caught between his career plans in London and his wife's desire to return to China, Ran (male, 27, software engineer) chose to follow his career advancement. At no point during the interview with Ran or his parents was there any indication that Ran should make any change to his career plans. Nevertheless, the limited number of married males in this sample (2) did not provide enough data for a meaningful comparison of parental involvement between married sons and daughters. However, the rich data from female respondents clearly showed a significant shift from parental to spousal considerations between single female respondents and married female respondents. Moreover, when single respondents talked about their future settlement plans, female respondents were more likely to take into account the possible needs of a future spouse.

Obviously, a gendered career pattern can be found outside of Chinese culture. However, the "left-over" women problem is more pronounced in China. This factor impacted on the parental opinion when their daughter married overseas. When Bolin (female, 38, export manager) told her parents that she was going to re-migrate to the UK and marry an Englishman, her mother faced a dilemma:

"I was in a total shock… my first thought was I'm going to lose my daughter…
I wasn't happy about it, but it was a difficult situation. She was already 28, she
would be difficult to marry by 30, I feared that to happen."

Clearly, Bolin's mother was against Bolin's decision to migrate to the UK, but the fear that Bolin would become a "left-over" woman overcame the parent's desire to have their daughter physically close. Therefore, the pressure for women to marry before 30 in China indirectly helped the realization of Bolin's migration aspiration through the reduced parental intervention.

The gender-related issue in parental involvement to some extent reflects the traditional Chinese family mode where daughters were to be "married out"; her loyalty to her natal family was to be shifted to her husband's family. Although the female respondents in the study, single or married, were far from converting to that tradition, the parents' attitude was found to resemble the type of gendered role the parent generation had experienced themselves. Likewise, the Chinese tradition emphasized the son's affiliation to his natal household. Male migrants and their parents also found themselves negotiating between the distance from home and gendered loyalty.

4.4 Summary

The one-child migrants' decision-making process at different migration stages was subject to a complex cluster of factors at the micro and macro level. At each level factors overlapped and shaped each other. The macro-level factors in the host country and home country also impacted on the migration trajectory through micro-level factors. This dynamic made it impossible to privilege or isolate any one part of the migration process in the description of migration decisions. For example, as has been shown above, it was seen that the parental involvement in the migration decision-making process was not a one-off matter: the process was subject to variable, often unplanned factors in a continuing dynamic that incorporated the whole family.

The changing influence of parents was accompanied by the spatial changes and relational changes caused by migration, and the growing independence of the child. The analysis showed that the transnational location between parents and only children had a different effect on the intensity of family connection, and any conflict in the decision-making process depended on the childhood parenting style, gender, and children's marital status.

However, parental involvement in their migrant child's overseas life went beyond their advice and exhortations in crucial decision-making points. Apart from funding overseas education, parents continued to provide financial and emotional support for their children. The next chapter investigates the financial and the care transfers from the older to the younger generation.

Chapter 5. Intergenerational transfer in transnational one-child families

The previous two chapters revealed the one-child migrants' life paths from their up-bringing in China to their arrival in the UK as students, and their transition from student to professional migrants. This chapter focuses on "the present", in particular, the current support dynamic between migrants and their parents in China. As the migrants' journey continued to unfold in the UK, the parents' roles were changeable as the two generations led their separate lives as part of a transnational family. However, what was consistent before, during and after the child's migration was the resource transfer from the older to the younger generation.

The matter of money was briefly mentioned when discussing parental support in the study-abroad decision process. Parents were the main financial providers for the students' overseas education[27]. However, following the completion of degrees, parental support typically became more complex and ambiguous. When the one-child migrants left university, new challenges emerged, such as securing a job, becoming a property-owner, and establishing their own family. Substantial post-education financial support from parents was reported by the majority of one-child migrants in the sample. The support included informal subsidies and help with buying a property. Furthermore, all the migrants who had children benefited from their parents, who came to the UK to provide childcare.

Chinese students' financial contribution to British higher education as well as to related industries (e.g. accommodation, tourism, catering) has been highlighted (Universities UK 2013, Nania and Green, 2004). However, the post-education

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[27] Apart from two women who came to work and one man who came to study on a funded PhD course, the rest of the 27 one-child sample came to the UK to study on a self-funded basis. The courses ranged from pre-A Level language schools to a Master's degree course. The initial tuition fees of the self-funded students came from parental savings. In most cases parents also supported full living costs while their child studied full time. Only three respondents reported having done part-time jobs during their studies; the part-time jobs were not essential; their parents had provided cost of living funds.

migrants' continuing contribution to the UK's economy, backed up by the continuing support from their parents, has been overlooked. Unlike most previous Chinese migrants who sent remittances home, this study showed not only a *reverse* direction of international money flow, but also the large amount of the (continuing) financial and resource transfer from the older to the younger generation. What were the financial arrangements between members in the one-child transnational families, and how were these arrangements made? This chapter continues in three parts: the first part elaborates on the monetary transfer between parents and children; the second part looks at the "flying grandparents" who travelled between China and the UK to provide childcare support; the third part analyses the attitude and justification of such intergenerational transfers, from the parents' as well as from the children's perspectives.

5.1 Parents' continuing giving and children's continuing receiving

Much of the research concerning money flow in migration has been largely about the financial support from migrants (in developed countries) to their family members at home (in developing countries)[28]. Based on this focus, Levitt and Sørensen (2004) categorized three types of migration experience: those who actually migrated, those who stayed behind but received support from migrants, and those who did not migrate and had no support from outside. Jørgen Carling (2008) has suggested that the second type misleadingly described the role of "those who stay behind" as a passive reception; rather, he proposed to name it "non-migrants who are engaged in transnational practices" to highlight the social interaction between migrants and non-migrants.

However, the financial flow *from* people who "stayed behind" *to* migrants has been

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[28] The remittances were found to be sent from adult migrant children to their parents and spouse at home. For example, the previous Hong Kong migrants in the UK (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Watson, 1977); or from migrant parents to their children at home, for example, from Filipino mothers working in Europe to their young adult children (Parreñas, 2001).

overlooked. The direction of money flow from sending country to the host country is not new, evidence has been largely recorded in education-related migration. For example, the Chinese "astronaut families" and Korean "Kirogi (wild geese) families" tend to operate in a model where the fathers' work in the home country is essential in supporting their children's education and wives' maintenance in the host country (Waters, 2012, Kim, 2010). However, the family financial flow, in these families, after the children grew up and the parents retired from their work, was seldom discussed. The one-child transnational families in this study showed a curious feature: parental financial support *continued* in spite of the fact that most post-education migrant children had a professional salary. Financial support here refers to direct money-giving at an informal level and family wealth transfer at a more significant level (i.e. parental contribution in buying a property in the UK). The next two sections will elaborate on the two forms of intergenerational financial support: informal finance-related activities, and UK property purchasing.

5.1.1 <u>Parental role as "financial safety net" in migrant children's daily expenses</u>

Apart from the 5 one-child migrants who were full-time students and the 1 respondent who did not wish to reveal her income, the 21 one-child migrants who had a job had various levels of income (see Table 8). Among the working migrants, 20 respondents were working in full-time jobs, 2 mothers opted for working part time in order to look after their young children.

Table 8: Respondents' income level

	lower-income (£15k-25k)	middle-income (£25k-35k)	higher-income (£35k-45k)
number of one-child migrants	6 (2 part-time)	8	7

(See Appendix 2 for the details of each respondent's job and income level.)

In 2014 the gross income required for reaching an "acceptable minimum standard

of living" in the UK was £17K for a single person, and £20K each for couples with 2 children (Davis et al, 2014). The majority of the sample exceeded the required income level, whereas a small number of the respondents who had a lower income struggled. However, when talking about their finances none of the respondents reported any difficulty in making ends meet, nor did they express anxiety about their current or future financial situation. Evidence from lower-income migrants revealed an affluent purchasing capacity including owning a house and annual holidays to China and European resorts. Although married migrants were believed to have benefited from their spouses' income to a certain extent, the most commonly reported (potential) source of extra financial support of one-child migrants was from parents.

The majority of the working one-child migrants expressed their confidence about parental "financial back-up". For example, when asked about whether her parents would fund her PhD course if she failed to secure a scholarship, Tian (female, 31, higher-income) said they would: "They would borrow money from relatives if necessary". Similar responses also showed that one-child migrants believed their parents would be willing to help financially, and that parents would be prepared to give *full* support: "If I ask [for money], my parents will definitely give all they can." (Zhimin, male, 31, lower-income); "It feels like they have money prepared for me, whenever I ask, they are ready to give" (Jiayi, female, 36, middle-income). In all 3 cases the financial transfer did not actually take place; Tian was granted a scholarship for her PhD course; Zhimin had savings from doing part-time jobs, and Jiayi was able to manage her household finances with her fully-employed husband. Nevertheless, in all 3 cases the child had confidence in their parents' capacity and willingness to fund their financial needs, a similar belief was common among the sample.

The "financial safety net" acted as an insurance between parents and child migrants. The actual financial transfer did not necessarily occur frequently; only a

minority of the sample reported having asked for money. Sending subsidies to children in the UK was informal; the amount of money, the time of the need, or the condition of spending were not established. These elements usually remained unknown until the child's specific financial needs arose. The areas of the reported extra spending included paying for a wedding, paying for a flight ticket to China, buying new furniture and helping with maintenance when the child was living on an unstable income.

The "financial safety net" played perhaps a greater role as a psychological comfort rather than an immediate funding source to meet practical needs; this comfort helped to explain why little financial anxiety was felt even among the lower-income migrants. Examples of money-giving in everyday life was reported on a small scale, among which the subsidy-recipients were found among low, middle and higher-income groups. Gender did not make a significant difference in this kind of intergenerational transfer. Although more affluent parents tended to give more money to their child, less affluent parents were also found contributing to their child's daily expense. The money-giving pattern did not entirely depend on the income of the children or the parent, nor was it to fill a gap in a crisis or for basic needs. This pattern suggested a normative rather than a pragmatic basis in money-giving among middle class families. However, the next section shows a more substantial type of financial transfer.

5.1.2 Property purchasing in the UK and parental involvement

The majority of the sample did not have British citizenship. Certain restrictions were applied to non-EU citizens in the mortgage market in the UK. Restrictions vary slightly with different lenders, but the general rules are clear: the migrant must have lived in the UK for more than 2 years to build up a traceable credit history; he/she must have a permanent resident permit or a work visa, and have a

permanent job[29]. In spite of being restricted by such requirements (5 respondents were students), 17 out of the 22 eligible migrants either had a property or were planning to buy a property in the near future, as shown in Table 9. The majority of the property owners and potential property owners were located in the more expensive regions of England (10 out of the 17 properties were in London or near London). Furthermore, the fact that 4 property owners had bought, or were planning to buy, a second property also indicated a high purchasing capacity among the one-child property buyers.

Table 9: Property ownership among 27 one-child migrants

property owners			non-property owners	
mortgage	outright payment	owned by spouse	has plan to buy	no plan to buy
5	3	5	4	10 (inc 5 students)
total: 13			total: 14	

The respondents who bought their property either outright or by getting a mortgage made their purchases between 2009 and 2014, which was also the period when most British people had difficulty buying a property as a result of the 2008 financial crisis. On average these respondents became property owners after having worked for 3 years (from less than a year and up to 7 years). While the average savings period for a single English young person to get a mortgage was predicted to be 14 years (12 years for young couples with children) in 2013 (Shelter, 2013), these young Chinese migrants clearly had had a much shorter transition period from graduation to property-ownership capacity.

The above features indicated this sample's upward mobility on the host country's property ladder. However, they do not tell the stories behind such a

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[29] There is no governmental resource which provides clear mortgage restrictions on foreign nationals; the information used here is compiled based on data provided by private mortgage companies in the UK. e.g. G Force Mortgages UK Ltd: http://www.gforcemortgages.co.uk/ForeignNationalMortgages#citizen Accessed 2 March 2016.

property-owning profile. The length of stay in the UK and being married had a positive impact on the migrants' decision to buy a property. Why did the one-child migrants buy property in the UK so relatively soon? How could they afford it? If parents helped, then what were their family financing arrangements? Apart from 1 respondent who got a mortgage independently, the rest of the property owners (including the married ones who bought a property with their spouse after their marriage) and those who planned to buy a property at the time of interview, all respondents mentioned forms of parental assistance.

This finding echoes a study by Guiqi Tomba (2004) where he found relatively low-income young couples living in a wealthy neighbourhood of Beijing. These young couples were able to benefit from their parents' various resources (accumulated during the 1990s) to secure upward mobility during the transition in China's housing market. Middle class families in Tomba's study formed a parallel situation to the one-child families in this study; the difference is that in the latter case the parental resources made an impact on their child's mobility outside of China.

Of course, parental help in children's property purchasing is not limited to the Chinese. The notion of the "bank of mum and dad" (Hosking, 2015) is not unfamiliar to British first-time buyers, especially after the 2008 financial crisis. In 2009 around 85% of first-time buyers under 30 had to turn to their parents for help to pay for a deposit (compared to 8% in 1997) (Kuvshinov, 2011). However, according to an HSBC survey on the British first-time buyers in 2012, more than half of the families who provided financial aid to their first-time buying offsprings expected to be repaid; the majority charged an interest rate of 2.1-2.5% (HSBC, 2012).

The parental financial help the one-child migrant respondents received for property purchasing was not offered as a loan: it was an outright gift. The most

common way for parents to contribute was to pay for the deposit (or part of it if the child's spouse also contributed) and leave the child to pay the mortgage. The only respondent who mentioned a "lend-borrow" relationship was Zhipin (female, 33, middle-income, London). The financial arrangement between Zhipin and her parents was slightly different from the others:

> Zhipin: "My husband and I had enough savings to pay for the deposit, we exhausted our savings for it. But there were still costs for solicitors, furniture, and daily expense, we couldn't live with two empty bank accounts, so I borrowed some money from my Mum."
>
> Researcher: "Did she ask you to pay her back?"
>
> Zhipin: "I said I'd pay her back before the end of the year, I've paid back half of it by now, but if I don't pay the rest, she won't say anything about it."

In the later part of the interview, Zhipin revealed that her father had started a small business in China; he hoped to help her pay the mortgage so that she would "have more freedom in life". Zhipin's account, in which she described her parent's help as a "loan", but then said that full repayment was not really expected and "more help" from her father was "on the way", may appear contradictory, but it is not. Some parents and children may feel more comfortable with the ritual of children asking for a 'loan', even if neither side really expects to have to repay it in full. A similar scenario was highlighted in Anni Kajanus' research (2015) about Chinese students in Europe. She found that it was common for students to talk about repaying parents the money spent on their overseas education, but these words were not likely to be realised: neither parents nor children really expected such a repayment.

Kajanus interpreted what she called a "game of money return" as "the tension between the idealisation of independence and the actual reliance". Such tension

may also partly explain Zhipin's claim of a "borrow-lend" relationship. Compared to Kajanus' cohort, this study's participants were, on average, older and had more income. Most parental financial support in this case was aimed at the "betterment" of the child's material life in the UK, making the migrant children not just "surviving" in what Vanessa Fong referred to as a "first world" country, but living a "middle class" life according to the "first world" material standard. This attitude can be found in the choice of housing and method of payment, which are elaborated below.

Although the majority of property purchasing could not have happened (or have happened so soon) without parental help, not *all* the respondents *needed* their parents' money to buy a property. Some respondents could afford a relatively modest property, but wanted a more expensive one. In this kind of situation parental help played the role of *upgrading* the property for the child. These cases occurred among married respondents whose spouses also contributed to the purchase. Shan's (33, higher-income) parents helped her and her husband to buy a small house in London in 2009:

> *"Back then my husband and I could afford a cheap house, but if my parents helped with the majority of the deposit, then we could afford a better house. They were happy to do that. In this way, we paid less for the mortgage each month, we had a better living environment, and when my parents came to visit us, they also lived in a more comfortable place."*

Three years later Shan had a son and as he grew up Shan and her husband decided, in 2014, to sell the house and buy a bigger one:

> *"We bought a new house recently. This time my parents also helped. It's the same principle as last time. We could afford an ordinary house, but my parents thought with their help we could buy a house in a better location,*

near a good school."

In another case, Jiayi (36, middle-income, Somerset) and her husband both worked full time in the UK for 7 years to save for a house. When they bought their house in 2014 Jiayi's parents made a contribution. Rather than "upgrading" to a more desirable house like Shan did, Jiayi and her husband "upgraded" their payment method; instead of getting a mortgage they were able to buy the house outright.

The way parents contributed money to their children's house purchasing showed a motivation which more than fulfilled the basic housing requirements of the children; parents aspired to enhance their children's lives and status in the UK as well as that of their grandchildren. Similar to the way parents provided subsidies to a migrant's daily life, the parental contribution towards buying a property helped to establish their children's middle class status in the UK.

Arguably parents were likely to help their only child with house purchasing regardless of the location of the child (in China or overseas) (see Wang, 2010, Tomba, 2004). This study shows a high level of transnational capital flow; it was essentially inspired by intra-family transfers mainly to do with the well-being of the younger generation. In the context of the transnational family, this capital flow led to the emergence of a group of affluent property buyers who had a greater upward mobility in the British property ladder than the average British nationals, especially after the British property market was negatively impacted following the 2008 financial crisis. The outcome of the financial flow also revealed how family financial activities led to an impact at the transnational level.

5.2 The continuing care provision from the older to the younger generation

Given the relatively young age of the cohort, the 27 one-child-migrants sample contained only 7 respondents who had become parents. Apart from 1 mother who gave birth to her son in China, the rest of the parents all had their child(ren) in the UK. To distinguish the three generations in the analysis, the 7 one-child migrants here are referred to as "one-child parents", the children of one-child parents are referred to as "grandchildren" and the parents of one-child parents are referred to as "grandparents".

The average age of the grandchildren was 3 years old, and the majority were below age 4 at the time of the research in 2014 (see Table 10). In the UK children's full-time schooling starts at age 5 (gov.uk, 2014). Children in England aged 3-4 are entitled to free early education or childcare around "15 hours each week for 38 weeks of the year" (gov.uk, 2015). Therefore, for parents with children under the age of 5, state-provided service played a minor role in day-time childcare support. All of the 7 one-child parents in the sample had substantial childcare help from their own parents (and sometimes parents-in-law).

Table 10: Three-generation caring situation

One-child parents	grandchildren	grandparents childcare-provider
Bolin, (female, 38)	older son aged 8, younger son aged 7	parents
Meilin, (female, 37)	son aged 7 (born in China, came to UK aged 1)	parents
Jiayi, (female, 36)	older son aged 3, younger son aged 4 months	father, mother-in-law
Baiwen, (female, 33)	son aged 4, daughter aged 3 months	parents
Shan, (female, 32)	son aged 2	parents and mother-in-law
Beiyao, (female, 30) and Demin, (male, 33)	son aged 1 month	wife's mother and husband's parents

5.2.1 Host-country based childcare arrangements

During the research the majority of one-child parents had the grandparents living in to provide childcare. Because of the visa restrictions grandparents were allowed to stay in the UK for no more than 6 months per year. In situations where both husband and wife were Chinese the common arrangement was that both sets of grandparents took turns to come to the UK for half a year each so that the rotation could guarantee all-year childcare support. The arrangements among inter-ethnic (e.g. Chinese/White British) couples varied depending on the availability of the husband's parents (in this study all inter-ethnic couples were ones with a Chinese wife and non-Chinese husband). For example, Ying's (29, account assistant) English husband was also an only child, and his mother had agreed to help with the other half of the year's childcare were the young couple to have a baby; whereas Bolin's (38, export manager) English parents-in-law passed away before she had children.

In general the non-Chinese grandparents spent significantly less time providing childcare than the Chinese grandparents, in spite of the geographical closeness of the former. Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that the British grandparents are less committed to childcare. The fact that Chinese grandparents usually lived with the couple and spent extensive periods of time in the UK (to make the most of their temporary visa) reduced the need for British grandparents to help with childcare. Therefore, the British grandparents may have contributed in a more episodic fashion. Furthermore, for the Chinese grandparents, there was the extra benefit of being reunited with their children while also spending more time with their grandchildren. The "looking after grandchildren" clearly has different implications for Chinese grandparents and British grandparents. The Chinese grandparenting arrangement and the negotiation process are elaborated in this section.

There was no significant gender division among grandparents in providing childcare. While grandmothers were reported to be "more involved" than grandfathers, both grandmothers and grandfathers showed a commitment to coming to the UK to give childcare support, which was traditionally regarded as the job for female relatives. The choice of grandmother or grandfather in childcare was usually the result of practical, rather than cultural reasons. Jiayi (female, 38, sons aged 3 and 4 months) had her retired father as the main childcare provider because her mother was working full-time in China. Beiyao's (female, 30) son was only 1-month old. Her father was too ill to come to the UK for the birth of the grandson, so her mother came to care for her and the baby for 5 months, while Beiyao's father was looked after by his own aged parents in China. In most cases grandparents were involved in childcare together. These findings suggested that the traditional gender role of care-providers in the transnational family was being overridden by the more urgent practical needs of the next generation.

What was unusually absent from the childcare arrangement among one-child migrants was the alternative: the "sending grandchildren back to China" to be looked after by grandparents. This arrangement was common among earlier Chinese migrants. Children (usually the first-born) were left in Hong Kong with their grandparents while parents were busy with their catering businesses in the UK. The child(ren) later joined their parents in the UK for education, sometimes to help with the family business or to look after younger siblings who were born in the UK (Song, 1999, Sham and Woodrow, 1998, Watson, 1977). Similar arrangements were also found among highly-educated parents who migrated from mainland China to Australia in the 1990s. New-born children were sent to China to be looked after by their grandparents; children returned to Australia when they reached school age (Da, 2003). Compared to having parents living in the host country to provide childcare, this kind of arrangement appeared to be less costly, and was more convenient to both the migrant parents as well as grandparents.

However, among the 7 parents in the study, there was no report of any form of negotiation between the grandparents and one-child migrants with regard to whether grandparents should come to the UK, or whether the grandchild should be looked after in China until reaching school age. It appears to have been taken for granted that the grandchild would be raised in the UK with the one-child parents. As Demin (male, 33, lecturer) recalled: "It [childcare arrangement] was like a mutual understanding, we did not need to sit down and talk about it, it was natural." A similar response was made by parents. Bolin's (38, sons aged 7 and 8) mother (66, retired factory worker) recalled:

*"We never asked whether she [daughter] needed our help [in childcare], we just took it for granted that we should look after her children. She never asked us whether we wanted to do this. It was like, your daughter is having a baby, **of course** you should go and look after the baby. [emphasis original]"*

The first time Bolin's mother realised her dedicated care for her grandchildren was somehow "different" was during one of her entries into the UK at the British Border Control. She was asked, by a Border Control officer, a routine question, "Why do you come to the UK?" With the help of an interpreter, she answered: "To look after my grandchildren." The officer responded, pointing to the visa page of her passport: "Then you should have applied for a work visa, not a family-visitor's visa." Bolin's mother was so shocked at the logic behind the officer's interpretation of her relationship with her daughter's family that she felt it necessary to tell the researcher about the incident from "several years ago". Bolin's mother thought this was evidence of the "lack of cohesion in British families" and felt proud of the "closeness" shared by Chinese family members.

Like Bolin's parents, grandparents did not get paid for their childcare, on the contrary, they were reported to be contributing to grandchild-related spending and

in some cases paying for their own flights to and from Britain. In most cases grandparents were financially affluent enough to afford the cost. In addition to their financial capacity, grandparents expressed the pleasure of being with their offspring and felt "useful" in their only child's household. For many grandparents (and potential grandparents), the period of looking after grandchildren in the UK was usually the only time they could be reunited with their only child for a long time. To some extent, providing childcare became a *valid reason* for parents to come and live with their long-missed only child, hence the grandparents' willingness to come. Once the grandchildren reached school age and the grandparents' intensive childcare was no longer needed, their visiting time in the UK was accordingly significantly reduced; the one-child family then often went back to a situation involving global separation.

"Flying grandma" was not new to migrant families from Hong Kong and other Asian countries in the UK, but the extent of grandparents' involvement was different. Mabel Lie (2010) found that compared to other Asian countries where women's freedom to travel was largely determined by the Islamic practice of "purdah", Chinese grandmothers were more likely to travel from Hong Kong to provide childcare. However, unlike the Chinese families in Lie's research, where the common transnational childcare arrangement was for paternal grandmothers to come for a few months, in this study, both paternal and maternal grandparents from China were actively involved, and the time the grandparents dedicated to childcare was significantly longer.

Although the childcare arrangement findings were based on only 7 one-child parents and 2 sets of grandparents, the "flying grandparents" found among all 7 cases revealed the overwhelming shift of transnational childcare location from China to the host country. Only one respondent (male, 31, single) mentioned the possibility of a China-based childcare arrangement, but such an idea was absent among the others who had not become parents. The fact that these one-child

parents did not seem attracted to the possibility of having children raised in China, with their children's grandparents, suggested not only practical considerations but also normative commitments to staying together as a family unit in Britain.

Furthermore, the one-child parents' being professional, middle class, afforded them such a choice; which was not usually the case for previous cohorts of Chinese migrants who worked extremely long, anti-social hours, and who lacked various forms of human and cultural capital in Britain. Living together in the UK was certainly more beneficial to the one-child migrants and their children than having to be separated. Even among parents in China who had not yet become grandparents, there was already an indication (especially among mothers) that they would come to the UK to help look after their future grandchildren.

5.2.2 The challenges for grandparent childcare providers

Physical and mental exhaustion have been reported among grandparent childcare-givers in China (Lo and Liu, 2009, Goh, 2006). For grandparents who came to the UK, in addition to highly demanding daily childcare duties, the combination of a lack of English, a change of diet, and a disruption of their daily routine in an unfamiliar place formed a potential threat to their psychological well-being. The majority of grandparents in this study had had university education and professional jobs. In spite of being highly-educated in China, most of the grandparents did not speak English. They were faced with the language and cultural barriers in the host country -- similar challenges for any non-English-speaking migrants.

In general grandmothers showed a better ability to adapt to the new environment than grandfathers. This outcome was partly to do with the gendered family role grandparents had in China; women were more involved in domestic affairs than men. As most grandparents came to the UK to provide childcare and help with

domestic chores, grandmothers were more "at ease" with such routines, while it usually took grandfathers a longer time to get used to them. Although 3 respondents reported their father's frequently-expressed dislikes about life in the UK, they came nonetheless. Grandparents who came *together* as childcare-providers benefited from each other's support in terms of their own psychological well-being.

Bolin's parents had provided the longest childcare in the sample. They had a 5-year-visa[30] and lived in Nottingham from 2006 to 2011 to look after their grandchildren. The grandparents were both retired factory workers who did not have much education and no English. Fortunately for them Nottingham has a relatively large mainland Chinese population; grocery shops and community activities cater to the Mandarin-speaking residents. Bolin's parents managed to familiarize themselves with the local environment, and made some friends with other Chinese. However, they had a clash of opinion with their son-in-law (white British) with regard to childcare[31] and their daughter had to act as a mediator.

Different attitudes toward childcare between two generations are not uncommon; other families with professional and highly educated grandparents also acknowledged disputes of opinions, but in a more mild manner. It was not clear to what extent the grandparents' class background was significant in the nature and scale of disputes about childcare. Therefore, while childcare for their migrant child was a significant resource for the young parents, and gave grandparents emotional comfort, childcare could also be the source of family tension.

At the point of interview Bolin's parents had returned to China after their

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[30] A 5-year-visa was rare among parent visitors. Bolin's parents were granted their visas when visa policies were less strict in 2006.
[31] The disputes were the outcomes of both cultural difference and generational gap. For instance, the son-in-law regarded the grandmother's constantly holding the infant as potentially spoiling the child, while the grandmother thought holding the infant was essential for the psychological well-being of the child.

grandchildren started school. In their retrospective account of their years as full-time childcare-givers in Nottingham they highlighted their emotional and social difficulties in the UK:

> *"Our life in England was okay, very quiet. But the most important thing was that we were **both** there. If today we are suddenly allowed to go to England, it would be better if we can go together. One person will be lonely. If there was only one of us left, I'd rather stay in China. In China I can chat with neighbours, phone my friends. Who do you chat with in England? Our daughter needs to go to work, she can't accompany you all the time… Our neighbours were friendly to us, they said 'hello' to us, but we could not communicate because we didn't speak English [emphasis original]."*

Bolin's parents clearly valued each other's company and feared the possibility of losing such company and support in the UK. In comparison to Bolin's parents in Nottingham, Jiayi (38, sons aged 3 and 4 months) lived in a small town in Somerset where the access to Chinese-related outlets was extremely limited and her father came to the UK to provide childcare without her mother. Jiayi described her father's frustration:

> *"My Dad said 'coming here for a short holiday is ok, living here is unbearable. Such a small place, no proper food to eat, no place to hang around, no language I can understand, nothing is interesting at all'".*

Nevertheless, Jiayi's father still came to the UK and alternated childcare with Jiayi's mother-in-law.

In spite of the challenges grandparents were faced with in the UK, their decision to

come nonetheless showed their dedication to helping their children, and to enhancing the well-being of their child and grandchildren. Without other offsprings' families to look after, parents of one-child migrants became the most reliable and committed childcare providers to the younger generation. One-child parents frequently expressed their gratitude about parental care help, like Jiayi said: "…childcare is tiring and involves great responsibility. Apart from family members, who else is willing to look after your child for free?" This study cannot claim to have discovered a major childcare arrangement pattern for the whole sample, as the majority (two thirds) had not yet become parents. Nevertheless, the existing cases of transnational childcare indicated a largely taken for granted child-centred arrangement in the transnational one-child family.

5.3 Making sense of the asymmetrical intergenerational transfer

There was no clear point when the money flow from parents to children would be expected to stop; nor was there a clear point planned for when children were expected to start to pay back any funds to parents (if at all). In traditional Chinese families it was generally understood that sons were the main, life-long supporters of elderly parents, while daughters were expected to contribute to their natal families until they married, at which point daughters' support was redirected to the in-laws (Song et al, 2012, Xie and Zhu, 2009). However, traditional convention did not indicate exactly when sons or unmarried daughters should start reimbursing their parents' expenses, nor did convention provide a financial solution to those parents who did not have a son.

The reality of the family financial dynamic is more complex than the rules recorded in traditional convention. Chinese family conventions were largely derived from agrarian society (Fei, 1992). Urbanisation challenged the big family cohabiting tradition and resulted in more dispersed nuclear families. Furthermore, compared to the seasonal rhythms in a rural society, the less flexible urban working hours,

longer travel distance from parents, more intense competition for resources, and a relatively better pension system meant that the younger generation in general had less time, money, and financial need to care for their parents than had been the case for their parents' generation. A large population of adults in Chinese cities from both working class and middle class backgrounds were found to be still receiving parental support, which ranged from helping the child to get a job, buying property, to providing childcare, and everyday housework assistance (Wang, 2010, Tomba, 2004).

The types of parental support in this research was similar to that found among families in China, and the timing and nature of parental support was related to the life cycle of their families. The 27 one-child migrants were at different life stages, ranging from postgraduate students who had recently arrived in the country, to those who came more than a decade ago and had established their career and family here. The findings showed a predominately parent-to-child intergenerational flow of money and care regardless of the child's income level and age. However, the repayment from child to parents was currently very limited. Clearly transnational one-child families have a new set of intergenerational expectations that have helped the family to function (successfully) in the global context. To make sense of the asymmetrical transfer the next two sections discuss it from the parents' perspective as the providers and the child's perspective as the beneficiary.

5.3.1 <u>Why do parents continue to support financially independent children in the UK?</u>

To provide support for their adult children, parental financial ability and willingness was required. As is shown in Table 11, the majority of the parents were affluent or medium-affluent. Although a small number of parents were relatively less wealthy and had offered less financial support to their migrant child, they were

self-sufficient and had not indicated any need for financial support. The majority of parents had had a college or university education and a professional and/or a managerial job.

Table 11: Parents' job and income level

Parents' level of affluence	less-affluent	medium-affluent	affluent
job description	office clerks or factory workers	professionals and managers	medium business owners, professionals in higher management
number of households*	3	14	10

*In households where parents had different levels of jobs and incomes, the more affluent parent's job was recorded.

The willingness of parents to continue transferring a significant part of their wealth to their child should not be taken for granted. Among the less affluent demographic, family tensions about parental assets and children's filial duty is more intense. Danning Wang (2010) observed such conflicts among some working class families in Tianjing (a northern city in China) and described these families' financial behaviour as a *game of power*: the older generation in the family "maintain legal ownership rights over family real estate and other property" so that "they can maintain a measure of prestige and power within the family structure" (Wang, 2010:966).

In Wang's research, parents used their property ownership as a leverage to achieve what they believed to be the maximization of the family fortune during a time of economic transition. The families in Wang's study were mostly working class parents with two or more adult children, and such a "power" strategy was more overtly practised among those families who also had working class children.

With a scarcity of resources (and less economic security) between both generations, "the parental authority still plays a crucial role and has been further consolidated by the rapid growth of the urban Chinese property market" (Wang, 2010:978).

However, although a very small number of parents in this study were less affluent, they have only one child, and that child had qualifications and a professional job. The legal ownership of the family assets (mainly in the form of property) among all families in this study was not a priority in the parents' family financial plan. Instead, *how the assets could better benefit the child* was the primary parental concern (see also Tomba, 2004). Therefore, the social stratification of Chinese families not only meant a difference in the resource possession, but is also likely to result in a difference in parental attitude about family resource transfer. In this way, the gap between middle class children and working class children will become wider.

After having funded her daughter's Master's degree course in the UK, Beiyao's mother (medium-affluent) was faced with the possibility that Beiyao might not get a scholarship for her PhD course:

> *Researcher: "Would you have funded her PhD if she didn't get the scholarship?"*
> *Beiyao's mother: "Yes, I would. I bought two flats when the house price was low. If she didn't get the scholarship, I would sell one flat to fund her."*

Given the limited means of investment in China during the rise of the market economy, buying property was a common way for more affluent parents to secure their newly-gained wealth. Middle class parents, like Beiyao's mother, had spare money to invest in a second or third property. The less well-off parents in the study were also property owners, but did not have separate investments. Rather than

using their own property to fund a more comfortable retirement two less well-off parents decided to transfer all their assets to their child even before their death.

For example, Tengfei (28, PhD student) perceived his father as an authoritarian figure in the family. The father (58, retired accountant) also presented himself as a firm-minded head-of-family in the interview, but he was prepared to give up his independence:

> *"I have made up my mind. If my wife died before me, when I am all alone, I will sell the flat, give all the money to my son, and I will follow my son".*

Bolin's (female, 30, lower-income) parents (both retired factory workers) were in their late sixties, and at the point of the interview they were living in the father's deceased parent's flat, having sold their own flat:

> *"We are going to buy a house near Bolin under her name. It doesn't matter if we eventually manage to move to the UK or not, we are leaving the house to Bolin… We definitely won't use this flat to pay for a care home scheme, this is the only asset we have, we are leaving it to Bolin, to our grandchildren."*

Clearly, "leaving it all to the child" was what parents in the study intended to do with their property. However, while inheritance normally happens after a parent's death, many one-child parents brought the process forward to a much earlier stage when parents were alive and sometimes only in their middle age. While the inheritance process in the family was usually focused on the distribution of parental assets among children, such a concern was irrelevant in the one-child families. One-child families skip the stage of negotiating the amount of inheritance (i.e. who gets what), and can progress directly to the decision about *how* and

when the assets should be transferred. Such an advance in the family inheritance process gave a higher level of flexibility in the ownership of certain parts of the family assets between parents and the child; which also explained why the substantial financial support from parents tended to be in the form of an outright gift, rather than as a repayable loan.

Moreover, such concentrated, substantial, and early asset transfer gave the one-child migrants significant socio-economical upward mobility compared to their middle class counterparts in Western countries; the parental wealth passed on to the younger demographic, generally speaking, is diluted and relatively late. Middle class parents in the United States and European countries were reported to be giving money to their children to fund education, housing and urgent needs (Reeves and Howard, 2013). However, the average amount received by each child was significantly reduced by the number of children in each household (average number of adult children being 3.3 in the US households and 2.4 in European households in 2006) (Zissimopoulos and Smith, 2010).

In her study about inheritance and financial transfer in families, Janet Finch (1996) raised her concern about the timing of inheritance. The longevity of the older generation meant that few could expect to inherit from parents until they themselves were near retirement, thus significantly reducing the effect the inheritance can have on an individual's quality of life. Whereas a wealth transfer at an earlier stage of the beneficiary's life would make a substantial contribution to enhancing an individual's potential in the housing market, employment and education opportunities.

By helping with the child's financial needs in the UK, parents' savings and assets in the sample were also transferred outside of China. As far as most parents were concerned, assets under the child's name were still the family's assets regardless of the physical location of the assets. Such a principle of family wealth

redistribution was similar to the way a transnational commercial corporation organised its capital to maxmise its global advantages. However, what made the "transnational family corporation" different was that rather than generating a profitable return to the parents, the objective was to maximize the development of the next generation of the "family corporation".

Gary Becker's (1993b) family economic model suggested that while selfishness dominated market transactions, it was altruism (pace Danning Wang, 2010) that dominated family economic behaviour. Parents gave more to children than children to parents, because the investment in children was more productive than that investment to parents; children had a longer remaining life and had not accumulated as much human capital. This model reflected the "parental sacrifice theme" in research into economically disadvantaged Chinese families where parents gave up their personal needs for the education cost of their children (Leung and Shek, 2011, Fong, 2004, Song 1999).

Becker's economic model is also consistent with parental support for financially independent children in the study. Parents saw children as an extension of themselves (Birditt et al, 2012). In middle class one-child families parents were able to maintain financial self sufficiency, accelerate their child's education, career, and personal development, by flexibly redistributing their savings and assets to balance family wealth towards the child's advancement.

5.3.2 Children's response to parental financial support

How did the one-child migrants feel about being at the receiving end of the asymmetrical intergenerational financial arrangement? What did they do in response to their parents' support? Although the 27 one-child migrants in the study were largely from middle class families, their socioeconomic status in the UK varied depending on their age, career stage and marital status. The sample

included individuals ranging from Master's degree students in their early twenties with no employment income, to one-child parents in their late thirties with a stable household income, and a property. Respondents at different stages of their life received different amounts of support from parents. In general, married migrants received more accumulated financial support from parents than unmarried ones; the need for money rose with the process of establishing a family (e.g. wedding expenses, property purchase, childcare costs).

a. Sense of entitlement

The researcher did not ask the respondents directly about their *feelings* towards parental support, rather, the related question in the interview was "*In what way have your parents supported your life in the UK?*" However, after reporting various forms of support from their parents, most respondents continued and spoke about their feelings as if they felt obliged to evaluate, explain or justify their position as the recipients of their parents' generosity. A large number of respondents were appreciative, while a small number of respondents reportedly felt "embarrassed" about using their parent's money while still having an income. Nevertheless, the most commonly expressed feeling was a sense of entitlement towards parental support. This sense of entitlement was either directly expressed or indirectly suggested in their financial expectations of their parents when talking about their future plans.

Nearly a third of the sample was explicitly aware of their status as the sole recipient of parental support and their absolute priority in their parents' resource allocation. In this study female participants expressed their sense of entitlement more directly than males. Men reported themselves as "the passive receiver"*,* whereas women, especially married women, were more prepared to show their financial bond with parents, and some respondents even enjoyed this sense of "being spoiled" by parents.

Baiwen (33, lower-income, affluent parents) was a mother in Leeds; she reported various instances of parental support, including their purchase of her house outright:

"I actually don't need their financial help, but I'm the only child. Aren't all only children's parents like this? They'd say 'if we don't give money to you, who do we give money to?' If I didn't accept their money, they'd be upset. So I usually just keep my mouth shut and accept their money."

For Baiwen, showing her "entitlement" to her parent's offer was a sign of emotional closeness, while the similar "entitlement" for Shan (32, higher-income, affluent parents), a mother in London and the beneficiary of parental support on two house purchases, meant something slightly different:

"Because I'm the only child, I feel all [my] parent's money is mine, and that's also how they [parents] always made me feel…I'm living the kind of life my parents want me to have. In fact, this was the kind of life they wanted for themselves, they live vicariously through me."

For Shan, intergenerational *financial* transfer was also a form of intergenerational *aspiration* transfer, where the parents lived their unfulfilled dream vicariously through their children.

In a study about Indians in Australia, Supriya Singh and colleagues (2012) noted the remittances sent from Indian parents to their children who were studying, or who had just finished studying in Australia. These students saw the money they received as "family money in terms of family obligations", not in "contractual terms as an investment that needs to be repaid". Singh et al highlighted money as a medium of care in the transnational family context:

> '[T]ransnational family money' is a 'special money' in that remittances, gifts and inheritance are the medium of care and belonging across the physical and cultural distance of national borders (Singh et al, 2012:487).

In spite of the similar attitudes that Chinese students and Indian students shared about parental financial support for their overseas education, some Indian students, in Singh et al's research, sent money back to support their family in India. It was not clear how affluent these Indian students' parents were. Nevertheless, Singh et al did not indicate parental financial needs as a factor, instead, they pointed out that the difference in Indian students' money-sending behaviour, was in the different "value students are placing on self-reliance and their questioning of their previous financial dependence on their parents" (2012: 487).

Compared to the Indian children, Chinese one-child migrants showed a stronger sense of entitlement, especially to do with their identity as "the one and only" in the family. Although a very small number of (mostly male) respondents felt guilty about being financially dependent on their parents (like the Indian students), the pursuit for greater mobility overshadowed the slight sense of guilt. In most cases, receiving parents' money was justified in terms of their parents' *aspirations* for their children – for the child to be better equipped to achieve what the parents had not been able to achieve.

A similar theme can be found in the parents' interviews, where many parents mentioned "the lack of opportunity and material condition" when they were young; therefore the ultimate goal, to let their child take the opportunity and live a better life, overrode the matter of money. Beiyao's (female, 30, middle-income) mother (55, teacher) recalled how she had to persuade her daughter to accept her financial support:

"She [my daughter] didn't want to do a PhD after the Master's degree. She said she didn't want to spend my money any more, she knew it wasn't easy for me to earn money. I said 'you are young, you should carry on studying'…I took her to my home town, a very poor mountain village. I told her how I studied and worked my way to the big city… I said 'you are now standing on top of me, you shouldn't turn back'".

With parents also encouraging the idea of financial transfer, it was easy for the children to take their access to parental resource for granted. Two respondents reported that they became aware of their "financial privilege" through the comparison with their peers who had siblings. Bolin (38, lower-income, less affluent parents) was born three years before the one-child policy was officially enforced, so some of her peers had siblings. Bolin observed that:

"Because you are the only child, parents give all their resources to you. This kind of support can continue even after you finished university. Among my peers, those who had siblings tended to be more calculating. Especially among girls who had a brother, if there is only one portion of resource in the family, she'd know from a very young age that the family resource was more likely to go to the brother, therefore, she'd learn more quickly about how to keep her eyes sharp and take advantage for herself."

Yizi (31, higher-income, medium-affluent parent) also compared her sense of financial security in the family with her Malaysian friend who had 3 siblings:

"She [Malaysian friend] was jealous of me, she said 'you don't need to think much when you spend money, you can choose to save your income or to spend it all, because your parent's money will sooner or later be yours. But I can't. Even when my parents did give me some

money they had to do it in secret so that my brothers and sister didn't know…My parents said their property would go to my brothers, there will be nothing left for my sister and I.' She said the issue of money was something the only child took for granted. I think she was right, I never had to worry about such things."

The awareness of entitlement through comparison with non one-child peers was found only among females. Gender inequality still existed in the parents' generation but it was much less evident in the one-child families in this study. Male only children were less likely to express awareness of their financial privilege when they compared themselves with other male non-only children because the latter were also in an advantaged position in the family resource distribution. This factor may partly explain the fact that the male respondents' did not articulate a sense of entitlement; it is also possible that they did not feel as comfortable about expressing their sense of entitlement to the researcher.

Slightly less than half of the respondents expressed certain levels of financial expectations from parents, which included some who had received informal subsidies after education or help in buying a property and some who had not (yet) received parental financial support beyond education costs. However, regardless of whether the money had been transferred, when talking about the need for parental financial help to achieve their plans respondents used the phrase "*Jia li de qian*", meaning "money from home" or "my family's money" rather than saying "money from parents" or "my parent's money". Furthermore, there was an absence of the need for a negotiation process when it came to including parental financial support in the respondents' spending plans; respondents spoke about their spending plans with "money from home" being already incorporated in their plans, regardless of the level of seriousness of their plans.

Quan (male, 26, lower-income, affluent parents) had just applied for a self-funded

PhD course at the time of the interview. His parents had a successful business in China; their wealth formed an important foundation for Quan's future plans:

> *"China's economy has been good lately, my parents made some money, so my PhD cost is not a problem…I had a problem with visa extension last year, otherwise my parents could have come and bought me a house as soon as I got my visa extension…I still need to go back [to China] and inherit my parent's business, so I will return in the future. If I had a sibling…I don't know."*

Quan clearly took his parent's money for granted, while Yongan (male, 35, middle-income, medium-affluent parent) relied entirely on himself when he bought his property in Buckinghamshire. However, Yongan thought that he also "owned" his parent's flat in China. When talking about his future settlement, Yongan said, "I have properties in both China and the UK, so I can settle in either place". When asked to explain, he said:

> *"The property in Shanghai belongs to **my parent's side**, I can go to live there whenever I want. It's all the same (emphasis mine)."*

The high rate of entitlement in the sample did not differ significantly in terms of gender[32], one-child's income level or parental income; all these categories expressed a high level of entitlement. This finding revealed three features about the one-child migrants' sense of entitlement to family wealth. First, unlike the traditional belief that mainly sons had a claim to family wealth, daughters in the sample felt equally entitled to parental wealth as did the sons. Second, even the more economically advantaged one-child migrant felt as much sense of entitlement as the less economically advantaged one-child migrant. Likewise, the

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[32] Males expressed their sense of entitlement less directly than females, as discussed earlier in the section.

one-child group from less well-off families felt as much entitlement as those from well-off families.

This evidence suggests that parental financial support for their children should not be understood as an instance of charitable behaviour from a more affluent family member to a poorer one, nor was the amount of the financial support consistent with the child's level of financial need or parental ability to give. The dominating principle existed beyond the individual family members' financial circumstances and needs.

b. The symbolism of money and its implications for the child-to-parent transfer

Apart from the 4 Masters students in the sample, the other 23 one-child migrants had an income, and the majority of them had never given parents any money, while the minority who gave money to parents did it on special occasions as a sign of gratitude. When asked why they did not give money (or did not give more money than just occasional gestures), most one-child migrants' immediate response was, "they don't need my money"; for the others it was not necessary given that their parents had a secured pension and medical insurance in China while a few others simply said, "they have more money than I do."

The respondents who recognized that their parents' financial transfers were a "significant sum" expressed little negative emotions associated with it; they did not show or express any sense of pressure to pay back that "significant sum". Such an attitude and lack of pressure to pay back their parents was in sharp contrast to Vanessa Fong's findings about working-class one-child Chinese migrants: "children of factory workers" who went to study in developed Western countries "often had to use their parents' entire life savings and proceeds from sales of their family homes" as well as loans from relatives. The loans and desperate financial situation "put a lot of pressure on the transnational student to earn enough money

abroad to pay back those loans as soon as possible" (Fong, 2011:78).

Interestingly, the 3 respondents in this sample who worked part-time during their study in the UK came from affluent and medium-affluent families. Their motivation for doing part-time jobs was not because their parents could not afford to pay for their expenses, but from a sense of achievement generated from "using my own money". Overall, this study's sample was more financially affluent than Fong's sample, and it was clear that the parental level of affluence made a significant difference in the psychological impact of parental financial help and the one-child's economic behaviour in the host country.

Although most respondents saw the giving money to parents as a "symbol of gratitude", a small number of male respondents saw the "symbol" as inappropriate in relation to their emotional closeness with their parents. Liwen (30, middle-income, medium-affluent parents) and Kai (28, lower-income, affluent parents) were dismissive of the idea of "sending/giving money to parents" and commented that it was "weird" and "false". Demin (33, higher-income, medium-affluent parents) said:" giving money is only a symbol, and such a formality is not required between parents and child." Although this kind of opinion was not widely shared, it suggested different implications of money transfer from child to parents in different families.

Furthermore, given the traditional emphasis of the adult son's role as the supporter of the family, these 3 one-child males clearly saw that the traditional obligation element in the family was irrelevant in today's context. The absence of a sense of financial obligation was not a feature of previous waves of Chinese migrants, especially among migrant sons, whose priority was to send remittances back home. In the new middle class migrant cohort, the direction of international as well as intergenerational money flow has been reversed.

c. Comparison with non-one-child migrant's perception

The 6 respondents with siblings added another dimension to the family's financial arrangements. Respondents from non-one-child families reported a significantly different financial family dynamic. The intergenerational financial transfers were much less intense; no respondent mentioned parental support (or the expectation of it) in buying a property in the UK. Furthermore, there was an absence of the sense of entitlement to parental wealth. Nevertheless, instead of an intense exchange with *parents*, for some respondents the financial exchange with their sibling became the priority (Table 12 shows the emotion and financial relationship the 6 non one-child migrants had with their siblings).

Table 12: 6 non one-child respondents' relationship with siblings

emotionally and financially close	Qiaolin (36, female), Wenbin (36, male)
emotionally close but financially separate	Feng (34, female), Chuanli (31, male)
emotionally distant and financially separate	Gaomei (27, female), Qianqian (27, female)

In the emotionally and financially close group, the 2 respondents both had an older female sibling, but they had a different inter-sibling financial relationship. Wenbin (male, 36, higher-income) grew up in a financially deprived rural family. His parents were both low-income farmers, and they had had to borrow money to raise two children. Wenbin's sister was 6 years older than him. She had had to give up high school and started working from a young age to help with the family finances as well as to help fund Wenbin's university education in China. When Wenbin decided to come to the UK to do an MBA course, his parents and sister supported him both financially and emotionally. At the point of interview Wenbin had a successful business in both China and the UK and had become the main financial supporter in the family. He was the only migrant in the sample who reported sending money to parents regularly: "They don't need my money, but I transfer money to their account each month anyway. It's their decision whether to

use it or not (laugh)." When speaking of his sister, Wenbin was full of appreciation and gratitude, he also revealed the financial closeness between him and his sister: "We are close in many aspects, even finance, we haven't separated our assets … she is part of my company, she also has her own business now."

Qiaolin (female, 36, middle-income) grew up in a medium-income urban family. She experienced her parent's divorce and the loss of her brother when she was a young girl. Qiaolin's sister, who was 8 years older, became her main supporter since their mother became withdrawn after those events (see Chapter 4). The sister and her husband funded Qiaolin's study abroad and continued to support her financially after Qiaolin started working in the UK, including house purchasing and informal subsidies. Qiaolin was aware and was very appreciative of the extraordinary amount of support her sister had given to her:

> *"My sister is more like a mother to me…They say 'you have such a good sister, [we've] never seen any sister like that'… it is very rare to have such a selfless sister."*

Qiaolin later emphasized that her sister frequently offered to give her more money without her asking, and described herself as "lucky".

These two cases show that financial transfers could be between a more affluent family member and less affluent family member, and that a sibling sometimes replaced the role of parents as supporters for the other sibling. Furthermore, the role of receiver and supporter in the family could change over time. However, it was not clear to what extent the sibling financial transfer was a loan or an outright gift. Qiaolin, for example, called the financial transfer from her sister "subsidies"; while Wenbin shared his business asset with his sister, to some extent, as a way to "pay back" his sister's support earlier in their lives. Nevertheless, although there was no clear "lend-borrow" feature found among sibling exchange in the small

sample, there was also a much less felt sense of entitlement of sibling's financial support than the kind of entitlement only children felt about parental support.

The sense of entitlement was much weaker among non-one-child respondents in terms of the actual financial support they received and financial expectations from parents. However, gender inequality became more obvious as it appeared to be a governing rule of family resource distribution in some families, especially in Wenbin's case. In spite of the deep appreciation for his sister and parents, Wenbin did not indicate in any way that the matter was unfair for his sister in the sacrifice of her own education. At the time of the interview, Wenbin's business had expanded in both the UK and China. His sister benefited financially as she was in the management team. Wenbin was also prepared to provide a base for his nephew if his sister wanted to send her child to the UK for education. Perhaps by sharing in Wenbin's success, the sense of "unfairness" to the sister was reduced in the family. Nevertheless, how each party felt before the gendered family strategy became successful, was obscured in this retrospective account.

In terms of giving money to parents, apart from the regular money-giving in Wenbin's case, the other 5 non-one-child migrants showed a similar pattern to the one-child migrants; 2 out of 5 respondents gave a small amount of money to parents on special occasions as a sign of gratitude. Chuanli (male, 31, middle-income, less-affluent parents) had a younger sister and he saw himself as the sibling with more responsibilities; he separated "giving money to parents" from "*asking* parents if they needed money", and regarded the former as a sign of gratitude and the latter as unnecessary:

> "It's my **own parents** we are talking about. No need to ask! They **definitely** won't accept my money. Usually I don't ask such things, I think it being **too polite**, it doesn't even sound like we are a family [emphasis original]."

Therefore, a similar awareness of parental financial self-sufficiency, lack of pressure to support parents financially, and the disputed opinion about the implications of the symbolic nature of money-giving, was found in non-one-child transnational families. However, having a sibling brought more diversity (and complexity) to the financial dynamics in such families; similar to the dynamics of care in non one-child families (see Section 3.2.2.b.), there was a level of flexibility in the supporter/receiver roles. Nevertheless, one-child families have more flexibility in terms of parent-to-child asset transfer, which was frequently used, and sometimes taken for granted in the allocation of transnational family resources.

5.4 Summary

One-child migrants often continued to receive substantial financial parental support after they finished education and started working as professionals. Parental support usually came in the forms of contributions toward purchasing property, a "financial safety net" and childcare in the host country. Furthermore, in addition to appreciation, there was a commonly felt sense of entitlement among the one-child beneficiaries. The sense of financial security as the only child in the family continued, including those who had established their own families in the UK. Finally, the parents in the study were largely financially independent with different levels of wealth, which enabled them to support their child overseas and expected little financial return.

Middle class one-child migrants engaged in a reversal in the direction of the international remittances flow. It is the first time in Chinese international migration history that a predominately China-to-overseas financial transfer has taken place, especially between family members at home and working migrant children in a developed country. Compared to the one-child migrants from the less well-off background in Vanessa Fong's research, this cohort showed a greater level of

financial mobility and had a more positive outlook in the host country. Such a financial flow pattern further substantiates research to do with the "delayed repayment" trend from the younger generation to the older generation in families in China. Moreover, one-child families brought forward the process of inheritance, and thus contributed to a greater flexibility for the family to re-allocate resources between the two generations and countries.

Furthermore, the childcare arrangement in the study showed a child-centred and host-country-centred pattern where grandparents travelled to the UK to provide childcare. The taken-for-grantedness of such arrangements emphasized the relationship between the one-child migrants and their next generation in the host country over economic factors in child rearing. The latter factor was usually the reason why second-generation children were sent back to China among earlier migrant families. These arrangements also showed a high level of mobility of parents as "flying child carers" relative to parents of earlier Chinese migrants.

By taking advantage of the global-financial and social environment, the transnational one-child families were able to maximize investment with the younger generation's interest as its priority. Such a strategy was based on the condition of parental financial self-sufficiency. The parents in the study were largely the beneficiaries of the 1978 economic reform, which led to a rapid income increase and business opportunity. Additionally, the high saving rates of parents also resulted in wealth accumulation at different levels. Therefore, as the research here has shown, the traditional money-giving activity from child to parents no longer constituted an essential income for parents: it had primarily become a symbolic formality, which became a way of bonding in the transnational family.

Chapter 6. Changing family contracts: intergenerational relationships in one-child transnational families

The intergenerational support among families in this study has been thus far predominately child-centred. This chapter looks at the other side of family support: children's responsibility towards their parents. The notion of reciprocity has been a central feature of human relationships in general[33], but intergenerational support indicates more than a simple "invest and pay-back" balance.

Although the *family contracts* discussed here are mostly between generations, rather than *intra*-generational (between spouses or siblings), it has to be distinguished from the term *intergenerational contract*. Some researchers tend to use these two terms interchangeably. Nevertheless, *intergenerational contract* also implies a macro-level resource flow between generations through the mediation of taxation and social redistribution by the state, without "direct exchanges between the generations involved" (Walker, 1996:2). As this chapter focuses on the parent-child relationship, the phrase *family contract* will be used throughout.

Children's attitudes towards their responsibilities for the older generation provide an important source of information about the role family can play in supporting an ageing demographic (both in the East and West). Given the family-oriented nature of Chinese culture and the middle class background of most one-child migrants, the families in this study provided a unique opportunity to study the impact of modernisation and globalisation on one type of contemporary transnational family contract. Furthermore, having parents at different ages from their early 50s to late 60s provided a good opportunity to investigate how children and parents "negotiated" family responsibilities (Finch and Mason, 1993) while their parents were still in reasonably good health but at

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[33] There are many bodies of literature concerning *reciprocity* that cannot be discussed in detail here. For example, the moral and practical implications of *reciprocity* (Uehara, 1995, Gouldner, 1960), the gift economy (Cheal, 2015, Kranton, 1996), and gift/reciprocity in Asian Confucian societies (Yang, 1989, Yum, 1988).

different stages of their "older" life.

How did one-child migrants and their parents make sense of the new form of "split-household", and cope with the potential conflict between the child's aspiration and plans, and parental needs? More specifically, how did family members discuss and negotiate the needs of ageing parents? How did their being overseas intensify the only children's sense of pressure to look after their parents? And how did the changing situations of parents (e.g. ageing) and children (e.g. forming their own nuclear family) impact on the on-going family negotiation process?

6.1 The Chinese family contract and its development in a changing society

An adage in China says "raise children for old age care" (*Yang er fang lao*), which implies mutual dependency between parents and children. Such a two-way support flow is not in any way exclusive to Chinese society. Parents investing in children's up-bringing and well-being in exchange for old age care from children is a basic principle of reciprocity within various family formations. However, the particular dynamics concerning the responsibilities and expectations vary in different societies as these contracts have been shaped by factors beyond the family level -- both from above (state policy) and from below ("culture logic") (Göransson, 2009:85, Finch, 1989, Lewis and Meredith, 1988). With the idea of a cultural logic the rest of the section will briefly analyse the role of filial piety and the Chinese state policy before putting the transnational one-child family into the context of the changing space (between China and the UK) and time (different generations).

6.1.1 Filial piety: then and now

> The Master said, 'The service which a filial son does to his parents is as follows:
> - In his general conduct to them, he manifests the utmost reverence; in his
> nourishing of them, his endeavour is to give them the utmost pleasure; when

they are ill, he feels the greatest anxiety; in mourning of them (dead), he exhibits every demonstration of grief; in sacrificing to them, he displays the utmost solemnity. When a son is complete in these five things (he may be pronounced) able to serve his parents (Classic of Filial Piety, 1988: 480).

In Chinese families the notion of filial piety has been the dominatnt "cultural logic" for more than 2000 years (Zhan and Montgomery, 2003). It is arguably one of the oldest forms of family contract that bind parents and children through practical duties and the provision of emotional support. The tradition of filial piety, which was embellished by Confucius (551-478 B.C.) and reinforced by Mencius (372-289 B.C.), has been the governing principle with regard to the family obligations of the younger generation for centuries. However, the varying definitions of this ancient term are vague; it is easy to make the mistake of assuming "filial piety" to be the preeminent cultural explanation to (almost) all phenomena in Chinese families. Part of the confusion is caused by the fact that the concept of "filial piety" has not remained static; its meanings and forms have been subjected to modification through ancient dynasties and modern states. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the practice of "filial piety" in the context of society today.

Traditionally, filial piety applied both to when parents were living and dead (as shown in the quote above). In feudal China, an official must resign in order to mourn for the death of a parent (Wolf, 1984). Such a posthumous filial piety requirement is unrealistic in contemporary society. However, part of the tradition has remained. A public holiday is designated for such activities: Qingmin Festival, also known as the "Tomb-sweeping Day", has been kept for the living to pay tribute to their ancestors. The importance of ancestor worship partly explains the "son-preference" phenomenon among couples, even after the "one-child" policy was enacted in 1979; posthumous rituals were traditionally performed only by sons. The gendered role of posthumous ritual no longer applies in most cities, especially given that each family could have only one child. However, having an only child settled overseas would mean that there

would be no off-spring left in China to visit the older generations' tombs after parents pass away. Thus this form of filial duty has been discontinued.

While the posthumous filial duty has undergone a rapid decline, the filial piety towards living parents is the focus of the chapter here (as has been for most researchers who invoked the term). Children were expected to fulfill a parent's practical and financial/material needs; look after a parent's emotional wellbeing. Filial piety prescribes obedience and respect from the younger to the older generation regardless of an individual's age. The general pattern of obedience and respect to parents is maintained throughout the child's life (Keller et al., 2005).

Co-residence has been essential for adult children to carry out everyday parental practical support. While multi-generation families living in the same household were widespread in agrarian society, it is relatively uncommon in today's Chinese cities. Since 2011, the population in Chinese cities has surpassed that in rural areas (compared to the urban population rate at 20% in 1981) (World Bank, 2015). Apart from the compressed living space in urban areas, longer life expectancy of older people, the smaller number of adult children, and demanding jobs, have all contributed to the shift to separate, atomized family living arrangements. Furthermore, women's participation in full-time employment[34] has reduced their availability for traditional domestic roles, including looking after elderly parents (usually parents-in-law) at home.

In 2015, the number of elderly people (aged 60 and above) reached 212 million (15% of the whole population) (Xinhua News, 2015), and nearly half (41.9%) of elderly people did not cohabit with their child(ren) (NHFPC, 2015) (the rate was 25% in 1987 [Tian, 1988]). These data also imply that slightly more than half of elderly people lived with their child(ren). In the UK, the percentage of elderly parents (aged 60 and above) cohabiting with child(ren) was approximately 20% in 2010 (Chan and Ermisch, 2013).

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[34] During Mao's era the employment rate of women increased from 10% in the 1950s to 80-90%, and has remained high into the 21st Century (Fang and Walker, 2015).

Compared to their counterparts in the UK, the Chinese showed a stronger family-orientated living arrangement for the elderly. However, in the context of a traditionally family-centred inter-generational care relationship, the high rate of the "empty nest" faced by many elderly parents indicated a significant change in the provision of parental care at a practical/physical level.

While the statistics are based on a national level, it does not follow that there has been a homogeneous shift in filial piety among all families. Especially after the growing social stratification during the post-reform period (see Chapter 3 for family stratification pre and post 1978), expectations and responsibilities between parents and children varied among different regions and economic backgrounds. Compared to their rural counterparts, elderly people in urban areas rated psychological needs (such as leisure activity and close company) as being more important than material needs in their life (Sun et al, 2015). In this study, middle class parents did not need financial support from their children, but had continued to transfer money and sometimes had been the care provider for their child's family (see Chapter 5). With parents being more financially and physically independent, the child's role as the material supporter for the older generation has been reduced (or delayed); meanwhile the emotional care from the only child became even more valued.

It is widely acknowledged, both in China and in the West, that emotional care is an important part of parental care. Niky James has proposed a formula of care: "care = organisation + physical labour + emotional labour" (1992); Hilary Graham (1983:28) called caring "a labour of love" which consisted of the carers' "affection and service". However, filial piety requires more than that. The required conduct/behaviour needed to fulfill parents' psychological needs, and the social pressure to do so, are the two features of filial piety that distinguished the Chinese inter-generational relationship from the West's idea of care responsibility.

The consistent condition in filial piety prescribed obedience and respect from the

younger to the older generation *regardless* of an individual's age. The general pattern of obedience and respect to parents is maintained throughout the child's life (Keller et al, 2005). The latter element of filial piety can be found in the up-bringing of migrants in this study. Half of the one-child respondents experienced a "traditionally authoritarian" parent-child relationship where some children felt pressure to be "well-behaved" in the family (see Chapter 3). At the point of interview, a few migrant children as well as all 7 parent respondents, explicitly emphasized the importance of "*Shun*" (obedience/respect) in their understanding of filial piety. Therefore, the role filial piety plays in middle class families may be less observable, but it would be too simple to assume the erosion of filial piety based on the decline of more observable filial *acts*, such as material and practical support.

Moreover, the implication of "being a filial child" on an individual's reputation in Chinese society has blurred the boundary between domestic care and public opinion, thus making filial piety a socially enforced obligation. An individual's "filial demonstration" is associated with being "a reliable, trustworthy and honourable person" (Ikels, 2004:5), thus it is "a central measure of their moral worth" (Whyte, 2004:106). An individual can gain social capital outside of the family by being filial to his/her parents, likewise, an individual's reputation (social capital) can be harmed by not being filial.

As Ikels has asserted, "the practice of filial piety was everybody's business" (2004:5). Other members in the community were given the right and responsibility to inspect, monitor or even interfere with how the younger generation should care for the elderly. In response to the belief that there was "no offence greater than lack of filial piety", the pre-Tang dynasty (pre-AD681) law stated that "parents (or even other persons) might accuse children of unfilial behaviour of any kind and have them punished by the authorities" (MacCormack, 2002: 141). In 21st Century China, the government has encouraged families to sign a Family Support Agreement (FSA); voluntary contract between parents and adult children to provide support to parents (Chou, 2010).

In order to carry out the contract, according to *The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly*, "A grassroots self-governing organization and organization of the elderly or the employer of the supporters shall supervise the fulfillment of the agreement" (The State Council of PRC, 2012). Therefore, children not only have a moral obligation, but also a legal obligation towards their parents (Whyte, 2004). The next section will further examine how the state shaped the idea of a family contract from above.

6.1.2 <u>State policy: the other shaping hand</u>

During Mao's communist era (1949-1978), filial piety, being a key plank of Confucianism, was considered to be one of the core values of the feudal society, thus it was critically attacked. However, some scholars found that the communist state was against only certain elements of filial piety, for example, absolutely obeying parents and traditional funeral practice, but it did not attempt to eliminate the traditional value of interdependency between parents and children (Chow, 1991, Wolf, 1984, Davis-Friedman, 1983, Ikels, 1983). The temporarily suppressed pro-filial-piety discourse soon regained its popularity after the 1978 economic reform (Whyte, 1997).

In today's China, the state has a strong presence in promoting filial piety in both the legal and moral sense. The state enacted an amendment of *The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and the Interests of the Elderly* on July 1st 2013. The addition made visiting or calling parents regularly a *legal* obligation, failure to do so could lead to a lawsuit. However, the frequency of the home-visit was not specified (Ford, 2013). The law was considered "educational", and served as a starting point of a lawsuit (Hatton, 2013). Consequently, lawsuits petitioned by elderly parents for more "emotional support" from children have been reported in various cities. However, even among the successful cases, the enforcement of "regular visits" has proven to be very difficult. Furthermore, the lawsuits often widened the emotional gap

between already estranged parents and children (People.cn, 2015, Xinhua News, 2015, Meng and Hunt, 2013).

The establishment of the law has been associated with an increasingly reported level of parental neglect in China (BBC, 2012). While promoting filial piety through legislation and propaganda, the Chinese state was reluctant to develop a more sophisticated welfare system for the elderly in need; this can be observed from its pension system and state care provision. The establishment of the Chinese pension system has been uneven between the employed and the unemployed (and self-employed), as well as between urban and rural areas. Urban employees, especially those working in state-owned institutions, have had a secured pension scheme for decades (Qu, 2010) (see Chapter 3 for the "work unit" welfare).

However, a systematic pension scheme for rural residents and unemployed urban residents was carried out only since 2010, and pension scheme coverage did not reach a national level until 2012 (Wang and Tian, 2015). A national survey conducted in 2009 showed that rural citizens preferred to rely on themselves or their child(ren) for old age care, rather than rely on social welfare (Yu, 2012). Whether this nation-wide pension system will bring financial security to the impoverished elderly, especially in rural areas, is not yet clear.

The long-term care institutions have a mixture of standards and policies. Government funded care institutions accept only the very desperate elderly, and turning to such institutions is usually associated with stigma (Wu et al, 2008). The emergence and quick development of private services has taken place since the mid-1990s (Zhan et al, 2008). However, high-quality care homes cater for only financially affluent clients. The high cost of these institutions contributed to a shift of attitude from stigma to privilege (Zhan et al, 2008). The gap remains for the vast group in the middle: 90% of the elderly still relied on familial care in 2012 (Zhang, 2012).

In 2014 there were more than 36 million bedridden or semi-bedridden elderly people but only 356,000 care-staff, and 50,000 certificated carers for the elderly (Wang and Tian, 2015). Meanwhile, the government has reduced its funding towards maintaining elderly care institutions in order to make them become financially self-reliant as part of economic reform (Feng, et al, 2011, Zhan et al, 2008). The shortage of staff in the caring provision and the reduced government subsidies are likely to pose long-term care problems even for middle class urban residents. Staff shortages in the long-term care sector have become one of the major issues in the UK and other Western European countries (Royal College of Nursing, 2010, Hussein and Manthorpe, 2005). Chinese families have become more geographically dispersed as a result of massive internal migration[35]; and the demand for non-familial care assistance is likely to increase across the country. Parents and children in this study expressed the tendency to rely on paid carers or "high quality" care homes for parents' future long-term care. However, the current underdeveloped professional care provision still has a long way to go before becoming an alternative to familial care for the majority of the middle class elderly population in China.

The support from the state for the elderly is believed to undermine family obligations (Ikels, 1990). By minimizing the state's role in providing welfare for its citizens, the family will remain the main source of support for the very elderly (and the very young), thus enforcing filial piety in intergenerational relationships. On the other hand, by establishing a welfare state, like the British did in the late 1940s, the principle that a citizen has the right to a claim upon the collective resources of the state (as an alternative to family) has emerged (Finch, 1989). However, the "familial contract" strategy has also been found in "nearly every society in East, South and South-East Asia" where family support significantly subsidises contemporary Asian development (Croll, 2006:478, see also Lee, 2010, Park et al., 2005, Sung, 2001). Therefore, the relationship between economic development (modernisation) may not necessarily lead

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[35] According to the Chinese Census in 2010, among the country's 1.3 billion population, 26% were internal migrants. Compared to the previous census in 2000, the number of internal migrants had increased by 81.3% (National Bureau of Statistics of PRC, 2011).

to weakened family contracts.

In order to investigate how contemporary Chinese family contracts are reconfigured and renegotiated, the rest of the chapter will move back to a micro-level observation by focusing on the one-child migrants and their parents (while keeping in mind the influence from the macro-level culture and policy changes). Compared to most research about contemporary Chinese inter-generational relations, the transnational one-child family comprises the most challenging change since the founding of the PRC in 1949. The next section will demonstrate how the parent-child relationship among migrants in this study has been caught in the middle of such a radical change.

6.1.3 Viewing the family contract in the changing space and time

When viewed from a vertical (time) perspective, family contracts can be influenced by the contract of the previous generation; likewise, it can also influence the obligations and expectations between the current and the next generation. When viewed from a horizontal (space) perspective, family contracts were subject to changes according to the changing physical and social space in which parents and children found themselves. When combined with these two perspectives, the transnational one-child family in this study constitutes the cohort that experienced the most intense space and time changes within two generations: historically, the family members experienced the most radical political upheavals and drastic economic reforms[36] in modern Chinese history. Structurally, these nuclear families were made up of the "baby boomer" generation[37] and the "one-child" generation; geographically and socially, only children and their parents lived separately in the "West" and the "East". The following Figure shows how the parent-child relationship was being simultaneously influenced by

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[36] The parents' generation grew up during the Great Leap Forward followed by the Great Famine (1958-1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), immediately after came the Economic Reform (1978) which transformed the planned economy to a market economy.
[37] China's baby boom took place during the early to mid 1960s when the fertility rate increased from 3.3 (1961) to 7.3 (1963) (Poston and Duan, 2010). Parents in this study were born mostly between the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s.

vertical and horizontal dynamics.
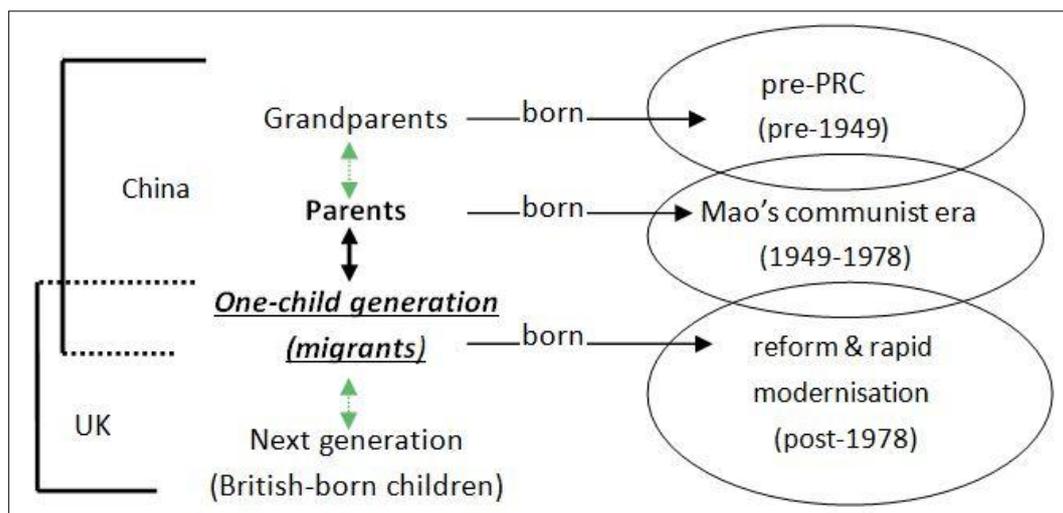
Figure 10: One-child family contract in space and time

As shown in Figure 10, the one-child generation, their parents, and their grandparents were born in sharply and distinctively different political and economic periods in Chinese history. For the one-child migrants who had child(ren) (or planned to have children) in the UK, their British-born children would be brought up in yet another different environment. Will the "traditional family contract" survive such sharp changes through the four generations? Which elements will remain and which parts will diminish? Such questions cannot be fully addressed within the scope of this study. However, it is important to keep a *multi-generational* scope in mind when analysing the family contract between the one-child generation and their parents.

While the differences between generations impacted on most one-child families in China, the space difference between China and the UK is unique to one-child families in this study. Such a distance has exacerbated the already complex generational gap between the one-child generation and their parents; the long distance, migration policies, the exclusiveness of a national welfare system, and parents' language difficulties, have all created barriers between migrant children and their parents (which will be elaborated on in section 6.2.1).

Not all the one-child families in this study anticipated these difficulties at the point of the child's migration. In most cases, the decision for the child to remain in the UK after study was more incidental, rather than carefully planned (see Chapter 4). How did the one-child migrants and their parents negotiate their family contract? How did the transnational one-child family cope with the gaps in distance and time together (as a household) but separately (in different countries)? The rest of the chapter will examine Figure 10's structure and investigate the long-distance intergenerational relationship as well as the continuity and (dis)continuity of the family contract through generations.

6.2 Distance and intergenerational relationship

This section explores space, which includes both physical space and social space. Transnational families have been regarded as a model of family strategy for upward mobility; highly mobile Chinese people take advantage of spatial difference, and pursue a variety of benefits on a global level (Waters, 2005, Ong and Nonini, 1997). Although some scholars imagine a transnational community constituted of the highly mobile, flexible "global citizen" (Ong, 1999) for whom notions of the "nation-state" have become irrelevant (Wong, 2003, Yang, 2011), middle class transnational families in this study have encountered great barriers as a result of distance and national borders.

Furthermore, the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the 21st Century has been celebrated for "generating new ways of living together and acting transnationally in the digital era" (Nadelcu, 2012:1339). Migrants in this study reported using frequent flights and ICT to keep "long distance intimacy". However, this section will not go into details about how improved transportation and ICT helped maintain connections between one-child migrants and their parents. Internet and flights are, after all, tools used by family members to exchange information, emotions and support. The availability of the technology is one thing, how to use it, and the

implications associated with the communication patterns, are quite another matter. Therefore, analysis here will be focused on the *motivation* behind migrants' home visits and everyday long distance communication: were these activities inspired by love or duty?

6.2.1 The practical difficulties for transnational one-child families

Long distances constituted the main fear for migrants when talking about possible "emergency cases in China". By "emergency cases" respondents meant a sudden major illness or accident that could happen to parents. Migrants in the UK faced a much longer travel time and less frequent flights than children who lived in China. Compared to migrants who had a sibling living in China, one-child migrants showed significantly greater concern and pressure about this practical matter. As Ran (male, 27) emphasized: "I need to be able to go back within a few hours' time, not the next day. In some emergency situations it would be too late." In comparison, Chuanli (male, 31, who has a sister) thought his sister's physical proximity to their parents gave him "a sense of peace of mind". The issue of distance affected both sides. Although some parents have travelled to the UK on a regular basis (see Chapter 5 "flying grandparents"), for some other parents, because of their chronic illnesses long flights were physically and psychologically challenging. A small number of respondents reported that their parents had never visited the UK because of the fear of the long flight.

British migration policy is the most direct barrier for parents to come to the UK for family reunification. At the time of the study all parents who had been to the UK came under the short-term visitor's visa (see Chapter 5). None of the parents had attempted to apply for a long-term visa to the UK. The primary reason was the strict migration policy concerning an "elderly dependent relative"; applicants must prove that they have no means of survival in China and that joining their child in the UK is the only

option[38]. Because of the parents' physical mobility, financial independence and the company of their spouses, no parent in this study met such basic application criteria. It was understood by most respondents and parents that the chance for parents to be granted a long-term visa was very small.

Apart from the visa policy, the lack of overseas medical insurance for parents was another problem. Under the short-term visa, parents were not entitled to free medical care provided by the NHS in the UK. As parents are more likely to become ill as they age, the potential cost of private medical care imposed a great financial burden on both parents and children. Furthermore, living in the UK for parents entailed giving up the benefit of their medical insurance in China. The contrast between the medical expense in the UK and in China added another barrier to any likelihood of long-term parental care in the UK.

Finally, even if parents were granted a long-term visa and free medical care in the UK, their lack of English would make any parents daily activity difficult, and would increase their dependency on their child, thereby reducing their own mobility. More than half of the parents (21 out of 33) in this study had never been to the UK or only came briefly as tourists. Furthermore, among the parents who came to look after their grandchildren, it was found that the lack of English, together with lifestyle changes, formed a potential threat to their psychological well-being (see section 5.2.2). Therefore, such a psychological challenge posed a dilemma for parents' future settlement; they may suffer from loneliness as "empty nest" parents if they remained in China; but they may also suffer from loneliness and a sense of alienation if they were away from their familiar social environment in the UK.

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[38] The wording from the Home Office is: "You must prove that: You need long-term care to do everyday personal and household tasks; the care you need is not available or affordable in the country you live in; the person you'll be joining in the UK will be able to support, accommodate and care for you without claiming public funds for at least 5 years" (Home Office, 2015).

Given the difficulty of parents joining their child in the UK, in order to ensure parents' emotional well-being, the most viable and practical way would be for migrant children to return to China. The Annual Report on the Development of Chinese Returnees (2013) presented the following statistics: in 2012 nearly 3 million graduates returned after studying abroad, 90.9% of them chose "to be near parents" as one of their main reasons to return (78.4% chose career development, and 66.7% chose lifestyle reasons) (Wang and Miao, 2013). These figures indicated a close relationship (inter-dependency) between parents and the one-child graduates[39]. Furthermore, the figures also show that parents may be the most significant factor for return migration, but not necessarily the only factor, as career opportunities and lifestyle in China were also major considerations.

It is perhaps not surprising to find the confirmation of the only children's felt responsibility towards their parents was among those who *had already returned*. The only children who remained in the UK represented the cohort that was *not* included in the Report. However, just as returnees went back to China for a variety of reasons, the one-child migrants also remained in the UK for a mixture of reasons (see Chapter 4), and the decisions to return or remain were not made based *solely* on the needs of parental long-term care. Therefore, it cannot be said that only children who remained overseas were necessarily less filial than those who returned. Chinese families have become so diverse that filial practices need to be assessed against their specific circumstances, rather than following a homogeneous standard of filial piety. The next two sections will discuss the practice of "long distance intimacy" between migrant children and their parents, as well as the (unexpected) benefits that distance brought to the binding ties of the transnational one-child family.

6.2.2 <u>Long distance intimacy</u>

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[39] According to the Report, 80% of the returnees in 2012 were aged between 24 and 30. Therefore, it can be inferred that they belong to the one-child generation.

The term "long distance intimacy" was developed by Rhacel Parreñas, which she used to describe transnational intergenerational relations between Filipino migrant mothers and their young adult children left at home (Parreñas, 2015). As migration literature on transnational intergenerational relationships tends to focus on the migrants' relationship with their younger family members, such as children, research rarely addresses "intimacy" issues with the older generation who are also family members separated from adult migrants. Even less academic attention has been paid to the middle class migrants' relationship with their middle class parents living in the home country. Unlike economic migrants who send remittances home as a way to compensate for their physical absence, middle class parents do not need money from their migrant children. However, "empty nest" middle class parents showed a significantly higher demand for emotional, over material needs.

a. Home visits

Home visits were usually the most effective way to bring comfort to parents, and both one-child migrants and non one-child migrants in this study had made frequent visits back home (see Table 13). All respondents saw their parents at least once a year, regardless of how long the migrant had lived in the UK. That is to say, some migrants who had lived in the UK for more than 10 years had also gone back to China on a yearly basis. Most of the respondents were full-time professionals and commonly entitled to 28 days' annual holiday. Each home-visit lasts from 2 to 4 weeks. Therefore, the majority of respondents' annual holidays were spent on home visits.

Table 13: Frequency of home visits

	one-child	non one-child
twice or more a year	5	2
once a year	16	3
every two years or longer	3*	1*
have not been back	3**	0

*Parents came to the UK to provide childcare, so no need to make home-visit.

**Students who had been in the UK for less than a year.

In fact, no respondents complained about "losing" their annual holiday (though they probably would not have felt able to complain to the researcher); on the contrary, they were *proud of* the long length of free time they could spend in visiting parents. Respondents frequently compared their annual visit with their peers who lived in China but at a different city from their parents; most of their peers also visited parents once a year, usually in the "crowded Chinese New Year time", and had shorter annual holidays than migrants working in the UK. It was common for children to live in a different city or different provinces from their parents. Adult children's busy lives in cities severely limited their home-visit frequency to parents, even if they lived in the same city. One-child migrants, like Yongan (male, 35, bank assistant), seemed to be able to reduce his sense of guilt with a rationalised calculation:

> *"For example, I have friends who live in the same city as their parents, but they are busy working. Say, they visit parents every other weekend, it's about 25 days a year. My annual visit to China is also 25 days, no difference in number, only the long distance."*

The "quantification" of emotional care and the direct comparison with other adult children in China revealed the aspect of home visit motivation that focused on meeting the social requirement of once-a-year physical co-presence with parents. A study conducted among middle class French and American migrants in London revealed a less uniformed frequency to their home visits, ranging from yearly visits to "only twice in 30 years". These home visits (both long distance and relatively short distance) were "often associated with the life cycle, for example events such as weddings, the birth of a baby, an illness or death." Furthermore, these events were related not only to their parents, but also to members of the extended family (Ryan et al., 2015).

In comparison, respondents in this study did not have an event-specific pattern to

make home visits[40], visiting home was generally regarded as something natural and did not need a justification. The frequency and length of the home visit was also influenced by how children saw themselves in relation to the "standard filial behaviour" of their peers in China. Therefore, the norm of how children should care for parents in China had its impact on migrants overseas.

b. Daily communication with parents

Most parents of migrants were themselves familiar with the latest communication technology. Both parents and migrant children managed a mixture of message, talk, and video chat with each other on a "smart phone" at a very low cost. Such an advanced form of international communication has transformed the practice of long distance intimacy. Apart from a small number of respondents whose parents sometimes had to work at the weekend, the majority kept a routine of video-chatting/telephoning with parents for at least an hour at the weekends. Video chatting happened more frequently among migrants who had child(ren), as the parents also wanted to "see" the grandchild(ren). Furthermore, other means of communication, like messaging (text or photo), took place even more frequently; while daily communication was reported by both males and females.

However, not all the respondents *enjoyed* this kind of frequent communication with parents; a small number of respondents found such communication with parents psychologically demanding and/or practically difficult. For example, Zhaohui (female, 23, unmarried) found it difficult to express intimate emotion to her father; Ran (male, 27, married) felt guilty that "if my Mum doesn't call me, I'd forget to call her, then she'd be unhappy about it"; Dahong (female, 27, unmarried) kept daily messaging with her parents, but said the content of exchange was sometimes "boring" and "trivial". Nevertheless, in spite of all these difficulties, these respondents still felt morally

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[40] A small number of respondents reported going back for parents' or grandparents' illness. However, this kind of event-triggered visit was treated as a response to an emergency, rather than a planned family visiting holiday.

obliged to fulfill their parents' emotional needs by committing time and patience to long-distance communication.

It is difficult to say to what extent the practice of long distance intimacy derived from "love and respect" or "abstract duty" (Sheng and Settles, 2006); most likely, it was often a combination of the two. Respondents rarely contacted parents for their own emotional support, i.e. when they felt sad or anxious, they went to their spouse or friends (in the UK or in China) for emotional comfort. "Only tell parents good news" was the "golden rule" mentioned repeatedly by respondents; any emotional distress expressed by the migrant child would also bring anxiety to parents. Therefore, the frequent contact with parents, for migrant children, was more to do with looking after a parent's emotional well-being. The time and resource respondents spent in these caring activities (from home visits to daily messaging) showed a high level of dedication to fulfilling parents' emotional needs – and to making them happy.

Older respondents generally showed more understanding of their parent's desire to hear from their child on a frequent basis. Bolin (female, 38, married, has 2 sons) was the oldest one-child respondent; she came to the UK in 2001. Having experienced changes in communication technology as well as changes in her personal life (marriage and children), Bolin gave a retrospective view on the conflict between frequent communication with parents and her daily routine in the UK:

> "Some years ago, when we had only Skype, I'd open my Skype when I went to work. My parents would also open Skype in China, as long as they saw my status was 'online', they'd know I was there. We didn't necessarily need to chat, but that was their way to know where I was, whether I was safe. If one day I was not online, they'd panic and wonder what had happened to me. Before we had this current software, I used to text my parents wherever I went, even just out shopping with my sons … Do I feel burdened? To be honest I used to think it was a bit of a trouble, but I can

understand them now, especially after I became a mother. They know you

are busy, they just want a word to learn that you are fine."

Bolin's parents also regarded frequent telephone contacts as a sign of their daughter's filial piety to them. Bolin's mother cited an incident as an example of her daughter's care for parents. Bolin had shortened a Sunday family outing with her sons in order to get back on time to video chat with her parents. Although Bolin's parents took emotional comfort from the indication that they were their daughter's priority on that occasion, they had tried nevertheless to "push Bolin away". Bolin reported in her interview that sometimes while she was online chatting with her mother, her mother would ask her to stop the conversation and spend more time with Bolin's own children; thus Bolin felt a sense of "selfless care" from her parents.

In this way, the international daily communication became a "game of intimacy"; It was important for children to contact parents *in spite of potential   inconvenience* to show their filial piety, while it was also appropriate for parents to reject their child's "sacrifice" and not impose their emotional needs on their children. Nevertheless, the children's failure to keep up with frequent communication could cause parental anxiety or disappointment; as a result, children's availability for international communication was seen as vital to their parents' overall well-being. Thus the cycle continues: between one-child migrants and their parents, it was the two parties' "sacrifice" and "selfless" pattern that drove the dynamic of intergenerational intimacy. This kind of "offer and reject" pattern was found in other intergenerational activities in this study, such as children's gift buying for parents.

The Dai and Dimond study (1998) showed that compared to American culture (which, generally speaking, reported more limited responsibility from children to parents), Chinese culture encouraged unlimited responsibility and devotion to parents or family. In the context of the middle class one-child transnational family, children held very limited material-providing responsibility, but the culturally prescribed guideline to

provide "unlimited" emotional support was found to be still pervasive. Although it is possible that some respondents did not actually call their parents as frequently as they claimed to, the fact that no respondent criticized their parents for being "too demanding", or "taking up too much time" at least showed that unconditionally supporting parental emotional needs was still considered to be the norm.

Compared to children who lived in China, parents had limited means of contact, or to check on their only child, therefore the long distance may have exacerbated the intensity of communication (and need for reassurance about the well-being of children, and vice versa). Nevertheless, in most cases, the long distance was not a destructive factor for the parent-child relationship. The next section will look at how the long distance could also bond the nuclear family even more closely on a transnational level.

6.2.3 "Selective distancing" and the closer parent-child bond

"Distance lends enchantment" (or "absence makes the heart grow fonder"[41]) describes how interpersonal attraction may be enhanced by individuals being away from each other. While a study of 63 dating couples in the US supported such a claim (Jiang and Hancock, 2013), there is no similar research made about the parent-child relationship. Nevertheless, evidence in this study suggested that both parents and children were aware of the role distance played in smoothing their relationships. The majority of child respondents (both one-child and non one-child) and parent respondents indicated the importance of *not living together* under the same roof. The wish to live independently from both generations is not new. Two separate surveys in the 1990s indicated the trend among urban Chinese residents' support for parents and children to "live close by but not necessarily together" (Ma et al., 1994, Hu and Ye, 1991).

Different levels of tensions with parents were reported among the migrants who shared a house with their parents over a substantial period of time (when parents were

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[41] The Bible, from *Book of Proverbs*.

looking after grandchildren or when migrant children went back to China for a long holiday). The cause of arguments ranged from everyday nitpicking to disputes about child rearing. In the opposite situation, not being able to see parents often made the time that parents and children spent with each other even more precious. Ran (male, 27, married) had an authoritarian relationship with his parents, yet he felt much closer to his parents during each home-visit: "When you meet only two weeks a year, you tend not to argue with each other, you tend to feel closer." A non one-child migrant, Chuanli (male, 31, unmarried), also articulated a similar feeling regarding parents: "When you see parents on a daily basis, you won't treasure that feeling [between parent and child]. I appreciated filial piety more after I left China." Overseas children were more likely to develop a romanticised view of the parent-child relationship, therefore increasing their likelihood to support the notion of filial piety.

Being physically away from China also gave the migrants an opportunity to "selectively distance" themselves from unwanted social relationships in China. Getting away from the complex social networks in China was one of the main reasons for migrants wanting to leave China and to remain in the UK (see Chapter 4). Relationships with friends and extended family members are often reported to grew thin as migrants remained overseas longer. However, some respondents saw this process as a filter which left only "authentic relationships", as well as a way to disentangle themselves from socially imposed obligations from the extended familial and social networks in which they were formerly embedded.

As a result of such a process, the longer migrants settled overseas, the fewer familial and social networks were maintained in China. The one-child respondents revealed a very limited bond with their extended family members, therefore parents became the strongest bond most migrants had in China. The decline in social contacts, particularly friendships, in China, appeared to be linked with a life-cycle pattern. Migrants' friends in China were largely their peers in school or university before they left China. Respondents frequently mentioned "entering the society" (i.e., starting a full-time job)

and "marriage" as two significant points of changes in friendships. Qiaolin (female, 36, non one-child, unmarried, has a daughter) left China when she was 19 and had spent 17 years in the UK:

> "When I left China, my good friends were all teenagers. When I was studying in university here, we were still close and could chat about everything. But after we entered the society, we had very different experiences and started to see things differently … and then they got married, our lives led to different paths…later on when I visited them in China, I found that we didn't have much to talk about, because I didn't have friends anymore."

Not all the respondents had reached the stage where Qiaolin found herself in; however, the impact of significant life events on a friendship was exacerbated by the distinct physical and social spaces migrants and their friends inhabited. Nevertheless, not all long-distance networks were subject to decline. A very small number of respondents indicated close ties with relatives (in China and overseas), or had an awareness to maintain social ties in China for future career purposes. Respondents in the latter group attributed the sustaining of their social network in China to individualised factors such as personality and transnational business needs.

Meanwhile, most respondents established a very limited social network in the UK; respondents were rarely socially involved with any of the local ethnic Chinese community, and the majority also found it difficult to make friends with the non-Chinese. The most common social contacts respondents had (after university) were from work, and in some cases, other parents from their children's nurseries. This profile thus differs from the economic Chinese migrants' (e.g. low-skill migrants from Hong Kong and illegal migrants from Fujian with very limited resources) connections with the "Chinese transnational network" which provided social and material resources for its members (Benton and Gomez, 2011, Faist, 2008, Ong, 1993).

In the context of reducing social connections in China and weak social connections in the UK, the significance of parent-child relationships was more likely to be recognised among one-child migrants than among those children who lived in China. Such a bond became even more significant among those migrants who established their own family in the UK and had decided to settle. The majority said that parents were the only reason they still identified China as "home". A small number of respondents were eligible to adopt British citizenship[42], but their parents' being in China was the main reason why these respondents did not apply for a British passport.

Although migrants may not practise filial piety as often as their counterparts in China, the abstract notion of filial piety may be better preserved (and idealized), at least in particular ways, among the overseas demographic. This is perhaps because by living overseas, away from their parents, they were less likely to take their intimacy with their parents for granted. Some participants spoke of their filial piety towards their parents by contrasting themselves to what they believed to be typical of British parent/child relations (one which they saw as less bound by norms of filial piety). Through such a comparison respondents showed a sense of pride about the closeness in Chinese families as well as their appreciation of filial piety. This attitude echoes "flying grandparents'" proud feelings about Chinese family relationship in comparison to British families (see Chapter 5).

In this sense, the abstract notion of filial piety had become a part of the migrant's identity, part of their "Chineseness". Such comments tended to be expressed by migrants who had child(ren) and who were thinking about their British-born offspring's cultural identity. Although the emphasis on filial piety as part of the migrants' ethnic identity may not necessarily transfer to the actual care of their parents in China, such an observation in this study witnessed the early (subconscious) internalisation of filial piety among the migrant community.

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[42] The Chinese government does not approve of dual nationality.

6.3 The continuity and discontinuity of the family contract through generations

This section is about time, which includes the changing dynamic of the parent-child relationship in the life cycle process and the evolving family contract through multi-generations as perceived by one-child migrants. Family relations are not static, "one's emotional and material needs are strongly linked to stages of the individual's life cycle" (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002:17). If family contracts are based on the mutual dependency of parents and children, then the details of this "dependency" changed as the younger generation developed its own branch of the family tree. The changing nature of family contracts did not mean its unwritten rules were methodologically impossible to capture. Nevertheless, it is important to examine a period of family relationships in the context of their past and future. This study has thus far presented the parent-child relationship in one-child families following a time line: up-bringing (Chapter 3), study abroad (Chapter 4), and overseas settlement (Chapter 5). The rest of this chapter will elaborate on the current stage of the parent-child relationship from the perspective of the past and the future.

6.3.1 Family responsibility, marriage, and future migration decision

Respondents in this study were at different stages of their lives; nearly half of the one-child sample was married. Marriage had a profound impact on an individual's short-term/long-term migration direction as well as the influence of parental needs on their plans. As shown in Chapter 4 (see Section 4.3.3), parental involvement in the children's migration decision-making process was reduced sharply after the child's marriage, and the spouse became a more important factor. Therefore, it was perhaps not surprising to find that married respondents were more likely to express their wish to settle in the UK while unmarried respondents (single or in a relationship) were more committed to returning to China (see Table 14).

Table 14: Intended country of settlement and marital status (one-child migrants)

	unmarried	married	total
China	7	0	7
UK	1	9	10
Not clear	7	3	10

Behind the differences in settlement choices was the shift in the family responsibilities migrants felt before and after marriage. While their career prospects had been an important factor in the unmarried respondents' decision-making process, a small number of respondents (3) saw parental needs as the dominating factor and had planned to return to China *solely because* of it. Compared to the unmarried respondents, married respondents had a very different way of seeing their role in decisions about their migration and potential settlement in Britain: responsibilities not only expanded from the natal family to their own nuclear families, but sometimes also to the in-laws (especially if the spouse was also a one-child migrant). As Demin (male, 33, married, has a son) put it:

> *"Any decision you make, is the result of compromises after taking all aspects into consideration: not just your parents, but also your spouse, your child and your spouse's parents. All of them."*

In this complex decision-making web, as described by Demin, parental influence was clearly a weak strand. Furthermore, the fact that Demin's wife, Beiyao (female, 30) was also a one-child migrant, added to the pressure on this couple. Beiyao expressed a strong commitment towards the reunification with her parents in the future; she was willing to migrate to another country if that meant her parents could join her. However, Demin was less enthusiastic about this plan because of the potential practical challenges: "I hope she will gradually accept settling here [UK]". Therefore, marriage added another level of the negotiation process that inevitably shaped the pre-marriage parent-child relationship.

Significantly, women who married non-Chinese husbands (6 white British and 1 Portuguese) had a more clearly expressed sense of belonging in the UK and were reluctant to regard returning to China as an option for their own nuclear family. It was especially noticeable among those who had child(ren); children's needs were regarded as the priority, and parents' needs came second. Nevertheless, most mothers in the study were prepared to go back to China for a temporary period when their parents' needs became urgent (e.g. when they were very elderly or ill). Such a "temporary period", as indicated by different mothers, ranged from a few months to a few years, largely depending on the needs of their own children.

This shift towards a child-centred commitment had also been reinforced by the grandparents themselves, as the care provider, rather than the care demander (See Chapter 5). The one-child generation had relatively young parents, as only children are also their parents' first-born (also noticeable in this study's sample). This feature gave the one-child generation a gap in time: ideally the middle-age grandparents (in their 50s or 60s) can help with childcare, and when grandparents became very elderly (in their 70s or 80s), the one-child parents would be in their 50s-60s with grown-up children. Such an age gap between the three generations avoided the clash of older care and childcare for the middle generation (i.e. the one-child generation). This kind of ideal timing was mentioned by a number of one-child respondents (married and unmarried) as a justification for making parental care responsibility secondary to the needs of their own family (or career) at the current stage of the respondents' lives. The relative youthfulness of Chinese parents avoided the caring "squeeze" which is more commonly found in British families, in particular, among the higher educated females whose childbearing is delayed and who are more likely to face the expectation of "two-way" ("downward" to children and "upward" to parents) care (Agree et al., 2003).

There was a lack of comparison of male one-child migrants in a similar situation because no men in the sample had a non-Chinese spouse – reflecting also the trend for British Chinese women to outmarry in much higher numbers than British Chinese

men (ONS, 2014). In fact, there was an imbalance in the number of male/female married one-child respondents (12 females and 2 males). In other words, the majority of female respondents in this study were married, while the majority of male respondents were unmarried. However, this imbalance in marital status is not incidental. Male respondents rejected the idea of having a non-Chinese spouse, while no such reference was found among female respondents[43]. Therefore, without such a spouse-preference, Chinese females were more likely to find a spouse than Chinese males[44].

Nevertheless, male migrants' "conservative" attitudes about marriage was consistent with their commitment to a more "traditional form of filial piety"; a significantly larger proportion of unmarried male respondents were prepared to move back permanently to China *for their parents* than were their female counterparts. Although such a commitment was not found among the two married male one-child migrants in the study, more married male participants are needed to demonstrate how (or whether) parental influence is indeed being changed before and after marriage.

An offspring's marriage is regarded as a significant turning point in parent-child relationships in both China and the West. Although traditional perceptions are based upon a gender stereotype[45], empirical research has shown a more gender-balanced profile with regard to marriage and the parent-child relationship (Barrett and Morman, 2012, Marrill, 2011, Zhang, 2009). While children in transnational families also experienced such a change in their relationship with parents as they established their own families, the implications for the family were profound; the shifting commitment

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[43] The 2011 Census showed that, in terms of inter-ethnic marriages, "the biggest difference between the sexes was found with the Chinese group, where women were almost twice as likely (39%) to be in an inter-ethnic relationship as men (20%)" (ONS, 2014). In this study, the majority of married women had a non-Chinese spouse (9 out of 12), while both of the 2 married men had a Chinese wife.

[44] It was not clear to what extent the difference between Chinese male and female's inter-ethnic marriage percentage was caused by the male's resistance to a non-Chinese spouse. It is not impossible that male respondents emphasized their personal preference to cover the embarrassment (or discrimination) they experienced in the inter-ethnic marriage market.

[45] An adage in the West says: "A son is a son 'till he gets a wife, but a daughter is a daughter all her life", while in China, "a married out daughter is like spilt water".

from parents in China to spouse and off-spring in the UK could directly shape, or sometimes completely alter, the future migration decision of the child. As a result, the temporarily separated status of the one-child family was likely to become permanent. Without any other children, parents of the transnational one-child migrants may even become the last generation of the family line to live in China.

6.3.2 The older generation: coming to terms with the intergenerational transition

Parents of the one-child migrants in this study were born and brought up during Mao's communist era, and their parents were largely uneducated peasants, except for a very small number of educated cases. If the 1978 reform marked the beginning of modernisation of China, then the parent cohort in this study arguably represented the more "modern" group in their generation; they emerged as the new middle class, had shown a tendency towards an unconventional relationship with their child (see Chapter 3), and had sent their child to study abroad. Furthermore, half of the 7 parents interviewed in this study were prepared to migrate to the UK permanently if the migration policy were to be relaxed.

How did parents of the one-child migrants see the contrast between the two generations with regard to up-bringing, filial duty towards the older generation, and sibling companionship? Ran's (male, 27, software engineer) father (55, former manager of a state-owned factory) provided a summary which echoed many other parents' responses:

"Many people can't understand, for example, I had 6 siblings, yet I have only 1 child, do I feel sorry about it? No, I don't feel sorry at all. Why? One reason is the policy's restriction. The other reason is that my wife and I didn't have much money. We were struggling with only one child because of the long working hours and low income. We felt a great pressure with just one child, so we didn't want a second child. Later on with better economic conditions,

we did think about the idea of having another child, but the desire was not strong. If you ask me how do I feel about the loss of sibling companionship, I tell you it was painful for me to have so many siblings. Our family was poor…The big happy four-generation-under-the-same-roof kind of family in old China refers to the rich landowners' family, not poor peasants' family like mine… So we didn't have a strong desire to have a second child. We are educated. My parents were uneducated and illiterate. What could they teach us? All my Mum ever told me was to save money and to study hard."

Ran's father's generation was very similar to their counterparts in Singapore; middle class Chinese Singaporeans born in the 1960s and 1970s experienced rapid economic growth in the late 20th Century, which Kristina Göransson (2009) described as the "sandwich generation". This term here does not mean the mid-age couple struggling between the needs of the elderly and the young; it refers to the generation between the "old traditions" and the "modern world". Like Ran's father and many other parents in this study, the Singaporean "sandwich generation" in the 21st Century enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle and were able to provide high-quality material and educational resources for their next generation. Such a lifestyle stood in sharp contrast to their childhoods'. When faced with "intergenerational discontinuity" (Göransson, 2009:35), Singaporean parents used strategies to manage generational difference in everyday interactions with their children and their parents. However, parents in this study lacked the everyday physical and social space to bridge the generational gap.

As Göransson pointed out, the so-called sandwich generation was a class-related phenomenon and did not apply to all members of that age group. Similarly, parents in this study were the "modern minority" in comparison to "the more conventional majority" in their community. For example, parent respondents promoted "modern elements" of family relations, such as a more egalitarian relationship and a less dependent older generation, in contrast to their observation of more "traditional" families around them. One mother cited a colleague's "half-joking" comment against the idea of the

transnational one-child family to show that by letting her daughter remain overseas, she became the "different" minority among her peers. While parents may have promoted their "modernness" in front of the researcher, or were taking pride from it to justify their transnational relationship with their child, the following case showed the serious struggle between the "more modern individual" and the still conservative social norms in the local community.

Zhaohui (female, 23, student) came from a small town in South China, and she reported that some parents in her home town prevented their child from going to university so that the child would not leave the parents. After her mother was paralysed several years ago, instead of being a "filial daughter" and taking up the role as her mother's carer, Zhaohui came to do her Master's degree in London and was determined to get a distinction:

> *"In our small town, everyone knows what everyone's children are doing, they'd compare with each other. I want my Dad to be able to tell others with pride when he was asked about me…I know he suffered a great deal from the gossip."*

Zhaohui's father (56) became semi-retired from his job as an accountant in order to look after his paralysed wife and his aged mother. When asked for his opinion about his daughter's being far away, he replied:

> *"I had the chance to leave [the small town] when I was young, but I stayed for my parents, now I regret it…It's a different time now. It's not good to tie your child to you. I know some parents want their child near, but I have let the kite go loose. She can fly as far as she wants."*

This more sharply-felt parental struggle with the peer group pressure was more likely to be found in more conservative regions in China, while parents from big cities did not report direct social pressure. However, in spite of the predominantly positive feelings

parents reported about the "generational leap" (Göransson, 2009:52), there was still a sense of disappointment and perhaps some sadness among parents. Mothers were more likely than fathers to show an ambivalence towards the asymmetrical intergenerational support (see Chapter 5).

Beiyao's (female, 30, married, has a son) mother (55, teacher) emphasized a woman's disadvantage for her generation:

> *"To be honest, my generation didn't live for ourselves, we were always thinking about others' needs. Look, we did things for our parents and parents-in-law. As for our husbands, we have to support our husbands, let him advance in his career without worrying about the family. We women have our own job, too, and we must do equally well in our career, that's a lot of hard work. Also, we need to look after our child, and hope our child will achieve high. Our women's life is really really hard."*

Ran's (male, 27, married) mother (51, businesswoman) thought such a generational difference was "unfair":

> *"Sometimes I said to my husband, that we are more or less the last generation that need to materially support our parents for filial piety. We do not need the next generation to materially support us when we are old and we are also left alone by the next generation (laugh). My generation is the most exploited. We need to look after the previous generation, but the next generation is not going to look after us."*

Fathers indicated their opinion more indirectly. For example, the two fathers who were interviewed with their wives nodded while the mothers talked about their disappointment about the asymmetrical intergenerational transfer. The fact that the researcher was a young female may have been a factor for such a gendered response.

Moreover, the one-child policy and the increased job competition in cities had a more negative impact on women than men; 2 mothers had to have an abortion when they were pregnant after their child was born, one because of the policy, the other one because of the lack of time to look after 2 children[46]. It was unclear to what extent parents felt negatively about the generational difference. Nevertheless, the evidence from the interviews showed the parents' emotional struggle to come to terms with the generational changes compared to the previous generation, as well as compared to their peers in the same generation.

However, the feeling of unfairness and disappointment was overshadowed by the feeling of satisfaction parents expressed about their child's achievement and how they had contributed to it. Parents repeatedly indicated that they only wanted their child to be happy and did not demand anything in return. However, when "happiness" became a moral obligation (see below), a new generational tension emerged between parents and the one-child migrants. The next section will discuss the one-child migrants' perception of the pressure and values they inherited from the previous generation.

6.3.3 The younger generation: the new pressure and the selective inheritance

"If I'm not happy about my life here, it's impossible that my parents would be happy. This is certain. If my life were in a crisis, they would feel helpless. I won't let that happen. So this is my filial piety to them" (Tian, female, 31, lecturer).

Tian's definition of filial piety, and her projection of what she takes to be its essential element -- "self happiness" – represented, for most respondents, an important part of their filial duty. It was in accordance with the traditional concept of filial piety that "a

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[46] In the latter case, the mother had her first child in 1976, and was pregnant again in 1978. The one-child policy was not enforced then, but because she and her husband were working full time without extra childcare help, she had to abort the child. Both the mother and the father revealed deep regret about the abortion in the interview.

child's achievement is not only a matter of personal success, it brings honour to the family"(Göransson, 2009:119). However, the moral obligation to be "happy" was a new requirement. One-child respondents expressed an ambivalent attitude towards the "happiness" obligation. While some accepted "being happy" partly as their duty, like Tian, some expressed the pressure associated with it. The following extracts from Yizi and her mother illustrate the story from two sides:

"We just hope she [Yizi] can live every day happily in the UK, with less pressure. If she can get used to the life in London, then stay. As for us, let's just keep things as they are, because we don't know where or when she will have a family, there are too many uncertainties. I've discussed it with my husband, we both agreed that it doesn't matter where she chooses to stay, as long as she will be happy. That is our plan, for now" (mother, 55, of Yizi, female, 31).

"I don't think it should be all about me. Parents say they will be happy as long as I am happy, but that puts greater pressure on me. I say to them that I'll be very happy if you two can take good care of yourselves. I hope they can keep healthy, maintain their own social circle, and don't focus too much on me" (Yizi).

From the parent's side (both according to interviews with the 7 parents and what children reported), there was a strongly expressed altruistic attitude with regard to parental expectations from their adult children. This was also associated with the parents' tendency to show a greater level of independence in the future care relationship and "not to become a burden" which would "drag down the children's steps to a good life". Again, as noted in the previous section, the parental tendency to hide negative feelings from the researcher (sometimes from their child as well) may have obscured and underplayed the other side of the "altruistic story".

However, the parents' "conscious distancing" did not effectively reduce the children's sense of indebtedness; on the contrary such altruism added to the one-child migrants' emotional pressure:

"They want to give everything to me, but they fear to trouble me with anything, I'd rather they loved themselves more than they loved me, I'd rather that they have asked something from me…this love is too heavy" (Bolin, female, 38, export manager).

The psychological pressure was not explicitly expressed among non one-child migrants. Although it cannot be assumed that migrants with siblings did not feel the moral obligation to "be happy"; it was the absolute focus on the "one and only" child that intensified the emotional expectation and obligation between family members. In addition, the long distance separation added to the regular obligation to comfort the parents' everyday anxiety. Forms of emotional reciprocity were clearly more complex and subtle than material forms of reciprocity. While the parents believed they were being "selfless" not to ask anything from their child in return, a small number of children indicated that they preferred parents to be more "selfish". While parents wanted their child to focus on "having a happy life", children considered themselves "selfish" for prioritizing their own needs (career) over parental needs. Such a principle of showing devotion to each other's well-being was similar to the "game of intimacy" played by parent and child in terms of each party's availability of long-distance communication.

The *perception* of what constituted selfish or altruistic behaviours from parents and children blurred the boundary and led to a mixed impact on intergenerational relationships. Children sometimes learnt about their responsibility for their parents by watching how their parents treated their grandparents. Two respondents in this study explicitly expressed how the previous generation's "filial behaviour" influenced their understanding of "filial piety"; it was common to hear child respondents mention their

parents' care (and lack of care) for their grandparents. Therefore, the "sandwich generation" parents may have regarded some of the care/support duties to the older generation as being "outdated" and would not wish their only child to repeat the hardship they had had when juggling between work and family. Nevertheless, by watching their parents performing the "outdated" duties to their grandparents generation, the child was likely to understand (early on) how the family "works" when the older generation became in need of care. However, when the one-child generation become old enough to "pay back", the family and social apparatus which facilitated the "conventional intergenerational support" may have changed.

Therefore, the one-child migrants, who benefited from a better education and economic growth, may not have *shown* as much intergenerational support as the previous generation, but it did not necessarily mean the traditional family practices were not *valued* in their perception. When talking about the possibility of a care institution in the parents' long-term care plan, parents showed a greater support for the idea than did their children. No parents were (openly) negative about institutional care, whereas 8 out of 33 child respondents (one-child and non one-child) were strongly against it, believing it was immoral to "abandon" parents in an institution.

Research conducted in China showed evidence that supported this finding. Using data from the 2006 China General Social Survey, Hu and Scott found that more highly educated people displayed "a stronger traditional support" for reciprocated parental care, and that "moral imperatives for filial piety remain strong and highly consistent across generations" (Hu and Scott, 2014). By conducting focus groups with elderly parents in institutional care in Nanjing (a major city in east China) as well as their adult children in 2008-2009, Zhan et al found that "[i]ronically, the elders often appeared to be more open-minded and willing to accept institutional long-term care than their adult children" (Zhan et al, 2008). The latter research echoes the "unexpected finding" of a survey conducted in Baoding (a city in north China) in 1994; it revealed more conservative filial attitudes among young adults than their parents (Whyte, 1997).

The parents' and children's ambivalence to such a reciprocal rationale showed a family contract in transition. First, one-child migrants still regarded the looking after parents' emotional well-being as their duty; the perceived acceptable amount of duty had shifted from the notion of "unlimited responsibility, self-sacrifice and devotion" (Sheng and Settles, 2006:302) to an emerging emphasis on individual aspiration. Second, parents, of the one-child migrants were caught between a more traditional reciprocal relationship with their own parents and a "reconfigured reciprocity" (Ken, 2014) expectation from their only child. Finally, both parents in China and migrant children in the UK have had to develop a coping strategy against peer pressure. Therefore, the complex interpretation of family contract(s) was arguably the outcome of *both* generations coming to terms with the changing family form through a changed space (because of migration) and time (between different generations).

6.4 Summary

The 21st Century Chinese family contract has become more diverse: its cultural origin, filial piety, can be traced back to well before Confucius[47]. Filial piety has been reconstructed during the changes of political regimes in China in the 20th Century; the concept's content was further fragmented during the post-1978 reforms period. With the emergence of the one-child generation and the rise of middle class families in China, intergenerational support experienced radical changes in terms of its material and practical support flow. In this context, the only children's settling in a far away Western country, such as the UK, brought new challenges for the younger and older generation, namely, to find a way to balance the abstract notion of filial piety with the 21st Century reality.

In spite of China's development of a market economy, and its engagement with globalisation, families are still the primary social unit for support. Such "Asian

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[47] Confucius embellished an already established cultural idea (Legge, 1899:450).

development strategies" (Croll, 2006) promoted the family contract over the social contract. One-child transnational families are the minority (and new) family type in the context of a Chinese society which still regarded "physical closeness" as the norm. Transnational family members have been under social pressure to compensate for the "physical separateness" with a more pervasive emotional unity. Such emotional obligations of intergenerational reciprocity may be less visible in terms of how migrants and their parents behaved, but were still influential in *how they felt* about their (expected) behaviour.

Without siblings, the normative distribution of responsibility among one-child families was more straightforward but also more intense. The rapidly changing socioeconomic environment in China has widened the generational gap; as a result the existing family contract is no longer straightforwardly or easily applicable to the future generation.

Therefore, the one-child generation and their parents had to adapt themselves to new rules and dynamics of intergenerational support given their specific circumstances. In addition, when separated by long distances, and faced with possible permanent household separation, only children and their parents faced a challenge that had never been faced by Chinese families before. There was no longer a normatively prescribed Chinese family contract, but rather a new context in which aspiring families in transition had to re-negotiate new ways of relating to, and interacting, with one another.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

7.1 Placing the transnational one-child families in the empirical picture

7.1.1 "Middle range" migrants and the overseas Chinese heterogeneity

Previous research into mainland Chinese migrants has been largely focused on migrants from a deprived background living a marginalised life in host countries; illegal migrants from Fujian province, for example, have been a main migrant cohort for public and academic concern. At the other end of the spectrum, the international investment of the wealthy mainland Chinese became a headline focus especially after the 2008 financial crisis[48].

This research brings attention to the "middle range" mainland Chinese migrants. These migrants possess a certain amount of capital resources in China and in the host country. These resources opened up more choices in terms of education, career and lifestyle. Meanwhile, having such resources and choices has also meant uncertainty and risk. "Middle range" migrants have more to lose than the working class and/or illegal migrants, but less transnational mobility compared to the "affluent elite". Therefore, the "middle range" migrants are sensitive and vulnerable towards political and economic changes in both China and the host country.

However, the "middle range" Chinese migrants are not homogeneous; within the cohort there were sub-divisions of migrants with different levels of mobility and affluence. This research produced a close comparison with Vanessa Fong's research which is also about one-child migrants in Western developed countries. Fong's longitudinal study started as an ethnographic research about one-child Chinese

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[48] For example, see "Wealthy Chinese flock to the West", *BBC* (28 July, 2010). Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10760368   Accessed 28 February 2016.
"Surge in Chinese house buying spurs global backlash" *Financial Times* (25 February, 2016). Available at http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fcc2d346-bcd3-11e4-9902-00144feab7de.html#axzz41SY0lGmI Accessed 28 February 2016.

families in Dalian (2004). Her participants were drawn largely from middle income or lower-middle income families, and had an average or below-average academic attainment. Fong (2011) followed her one-child participants as they grew up and went abroad to study. Both groups of participants from this research and from Fong's research went to school in the 1990s and went abroad during 2000 and 2010. Notwithstanding the shared macro-level environment, the micro-level difference in family background and the academic attainment of the two groups of one-child migrants, there was a distinctively different migration strategy and socioeconomic outcome.

In the decision-making process to study abroad Fong's participants chose to study mainly in Japan and Ireland because these countries were cheaper and had lower language/academic requirements. A common route of migration, in Fong's research, was to "buy a visa" by entering a course in the cheapest language school in the host country. Parents usually exhausted their savings to help with this initial stage. During their time in language schools, the students had to support themselves and save for a university degree course by doing extensive part-time jobs. The urgency to earn money and the little time to study, weak language skills and below-average academic attainment, in addition to the pressure to fulfill their parents' expectations (hence the reluctance to return to China), all formed a vicious circle, and limited many one-child migrants' up-ward mobility in the host country as well as their career advancement.

In comparison, most one-child migrants in this research came from above-average income families, and the majority were above-average or top students in China. These students had much less financial pressure in overseas education costs, and their priority was to get into a high-ranking university. Half of the sample entered a Russell Group university, and the majority were postgraduate degree holders. Following their graduation, most one-child migrants, with the help from their parents, had a relatively smooth transition into professional jobs, property ownership and parenthood in the UK. Between Fong's participants and this research's participants, there was a shared

aspiration for "Western" affluence. However, the profiles of one-child migrants generated from these two separate studies clearly demonstrated that the difference in the transnational mobility trajectory resulted from a difference in parental income and the child's academic performance in China.

More and more young people from China's "middle class" families are likely to join the migration wave and pursue their transnational aspirations and exploit the associated social and professional mobility openings. As most Western receiving countries have tightened their migration policies, apart from the most affluent and the illegal migrants, becoming an international student is likely to be a popular route of entry chosen by future migrants, thus adding to the diversity of the "middle range" migrants as well as complicating the transnational mobility profile associated with "international students".

Ronald Skeldon noted the year 1978 as the turning point of the Chinese migration history with the incorporation of China into the global community as well as the global spreading of highly diverse "new" migrants from mainland China. Skeldon pointed out that "Chinese Overseas" is "a highly heterogeneous phenomenon and essentializing it into a transnational community of Chinese Overseas is not doing justice to the real situation" (2007:45). The sketch of one-child migrants in this research, especially in comparison to Vanessa Fong's findings, contributes to the complex picture of "the real situation". However, the emphasis on heterogeneity certainly does not imply a lack of shared features between those different Chinese migrant cohorts. The point here is that migrants are multidimensional individuals, and no single dimension should be over interpreted to imply a similarity (or difference) of the other dimensions. In other words, when using categories such as "Chinese migrants", "students" or "middle class migrants", the other aspects of the migrants' lives should not be taken for granted, nor should they be ignored.

7.1.2 <u>The migration decision-making process and the family life cycle</u>

Personal life cycle and family are both important in influencing decisions concerning migration and its aftermath. "One's emotional and material needs are strongly linked to stages of the individual's life cycle" (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002:17). Findings from this research showed that one's *sense of responsibility* is also strongly linked to one's life stage, which involves changes in the content of responsibility, and towards the people one was responsible for. More specifically, as shown in the accounts presented in this study, marriage and the forming of one's own family was a significant point where one-child migrants' spouse and offspring became the priority of their "family responsibility", while their "filial duty" towards parents became secondary. This is also the period when a migrant may became committed to remaining in the host country. However, as a migrant's offspring grow up and the migrant's parents become elderly, the migrant's sense of responsibility may shift to parents (if they were still alive), hence the disposition to return to China.

The migration pathway was based on the migrants' life cycle, but was also substantially shaped by the life cycles of the individual's close family members like parents and offspring. Therefore, by combining the influence of family and life cycle, the *family life cycle* model provided another approach to help clarify the factors shaping the migrants' long term migration decision. This finding was consistent with Johanna Waters' longitudinal research into Chinese mothers from Taiwan and Hong Kong in Canada (2011). Her participants' disposition to settle, to return, or to re-migrate was largely associated with their offsprings' reaching adulthood, their spouses' retirement, or their own point of retirement. The dominant factor of an offspring's life cycle in a migrant's decision could also be found in, for example, Korean mothers who accompanied their children to study in Singapore (Kim, 2010); the time of return entirely depended on the children's completion of education.

However, what is absent from most studies that have taken the family life cycle into

account is the influence in the life cycle of the older generation. This was perhaps because migrants' siblings shared the responsibility towards the older generation so the impact of parental needs on the individual migrant was diluted, and became relatively insignificant compared to the migrant's own nuclear family needs in the host country. Without the dynamic of a sibling, this study of transnational one-child families brought out the profound impact of the parents' life cycle on the migrants' decision-making process in terms of both benefit and responsibility. More specifically, the material and childcare contributions provided where parents were reasonably young and healthy was concentrated on the only child; so were the needs for emotional and practical care where parents were elderly and vulnerable. The lack of parental influence in other transnational families, however, indicated the impact of a sibling in reducing parental influence in a migrant's long-term migration pattern.

7.1.3 Re-examining "traditional Chinese family values" in "modernisation" and "globalisation"

The opposition of the "traditional Chinese" and the "modern West" has been the dominant discourse about China's journey to "modernisation" since 1978. The family can be regarded as a social field for observing the progress of "modernisation". It would be difficult to find a family cohort that experienced more radical changes from "traditional Chinese" to "modern West" within two generations than the experience of the one-child families studied in this research. The macro-level ideological changes and the micro-level family dynamic changes are both powerful factors which have challenged "traditional Chinese family values" in the context of 21st Century "modernisation" and "globalisation".

In response to the research question -- *How does this cohort understand and negotiate their responsibility to their parents* -- this research has demonstrated an uneven change in the interpretation of "filial piety" as perceived by parents and one-child migrants. The unevenness has mainly resulted from a separation of the

individual's filial *behaviour* and filial *feelings*. For example, the material and practical exchange between the two generations demonstrated a reversal, a transfer from the older to the younger generation which went against the traditional sense of "filial practice"; but neither party felt such a reversal to be "unfilial". However, although the majority of one-child families did not expect the child to provide practical care when the parents were elderly, more children than parents were found to be resistant to the idea of a paid care service in replacement of the care from offspring (though whether their opposition will remain as steadfast when their parents come to need such care in the future is an open question).

The sense of "traditional Chinese family values" was found to be pervasive among one-child migrants. However, the moral awareness of family responsibility did not necessarily translate into clearly prescribed forms of action. A variety of factors interfered with or encouraged the discharging of filial piety between family members. In the case of transnational one-child families, distance, finance, communication technology and migration policy all acted as barriers or facilitators in the fulfilling of filial obligation. Therefore, the lack of *observable* filial actions did not mean that filial piety did not exist as an implied abstract notion among family members.

There is no obvious or easy solution for one-child migrants to balance their aspirations in the UK and their filial responsibility in China. Participants showed different levels of physical and psychological struggle speaking from different stages of their migration experience. The "family value" and "filial duty" perceived by various families manifested itself in complex forms shaped by factors within and outside of the family. Having experienced life in a Western society, intergenerational expectations and responsibilities in these transnational families did not simply become "Westernised". Instead, the "contract" between the two generations showed a reconfigured reciprocity as an outcome of family adaptation.

This research proposes a new approach to the examination of the Chinese family in

the 21st Century's key phenomena of "modernisation" and "globalisation" beyond the East/traditional versus West/modern argument. Families are versatile; households are found actively adapting in extreme practical and psychological conditions such as the one-child families in this study. Perhaps the sudden transformation of the domestic environment in China, and the engagement with the global community are not to be seen as "threats" to Chinese families. Instead, these changes have provided the possibility of choices for a great number of families in China. The essential elements of the family have not changed; but the changing environment has enabled families to evolve sometimes sharply distinctive configurations, which were formerly restricted because of economic, political and social conditions.

7.2 The family-migration nexus in the transnational social field

The lives of increasing numbers of individuals can no longer be understood by looking only at what goes on within national boundaries. Our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind. As a result, basic assumptions about social institutions such as the family, citizenship, and nation-states need to be revisited (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004).

This study is partly the response to Levitt and Glick Schiller's call to revisit how family and migration impact on each other from an "analytical lens" that recognises migrants as individuals in "multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields". Migrants in this study are primarily examined as the only adult child in transnational families. But as the migrants' human stories unfold the scope of the analysis extended beyond the "current host country" experience. Migrants' former, current, and future identities in China, in the UK or in another (potential) country all have different levels of impact on migrants' settlement decisions, these decisions in turn shape the intergenerational relationship between migrants and their parents as well as the establishment of the

migrants' own families.

Without being limited to a certain theoretical field, the research questions that have driven this study find their theoretical conceptual and empirical reference in both migration studies and family studies. The fields of reference have been historical, sociological and socio-economic. Therefore no one theoretical framework can encapsulate the empirical findings of the current research into how the UK Chinese one-child migrants of a middle class background balance their aspirations in the host country with their filial obligations in a rapidly developing China. From all of which it follows that it was logically necessary to synthesise the specific elements in the absence of any one overarching theory. This study is a demonstration of using a transnational social field lens to incorporate existing theories into a cluster of tools that continue to serve as explanations, or are to be tested and modified by the empirical findings.

Although few can deny the benefit of a transnational perspective in studies about cross-border activities, the sustainability of the transnational field itself has been subject to questions and debate, more specifically to do with the (in)compatibility of transnationalism and assimilation/integration. Families represent the most intimate form of a transnational social field. Transnational families in this study have shown intense circulation of material resources, emotion and care forged by the biological bond and family contract. Both types of connections do not exist in other forms of the transnational field. This kind of transnational ties has shown its dynamic by both supporting and discouraging the migrants' integration in host country. For example, parental financial support helped the migrants' smooth transition into employment and property ownership in the UK, yet such parental support reinforced the migrants' sense of responsibility to parents in China, thus the support brought uncertainty to their settlement commitment in the UK. Therefore, the level of intensity of transnational ties, and the level of migrants' integration in the host society, do not simply correlate lineally, i.e. stronger transnational ties do not necessarily weaken local assimilation, and

diminishing transnational ties do not always correlate with a more strongly integrated migrant cohort.

However, what counts as evidence for a "diminishing" transnational tie? By analysing the intergenerational relationship over the life course of migrants and their parents, this study revealed a subtle distinction between observable transnational behaviour and transnational imagination. This distinction is best attested in the separation of filial behaviour and filial feeling found in one-child Chinese transnational families. As demonstrated in previous sections, the actions, such as international travel, use of ICTs and the (less common) material transfer from migrants to their parents, and how the two generations feel about this arrangement, need to be interpreted together to produce a more comprehensible understanding about the versatile connections in transnational families. Migrants' imagined entitlement and responsibility in transnational families, which changes with the family life cycle, shape the intensity and sustainability of that transnational social field.

Finally, the family-migration nexus contributes to the refinement of Wang Gungwu's concept of "migranthood". As briefly mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, Wang distinguished student-turned-migrants from traditionally defined migrants who leave "their home without intending to return". Students are not migrants. But being a student may lead to "delayed" migration. "Migranthood" is the condition of a migrant in the space "between that of a student and that of a migrant" (Wang, 2007:167). Wang argues that the post-student migrants are flexible and unpredictable because they respond to the global demand for skills. Migrants in this study have shown that an individual's study abroad decision and migration decision can have time laps ranging from months to years. The switch from students to professional migrant status largely depends upon the individual's aspiration for education and career advancement at a transnational level. In this respect, the current study confirms this relatively underdeveloped term, "migranthood", which describes post-student migrants as "the product of economic and technological globalisation" (Wang, 2007:176).

Nevertheless, Wang did not indicate when, or whether, "migranthood" ends. This study points to the possibility that the "migranthood" will not completely end among the first generation migrants, and that migrants are likely to invoke their "migranthood" in order to justify/help their settlement in the host country. For example, the strongly expressed commitment to look after parents in China (in the future) reduces the sense of guilt of migrants' not being with parents (now), thus justifies the migrants' choice of (temporarily) focusing on their life in the host country. At a nation-state level, the Chinese government is actively fostering its transnational ties with skill-bearing, overseas-educated migrants. Instead of calling overseas Chinese to return to China and work, the state's narratives have shown a shift towards keeping the cohort's "migranthood"; it views overseas Chinese as a socio-political asset which may be of long-term benefit to China. Therefore, at the individual, familial and nation-state level, "migranthood" is a significant concept which deserves more academic attention.

7.3 Practical implications

China provides the greatest number of international fee-paying students in British universities as well as in other major English-speaking countries. It is in the British universities' economic interest to attract a greater share of the international education market. The "devaluation" of an overseas qualification (including a British qualification) in the Chinese job market is a barrier that may lead to the mis-representation of British education among Chinese students who want to study abroad.

One way for the UK returnees to be in a better position in the Chinese job market (particularly against other returnees) is to gain some work experience before returning to China. However, the growing difficulty of applying for a work visa, or of switching from a student visa to a work visa in the UK has limited such a possibility. The lack of possible routes to extend the students' stay in the host country is also likely to reduce the attractiveness of coming to the UK.

Furthermore, as shown earlier, the restricted work visa scheme and relatively easier student visa application directed non-authentic "students" (who actually wished to work), into the "student" category. This group of "students" was exposed to the exploitation of "language schools" or bogus universities. Unable to find a job or obtain a work visa, when these "students" returned to China they discovered that their so-called "qualification" had little or no value, and the reputation of an overseas education in the Chinese public's perception suffered accordingly. However, this "lose-lose" situation could have been avoided had the work route been available.

Among other things, this research set out to investigate the one-child migrants' relationship with their parents in China; the findings suggested that there was a substantial negative impact of the restricted British migration policy with regard to family reunification. Without a long-term residence visa, parents were found travelling frequently between China and the UK to provide childcare with a 6-months visitor's visa. These "flying grandparents" contributed to the reduction of local childcare service providers' pressure, and ensured that their adult children spent more time doing their jobs. However, the visa system treated parents as narrowly "elderly dependent" without realising how much these parents contributed to the British economy by helping their migrant child with British education and property purchasing, and the further positive impact these parents could bring to the welfare of the one-child migrants' family in the UK.

Since the turn of the century, a declining birth rate and the ageing of the population has been a major concern in Asia especially among the countries with a growing economy. The relaxation of the one-child policy in November 2013 and the official end of the policy in October 2015 did not lead to an increase in the birth rate as expected by the Chinese government. On the contrary, the birth rate in China dropped from 12.10‰ in 2012 to 12.07‰ in 2015 (National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC, 2016, 2013). Therefore it is still likely that most couples will have only one child. With the growing

mobility in the Chinese population the phenomenon of the transnational one-child Chinese family is thus likely to be sustained in the foreseeable future.

The geographical dispersal of small nuclear families against a traditionally family-oriented culture is not exclusive to China. The neighbouring countries such as Japan, South Korea and Singapore have a deeply embedded Confucian patrilineal familial culture; they have lower birth rates and a longer modern international migration history than China. Therefore, this research serves as a point of comparison with how Asian families as a micro-level unit, cope with/actively respond to the challenges and opportunities available in modernisation and globalisation.

7.4 A note of caution and future research recommendations

This research sought to explore in-depth the diversity of middle class one-child migrants' experiences, especially in relation to their parents. The generalisability of these findings is clearly limited. The sample was recruited *in the UK*, primarily among those who had a degree and a job. Although a small number of students (5) was included, the overall investigation was biased towards the experience of those Chinese students who *remained* in the UK *after* graduation. Given that half of the sample (17 out of 33) graduated from a Russell Group university, the sample reflected a relatively successful cohort in terms of education and career. Whether such a highly educated, professional profile is consistent with the career mobility of the post-education Chinese migrants in the UK, needs to be compared with UK national level statistics about the professional migrants from mainland China; such data were unavailable at the time of the research.

The gender perspective of transnational one-child families' future relationship remained under investigated largely because of the unbalanced gender profile among the married participants in the sample. Especially with 7 one-child mothers and only 1 one-child father, it was difficult to make any meaningful gender comparisons in terms

of the impact of marriage and parenthood on a migrant's sense of filial piety. An effort was made during the recruitment with the intention to have a relatively gender-balanced sample at different life stages, however, the researcher had to accept what was given. Therefore, the analysis and discussion on the gender perspective in this research had to compromise with the shortage of married/parent male participants.

Further research is needed to elaborate on the findings in this study in terms of its vertical and horizontal dimensions. A longitudinal research design is necessary to investigate the future development of transnational one-child families. A study of the same migrants/families over time would provide more accurate accounts of the impact of the family life cycle on the migration decision-making process. A longitudinal approach would also provide an opportunity to compare the intergenerational contract between one-child migrants and their British-born children with the intergenerational contract between one-child migrants and their parents in China. Apart from a long-term approach, future research into new Chinese migration could usefully focus on intergenerational relations in other contexts. For example, in those cases where parents migrated with adult child(ren), and the cases where the only children returned to China to be near their parents.

Nevertheless, notes of caution and the identification of research gaps will not sufficiently demonstrate the complexity of intergenerational changes in Chinese migration, nor is any research capable of accurately predicting individuals' responses to the socioeconomic changes in their immediate, as well as, global environment. As the world is becoming more closely connected and our investigations into various aspects of this world continue, it is almost impossible to cover the full spectrum of a subject/cohort/phenomena in a single research project. This research focuses on the family as a social field to observe cultural-value changes across time and space. In this sense, the family acts as an intermediate unit between individual mobility and the global society. But it is certainly not the only intermediate unit; other units such as

companies and educational institutions are also significant in the complex of multi-level socioeconomic mobility changes. As future research continues in its attempt to complete the puzzle of migration and transnational mobility, it is important to keep in mind that we remain multidimensional individuals living, as the poet said, in a world of endless multidimensions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of interview request sent to questionnaire respondents (originally in Mandarin)

Dear [Name],

Thank you very much for completing the online questionnaire.

My name is Mengwei Tu. I am a PhD student in Sociology in the University of Kent. I am doing a research about the Chinese migrants in the UK, particularly those who are from one-child families, highly educated and working as professionals. You will find more detail about me through the link at the bottom of the email.

Your basic information matches the criteria of the cohort I am studying, therefore I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. The content of the interview will be about your upbringing in China, your decision to go abroad, your life in the UK and your relationship with your parents. The interview is likely to last for around an hour, preferably face-to-face, at a place that is most convenient to you. The content of the interview will be strictly confidential and it will be used for academic purpose only.

Your involvement means a great deal to this study. I appreciate the time you have already spent on completing the questionnaire, and I sincerely hope to learn more about your life and experience. If you are interested in taking part in the interview, please reply to this email and we can arrange a possible date. If you have any questions related to the research, I will be happy to answer them.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Yours sincerely,

Mengwei Tu

School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research

University of Kent

Appendix 2: Participants' information

Participants	education	gender	year of birth	age	year of arrival	length of stay (year)	place of residence	home region in China	occupation	income level	marital status	visa type
1. Tao	Master	female	1987	27	2010	4	Kent	mid west	social media manager	35-45k	married	work
2. Zhipin	Bachelor	female	1981	33	2008	6	London	south	accounts assistant	25-35k	married	PR**
3. Zhimin	Master	male	1983	31	2002	12	London	north east	sales manager	15-25k	single	UK passport
4. Bao	Master	female	1983	31	2007	7	Devon	east	purchasing manager	15-25k	single	work
5. Yang	Master	male	1979	35	2002	12	London	east	bank admin assistant	25-35k	single	PR
6. Yizi *	Master	female	1983	31	2009	5	London	south	advertising manager	35-45k	single	work
7. Zhaohui *	Bachelor	female	1991	23	2013	1	London	south	Master's student	n/a	has a partner	student
8. Jinhai	Master	female	1987	27	2010	4	London	east	auditor	25-35k	has a partner	work
9. Demin	PhD	male	1981	33	2003	11	London	east	lecturer	45-55k	married & parent	PR
10. Baowen	Master	female	1981	33	2005	9	Leeds	north east	legal assistant (part-time)	15-25k	married & parent	PR
11. Tian *	PhD	female	1983	31	2005	9	Leicestershire	north	lecturer	35-45k	married	work
12. Quan	Master	male	1988	26	2008	6	Hampshire	mid west	electronic engineer	15-25k	single	work
13. Jin	Bachelor	female	1991	23	2013	1	Kent	mid west	Master's student	n/a	single	student
14. Ying	Master	female	1985	29	2001	13	London	east	accounts assistant	25-35k	married	PR
15. Liwen	Master	male	1984	30	2007	7	London	north	tele-communications engineer	25-35k	single	work
16. Guozhi	Master	male	1988	26	2011	3	London	east	funds analyst	35-45k	has a partner	work
17. Tengfei *	Master	male	1986	28	2011	3	Lancashire	north	PhD student	n/a	has a partner	student *
18. Delun	Bachelor	male	1992	22	2014	0	London	mid west	Master's student	n/a	has a partner	student
19. Shan	PhD	female	1982	32	2004	10	London	north	post-doc researcher	35-45k	married & parent	PR
20. Meilin	Master	female	1977	37	2001	13	London	east	accountant (part-time)	undisc	married & parent	PR

21. Lan	Bachelor	male	1987	27	2012	2	Kent	north east	Master's student	n/a	single	student
22. Bolin *	Master	female	1976	38	2001	13	Nottinghamshire	east	export manager	15-25k	married & parent	UK passport
23. Ran *	Master	male	1987	27	2008	6	London	mid west	software engineer	35-45k	married	work
24. Beiyao *	PhD	female	1984	30	2006	8	Wiltshire	north east	process engineer	25-35k	married & parent	work
25. Kai	Master	male	1986	28	2002	12	London	east	estate agent	15-25k	single	work
26. Jiayi	Master	female	1978	36	2007	7	Somerset	north east	Chinese medical doctor	25-35k	married & parent	PR
27. Dahong	Master	female	1987	27	2008	6	London	south	marketing analyst	25-35k	single	work
28. Qiaolin	Master	female	1978	36	1997	17	Devon	mid west	purchasing manager	25-35k	married & parent	PR
29. Gaomei	Master	female	1987	27	2010	4	Devon	north	purchasing assistant	15-25k	single	work
30. Qianqian	Master	female	1987	27	2010	4	Devon	north	purchasing assistant	15-25k	has a partner	work
31. Wenbin	Master	male	1978	36	2002	12	London	east	entrepreneur	55k+	single	UK passport
32. Chuanli	PhD	male	1983	31	2011	3	Leicestershire	east	research associate	25-35k	single	work
33. Feng	Bachelor	female	1980	34	2002	12	Manchester	south	project IT manager	35-45k	married & parent	PR

* parents interviewed

** permanent residency permit

Child's name	parents	age	occupation	education	home region in China
6. Yizi *	mother	55	hign school teacher	university	south
7. Zhaohui *	father	56	semi-retired accountant	high school	south
11.Tian *	father	57	manager in state-owned company	university	north
17. Tengfei *	father	58	small grocery shop owner	high school	north
22. Bolin *	father	68	retired factory worker	high school	south east
	mother	66	retired factory worker	high school	south east
23. Ran *	father	55	head of state-owned factory turned consultant	high school	mid west
	mother	51	businesswoman	high school	mid west
24. Beiyao *	mother	55	semi-retired high school teacher	university	north east

Appendix 3: Interview Questions for Migrant Children

Section1: Before going abroad

1. Could you tell me something about your upbringing?
   - Relationship with parents
   - Peer pressure

2. How did you come to the decision to come to the UK?
   - Parent's influence
   - Information source
   - Major aspirations

3. What was your plan for settlement or return at that time?

4. Did any of your peers go abroad to study/work? Are they still in the UK?

5. What were your career plans, if any?

Section 2: Life in the UK

6. What is your study/work/social life like in the UK?
   - Adjustment into the British society
   - Coping strategy
   - Parent's help

7. (If applicable) Why did you remain in the UK after finishing your study (What options did you consider?)?

8. What is your future plan in the UK (career, family)?

9. Where do you identify as home?

10. How often do you go back to visit China and what is your experience about each visit?
    - Changes in environment, friends and family
    - The contrast between life in the UK and in China
    - View towards the Chinese State

Section 3: Relationship with parents

11. How do your parents feel about you remaining in the UK?

12. Have your parents visited you in the UK? If so, what was their experience like?

13. To what extent do you think your parents have supported your life in the UK, both financially and emotionally?

14. Do you send your parents (or any other relatives) any remittances?

15. What does filial piety mean to you?

16. Have you thought about how to look after your parents in the future?

17. Do you feel there is a conflict between what you want to do in your life and what you should do for your parents? If so, how do you cope with it?

18. (For only-children): Do you think your migration experience would be significantly different if you had had a sibling? If so, how?

    (For non-only-children): Do you think your migration experience would be significantly different if you had been an only child? If so, how?

Appendix 4: Interview Questions for Parents

Section 1: Child's up-bringing

1. Can you tell me about how you brought up your child?
   - Expectations of academic and career achievement
   - Parenting style

2. Do you think your child has met your expectation?

3. If your child were of a different gender, would you have treated your child differently?

4. Would you have had another child if there was no one-child policy?

Section 2: Child's going abroad

5. Why did you send your child to study abroad?

6. When your child was about to leave China, what was your plan (and what were your worries, if any)?

7. During your child's years overseas, do you feel any change in your relationship with your child? (If so, please specify.)

8. What do you think is the impact of distance on your family?

9. Do you want your child to return to China in the future?

Section 3: Retirement plan

10. Have you been to the UK?
    - If so, what was your experience in the UK?
    - If not, would you like to go there in the future?

11. How have you planned your retirement?
    - Short-term plan
    - Long-term care plan (when you are very elderly and need intensive care)

12. Would you consider moving to the UK and join your child permanently if conditions allowed?

Section 4: Perceptions on the changing society

13. What does filial piety mean to you?
    - Your filial obligation to your parents
    - Your filial expectation from your child

14. What is your opinion on the generational changes following the economic reform and the one-child policy?

15. Do you think your child is a filial child?

Appendix 5: Consent form

Consent form
同意条款

The objective of the research is to collect information about mainland Chinese in the UK, with regard to their background, motivation to go abroad, experience in the UK, relationship with family and friends in China, as well as other aspects of their everyday life in the UK.

The interview will be digitally recorded. The recordings and transcriptions will be stored safely where the researcher has the sole access. After the analysis is complete, data will be archived in a secure place.

The researcher can be contacted by the email and telephone number at the bottom of the form should the participant have any inquiry in the future.

本调查意在于深度了解英国大陆华人的成长背景，出国原因，在英经历，与国内家人亲友的关系，以及日常生活中的各种体会。

采访以录音形式记录。录音以及与之有关的采访资料均由采访者单独保管，不会向第三者透露。分析结束后资料会被储存在安全地方。

受访者如需要在任何阶段对调查进行询问，可以通过此表提供的联系方式联系到采访者。

- I agree to take part in this study.
- 我同意参与这次研究项目。

- I understand that my participation is voluntary that I am free to withdraw at any time, without any given reason.
- 我的参与完全出于自愿，我了解自己有在任何阶段自由退出的权利。

- I agree to be recorded on the digital voice recorder.
- 我同意采访被录音。

- I understand that the contents shared between interviewee and interviewer will remain strictly confidential, and that the subsequent use of data will protect the anonymity of the interviewee.
- 我了解采访内容应严格保密，研究项目对内容的使用将以保护受访者隐私为重。

Participant's Signature/ Date
受访者签名/日期

Researcher's Signature/ Date
采访者签名/日期

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