University of Southampton

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology

From One Child to Two Children: The Opportunities and Choices of The One-child Generation in Jiangsu, China

by

Shibei Ni

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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China has been in a low fertility situation similar to many industrialised societies for over two decades since the introduction of one-child family planning programme in 1979. The two-child policy was announced in 2015 to overcome the low fertility trap and the associated demographic challenges. The result following four years of implementation of the policy has not been satisfactory. The desire for low fertility continues to be popular among young people in urban areas. Their fertility intentions and choices remain key predictors of subsequent reproductive behaviour. To better understand the reproductive intentions and behaviours of the young people would be crucial for policymaking and programme intervention.

This thesis aims to investigate the fertility intentions of the young residents in Jiangsu – the one child generation, who were born since 1979, and the mechanisms underlying their reproductive decisions and family life. Existing studies tended to focus more on older cohorts' fertility intentions and views on policies, while most of those have reached the end of their reproductive life.

Jiangsu province, with strict family planning regulations, is little explored in terms of behavioural changes after the introduction of the two-child policy. This research adopts a mixed method design by drawing on both quantitative data and qualitative data to address the research questions. Using data from 2010 Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey, the thesis identified the one-child generation's fertility intentions in the one-child policy era, and the underlying associations with socioeconomic factors. Following the quantitative analysis, qualitative data were collected in two cities within Jiangsu province through semi-structured interview and focus groups. The study recruited 56 respondents, 43 females and 14 males, who shared their perceptions of fertility policy shifts, reasons for their current fertility choices and the relations between childbearing, personal career development and family life after the introduction of the two-child policy.

This thesis shows that the one-child family is still favoured by the one-child generation despite the implementation of the two-child policy. Furthermore, the thesis also uncovers the mechanism underlying young people's decision-making process, from both the socioeconomic side and family relations. It finds that concerns over costs and childcare greatly navigate young people's fertility pathways, and gendered predicaments in family and work and intergenerational relations possibly add more risks and uncertainty to having more babies.

The findings demonstrate evidence that in the one-child policy era, the one-child generation were generally more in favour of the one-child family than their preceding cohorts, however with notable differences in reported intentions between the 1980s and 1990s (recent) cohorts. In terms of fertility intentions after the two-child policy amendments, those who reported preference of a two-child family outnumbered those who preferred one child only yet few of them expressed a desire for a family with three or more children. This indicates the long-lasting impact of the one-child policy on the fertility intentions of the young people in China, whereas the two-child policy seems to have little impact. In addition, household economic status and the distribution of childcare are among the top concerns for young people to proceed to a second birth. Finally, women and men have different perceptions and experiences in dealing with work-family conflicts. Albeit intergenerational support plays a positive role in alleviating young couples' life burden with children, women are compelled to make more sacrifices for the family due to the rooted caregiving identity of women. Over and above, incompatible demands between work and family, together with the unanimous discriminations women confronted in workplace (irrespective of their state of having a child), have intensified each other and resulted in more uncertainty in progression to more births among young women. In this sense, fertility policy should try to alleviate young people's burden of having two children and entitle women to enjoy work and family at the same time, instead of merely relaxing regulated number of children.

Keywords: fertility intention; one-child generation; family planning policy; fertility; gender; family; mixed-methods; Jiangsu; China

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Shibei Ni

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I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
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5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
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Definitions and Abbreviations

ART Assisted Reproductive Technologies

CPC Communist Party of China

CPR Contraceptive Prevalence Rate

FPP Family Planning Programme/Policy

IUD Intrauterine device

JFIBS Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey

KMT Kuo Ming Tang (Nationalist Party)

PRC People's Republic of China, 1949 till now

ROC Republic of China, 1912-1949

SOE State-owned Enterprises

TPB Theory of Planned Behaviour

TFR Total Fertility Rate

Chapter 1 Introduction

Family Planning Programme has been vigorously implemented in China for the last four decades. In particular, with the one-child policy which was in place for more than 35 years since 1979, China has experienced dramatic demographic changes. The total fertility rate of around 6 children per woman in the 1950s dropped to the ultra-low of 1.5 towards 2010s, attributed primarily to the implementation of strict family planning (Zeng and Hesketh, 2016). It is estimated that by 2035 (if without further intervention), for the first time ever in the demographic history of China, the absolute population size is expected to recede (Myers, Wu and Fu, 2020), unless the fertility rates recuperate to a replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. In response to a looming demographic crisis, the government of People's Republic of China made strategic decisions to replace the one-child with two-child policy in 2015.

With the past several decades of systems and policies favouring one child only, the social environment has been gradually shifted towards one-child family, not only in the people's mindset, but also in the public service. The one-child norm was deeply rooted in people's life routine, particularly in urban areas where parents and grandparents treat the one child as "little emperors", as well as providing greater investment and resources (Greenhalgh and Winckler, 2005). Transition to two-child policy, however, leads to changes beyond the regulated number of children only. The notion of having two children does not simply mean having one more child, as the life routine and behaviour pattern previously based on one child have to be overturned. This may not be difficult for the older generation who were born during the 1960s and 1970s as most of them have siblings, which could possibly explain their active responses to the two-child policy (NBS, 2017). On the contrary, the move towards two-child family could be unprecedented to their children, the one-child generation. As the one-child policy began in 1979, the older cohort of one-child generation have grown up into their 20s and 30s and most of them are at the start of their reproductive career. Brought up in the environment of one-child families, these individuals have their own views and perceptions about family life and childbearing. Little is known about the reproductive intentions of the one-child generation under the two-child policy context, especially how they respond to China's new fertility policy and how they perceive, decide and integrate childbearing into their lives. This thesis addresses the reproductive intentions of heterosexual couples and the underlying reasons when China's family planning programme makes a shift from the one-child to two-child policy.

This chapter briefly introduces the research problem. The first section offers background information on the research topic, focusing on the relevance of low fertility and women's status in

the birth control history in China. The second section explains the research objectives, research questions and methodology adopted. The final two sections briefly describe the value of the research brings and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background and study context

1.1.1 Family Planning Programme

China has long been a populous country due to the longstanding traditions of a society with more children. After the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the government leaders, particularly Chairman Mao Zedong, initially viewed the large population of 541.67 million in 1949 (Yao and Yin, 1994) as a valuable asset because the devastated country, following a century of external invasion and civil war, had to be rebuilt. Chairman Mao held the view that rebuilding the society and economy of China cannot be realised without a large population. However, challenges soon emerged following a steady increase in population growth rates. The first population census conducted in 1953 revealed that the whole population rose to 580.6 million, with the natural growth rate as high as 37 per thousand (Yao and Yin, 1994). Some practical issues started to influence people's life, including insufficient housing in cities and a lack of school buildings to accommodate students (Yang, 2003). In 1953, Premier Zhou Enlai pointed out that Chinese people were fond of more children but to supply for the rapid population growth would be a big burden for China (Zhou, 1953). The government therefore endorsed the strategy of limiting births and began to support birth control by conducting propaganda and giving out contraceptives from 1954 (Yang, 2003; Qin, 2016). Unfortunately, the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961 and the Great Chinese Famine from 1959 to 1961 led to a grave shortage of food, followed by another devastating movement of Cultural Revolution which started in 1966. The crude death rate of 1959, 1960 and 1961 respectively was 14.59, 25.43 and 14.24 per thousand (Yao and Yin, 1994). All these events exerted destructive influences on people's basic life and government's macro-strategy at that time, population policies included. Overall, the strategy and practice of population control before 1970 was not continuous and systematic and there was no compulsory regulation yet. The whole population rose by almost one and half times from 541.67 million in 1949 to 806.71 million in 1969 (Yao and Yin, 1994).

Accompanied by the economic reforms in 1970, Chinese leaders were determined to control the burgeoning population growth rates, reflecting on the needs of balancing economic growth while limiting excessive increase of population. The strategy of population control was therefore incorporated into a long-term national development plan, the 4th Five-Year Plan (1971-1975) (Qian, 1983). Soon after the foundation of the Planned Reproduction Group of the State Council

of the Central Government in 1973, the slogan of "*wan"* (postponing marriage and childbearing), "*xi"* (increasing birth intervals), "*shao"* (having fewer births) was proposed (Guo, 2000; Zhu, 2015). During that period, family planning was still a personal choice albeit intensively promoted throughout the country. The population increased from around 830 million in 1970 to 950 million in 1977, with the total fertility rate decreasing from 4.5 to 2.8 children per woman (Yao and Yin, 1994). To reach the goal of controlling the population size within 1.2 billion by the end of 1999, the government further tightened up birth control and finally added population control to the Constitution as a basic national policy, known as Family Planning Programme (FPP). In September 1980, the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee issued an open letter to officially introduce the one-child policy nationwide (ethnic minorities excluded). This stringent fertility policy was designed to facilitate the accomplishment of the economic reform and accelerate the modernisation process in China, by the means of birth control. Certain revisions were made later on while the one-child policy was in place dominantly, and specific regulations were developed on a provincial level. The slogan for promoting birth control gradually transformed to "*wanhun, wanyu, shaosheng, yousheng*" (late marriage, late childbearing, fewer births and better births). The Law of the People's Republic of China on Population and Family Planning was enacted and came into effect from September 2002 onwards. Meanwhile, the population rose from 1 billion in 1981 to approximately 1.3 billion in 2002 (Yao and Yin, 1994; Zhuang and Zhang, 2003).

The implementation of the one-child policy for over 30 years led to successful population control, with unimaginable consequences including rapid fertility decline, skewed sex ratios and population aging (Kallgren, 1986; Shen, Wang and Cai, 2013; Jin, 2014; Qin, 2016). The stringent implementation of FPP made total fertility rate decline fast and it has been below the replacement rate of 2.1 for the recent two decades. The decreasing number of new-borns, together with an increase in life expectancy, implied the growing percentage of older people in the whole population. The share of senior citizens aged 65 and over to the total population increased from 5.8% in 1990 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003) to 7.1% in 2000 (Zhuang and Han, 2012), further 8.92% (Zhuang and Han, 2012) and 11.47% (World Bank, 2021b) in 2010 and 2019 respectively, marking the arrival of an ageing society in China. Worse still, skewed sex ratio at birth was aggravated due to the traditional preference over sons. As the 1982 census showed, the sex ratio at birth of 108.5 was slightly over the normal value of 105 males per 100 females, however this figure reached 114.1 in 1990, further increasing to 117.1 in 1995 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003). The 5th population census revealed that the ratio ascended sharply in 2000 and was as high as 119.92 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003). In a nutshell, the society has faced unprecedented demographic challenges since the enactment of one-child policy. The Central Government also noticed these changes and attempted to modify the fertility policy, from selective two-child policy

to universal two-child policy (He, 2014). The selective two-child policy was announced publicly as the first-step reform attempt in 2013. Nonetheless, the expected fertility rebound was not observed. The 5th Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee finally adopted the universal two-child policy in October, 2015 to respond to the demographic challenges. This new population policy represents the end of the one-child policy as well as the compulsory contraceptive practices for women for the last 35 years (He, 2014; Feng, 2015). A comprehensive review of family planning history in China is presented in Chapter 2.

A unique group stands out with the long practice of family planning: the one-child generation. As Lin and Sun (2010: 217) described this generation:

> It is also ushering in a generation of young people with distinct characteristics, those who grew up in a one-child family and in the middle of China's rapid and profound social and economic transformation, with its wide and rich access to sources of information via the internet.

The era of the one-child generation has set precedence in the Chinese history with considerable impact on their exceptional life experiences. The decrease in family size could signify the preciousness of having and nurturing children and thus they were brought up in a more refined and intensive way, in comparison to their parent generation (Yang, 2017b). This young generation increasingly care for personal demands and feelings (Chen and Hu, 2012; Deng and Chen, 2020), and have therefore developed new perceptions of having children, raising children, and embracing their values instead of the convention of having "more sons, more blessings". The trend suggests that the one-child generation couples deem enough to have just one child or even favour childlessness. Their childbearing and family beliefs, as they enter their reproductive career, become increasingly significant to the whole nation and possibly the rest of the world.

1.1.2 Low fertility trend and emancipation of women in China after 1949

For a long time, the rapid population growth and the resultant negative impact have been the dominant focus of government and public in China. Conversely, the demographic profile in recent years reveals that China has entered low-fertility era much earlier than expected (Gu, 2007). Since the beginning of 1990s, China has experienced an unprecedented demographic transition with fertility rates falling below replacement level. China's fertility transition commenced as a result of rigid and intensive family planning policies, and notably the "one-child" family planning policy introduced in 1979 which impacted upon an entire generation. The total fertility rate in China during early 1970s was as high as 5.8 children per woman which then dropped substantially to 2.3 in 1990 (Yao and Yin, 1994), 1.2 in 2000 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003) and to 1.04 in 2015 (NBS,

2016b). Figure 1.1 illustrates the declining trend of fertility throughout the past 70 years. In response to the looming demographic crisis, the two-child policy was put in place in 2016. The number of newborn babies in 2016 and 2017 was 17.86 million and 17.23 million respectively, with 2018 witnessing only 15.23 million new-borns (He, 2020; NBS, 2020). The newly born population kept declining after the two-child policy was announced and was far below the expectations (Ren, Xiong and Zhou, 2020). The low fertility trend persists regardless of policy amendments.

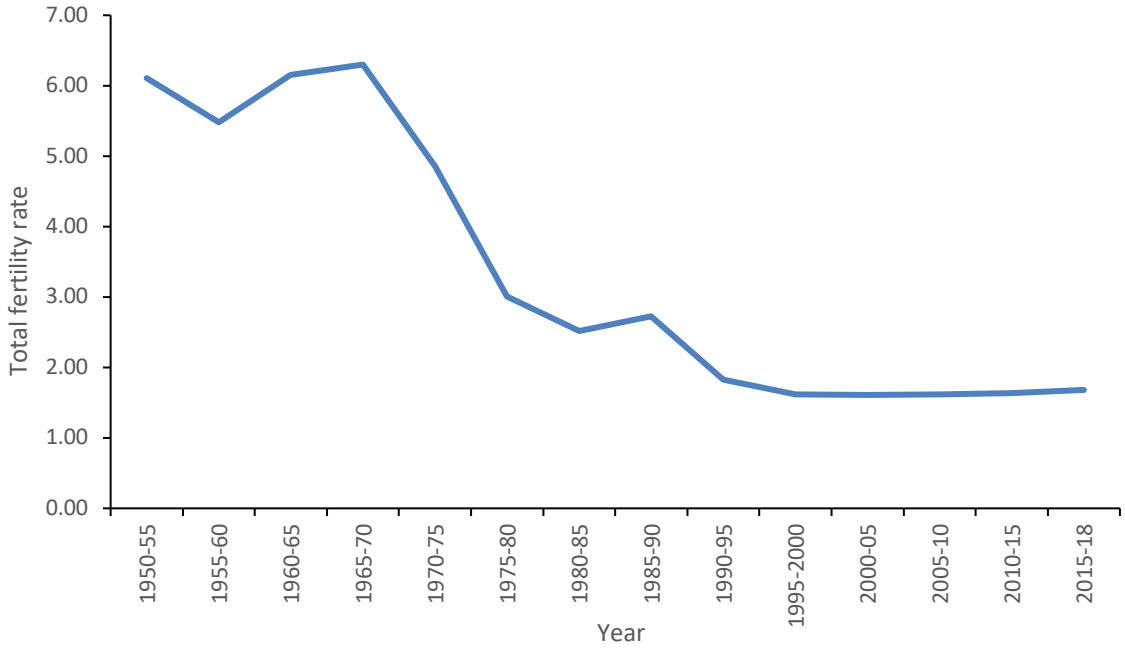

Figure 1.1 Total fertility rate in China, from 1950 to 2018

Data source: United Nations Population Division Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Apart from the demographic transitions, China has also experienced dramatic social changes over the past six decades (Xie and Hannum, 1996). Women's social status has been lifted up in general (Hannum, 2005; Wu and Zhang, 2010) and the one-child policy exerted a significant influence on women (Greenhalgh, 2003). Retrospectively, during the early decades following the 1949 Revolution, Communist ideology concerning gender equality was broadly spread, emphasising women's parity with men. The most well-known slogan at that time was "women hold up half the sky". In the spheres of politics and social environment, Chinese institutions guaranteed women equal rights of pay claims with those of men and approved of the policy of "same work, same pay" (Zuo and Bian, 2001). The year of 1950 witnessed the enactment of Marriage Law, which formally legalised the free agency in marriage and women's rights and interests as wives (Zuo and Bian, 2001; Mu and Xie, 2016). These ideational and policy changes have facilitated the emancipation of

women and enhanced women's social status in contemporary China (Zhang, Hannum and Wang, 2008; Song, 2009; Mu and Xie, 2016). During the 1980s, the nine-year compulsory education was made free for all children of school age, helping women to obtain the same educational achievements with men (Treiman, 2013). All these efforts contributed to sustaining gender equality over time in China.

Despite successful emancipation of women in China, the promotion of gender equality in China is in fact conditional and costly. On the one hand, in the Mao era, for the purpose of promoting industrialisation, women were encouraged to participate in social production (Yang, 2017b; 2018a; 2020b), taking women out of the family domain and the employment rate of women was once as high as 90% in urban area in the 1970s (Zheng, 2020b). Nonetheless, the transition from planned economy to market economy in 1980s as well as the urbanisation process had to lay off employees of state-owned enterprises and women employees were the first to be "abandoned" as they were initially seen a backup pool of male manpower (Bao, 2004; Jin, 2006; Yang, 2020a). On the other hand, the fast decline in children's number (from more than three to one) in a family makes every child extremely precious and accordingly increases the daughter's status and education level. However, the successive high sex ratios at birth favouring males in the 1980s and 1990s reveal the traditional low status of girls. The intensification of sex ratios coincided with the fall in fertility rates, especially in urban areas of China (Li, Li and Jiang, 2006). In this regard, only surviving girls had the opportunity to experience their lifted status in the family and society, particularly those who are the singleton (daughter) child in their family living in cities as they share the benefits exclusively that used to be held by sons only. Their "advantages" could endure even after they give birth, for example, a recent study demonstrated that unlike other women's stagnation or slow progress in career after giving birth, most women who experienced career upward mobility after giving birth to a second child were the urban singleton daughters who received massive parental support (Shen and Jiang, 2020a).

In summary, with a far-reaching influence, strict family planning in China has accelerated the demographic transition process by strong political intervention and established the context of low fertility. Accompanied by the advancement of marketisation and modernisation, women have shown more involvement in the public sphere, while the outlook of gender equality still remains uncertain. By then, the one-child generation, growing up in a different environment and sharing different perceptions from their parent generation, have started entering their reproductive careers. The recent introduction of the two-child policy has in fact created both opportunities and challenges to these young people's fertility decisions.

1.2 Research objectives and design

The overarching objective of this research is to investigate the variations in fertility intentions of the one-child generation in Jiangsu province of China and the underlying interplay between gender and family under the two-child policy environment. The scope of the research will be limited to urban area in Jiangsu Province, China. Although there are differences in regional FPP regulations, urban area in China generally adopted and practiced the one-child policy across all provinces (Qin, 2016). In other words, urban residents are possibly more influenced under the new policy context, as most of their rural counterparts already had the privilege of having two children before 2016[1]. Jiangsu is one of the six provinces/municipalities/autonomous regions that implemented the one-child policy most stringently (Gu *et al.*, 2007), making it a representative case to explore young residents' responses to childbearing intentions under policy changes.

There are three specific objectives and each objective has sub-research questions. This research attempts to address the following sets of research questions as Table 1.1 lists.

Table 1.1 Research objectives and questions

Research Objectives	**Research Questions**
1. To examine the fertility intentions of the one-child generation prior to the introduction of the two-child policy (2016)	1) What are the differences in fertility intentions between the one-child generation and preceding cohorts prior to the introduction of the two-child policy?
	2) What are the key socioeconomic factors underlying the fertility intentions of the one-child generation?
2. To investigate the variations in fertility intentions of the one-child generation with the introduction of the two-child policy (2016) and the mechanisms underlying their reproductive choices	1) How does the two-child policy influence fertility desires of the one-child generation cohorts?
	2) What is the current trend of fertility intentions of the one-child generation under the new fertility policy?
	3) What are the main obstacles to transition to the second birth amongst the one-child generation?

[1] There were more exceptions for rural couples to have two children in the one-child policy era, compared to urban couples, for example, a second birth was allowed if the rural couple only had one daughter. Differences in fertility regulations can also be found for different ethnic groups. More details in nuanced regulations on this will be delivered in Chapter 2.

3. To explore the family pattern of one-child generation couples, and interactions of gender, childbearing and wage work under the two-child policy context	1) What is the notion of a family of one-child generation couple with young child(ren) in urban Jiangsu?
	2) How do men and women perceive the relations between childbearing/family and work and how do they manage related challenges?

The thesis employs a mixed method of inquiry. This goes hand-in-hand with the purposes of the research in general. Employing this strategy, the thesis adopts quantitative analysis at the first stage and qualitative methods at the second stage. Quantitative data are drawn from the Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey in 2010, and the qualitative data are collected through semi-structured interviews along with focus groups. The methodology and analysis plan are discussed in Chapter 4.

1.3 Scientific and policy contributions

As the objectives of the research show, the thesis offers important insights into several areas.

Firstly, the thesis adds value to building literature on the reproductive intentions and behaviours of the one-child generation. This group has been studied mainly on their experiences and characteristics in comparison to preceding cohorts. Little is known about their life course events. Since this generation enters their reproductive career, their fertility intentions and behaviours should be of higher significance. This study therefore provides relevant empirical results to explorations on their childbearing behaviour.

Secondly, the thesis contributes to fertility studies in China by demonstrating the value of qualitative strategy in predicting and explaining people's fertility intentions. With much more reliance on quantitative data to predict fertility trend, quantitative analyses dominate exsiting fertility studies in China. Except for its advantages, it fails to explain the process and mechanisms behind fertility decisions. The mixed method applied in this research could shed more light on the understanding of the complex process and struggles young people encountered related to childbearing and families.

Finally, the study contributes to China's population policy literature. Providing a new account to the problem of understanding how population policies impact on people's childbearing ideals, it corporates individual considerations and experiences of childbearing and policy context. This helps to identify the role of population policies in contemporary China and contributes to the policy development. The findings inform the attitudes of the young generation towards fertility

policy regulations and provide empirical evidence for future policy options. It turns out that the current fertility policy is formulated and implemented in an oversimplified and crude way, which fails to accommodate or reflect the needs of young people. The one-child generation requires more practical and direct means to relieve their burden and expand their choice options. This thesis argues that fertility policies should be specific enough to respond to demands that different groups of people may propose.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This chapter sets the background information to the research topic. It has laid out the wider context and the rationale of the research. It has also put forwarded the research objectives and questions the research will address. The structure of the rest of the thesis is outlined below.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed elucidation of China's broader social and demographic context. Firstly, the history of population control in China is reviewed from before the foundation of PRC when the ideology of birth control sprang up, then the introduction of Family Planning Programme in 1950s, till the well acknowledged one-child policy being into enforcement after 1980. The influences the long-lasting one-child policy exerted are presented thereafter to pave the path towards adopting the two-child policy. A complete review on the birth control history in China will facilitate understanding the background and context of population policy, the social environment, and norms for the past several decades. Thirdly, it discusses family dynamics and the unique one-child generation to bring a clear picture of families in contemporary China, followed by an overview of gender equality issues in China. The trajectory of Chinese women's status is elaborated, with its links to population policy.

Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive literature review. After introducing the translation from fertility intentions to behaviour, it contains a general review on the knowledge of fertility intentions, from theorising fertility intentions to the contributing factors. A variety of relevant factors have been grouped into two types: individual-level considerations and macro-level contexts to tease out the attributes that build on people's fertility intentions. Then, turning to research on China, it includes fertility intention research at either regional level or national level across time, along with research capturing motherhood experience of young women in urban China. This chapter ends with the conceptual framework of the research by drawing strengths from the above historical and literature review, which will shed light further on the analytical discussion in the empirical chapters.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology and design, and the rationale behind the choice of a mixed strategy with an emphasis on qualitative design. It examines the implications of using

quantitative data analysis and collecting data through qualitative semi-structured interviews. The selection of target respondents and research sites are justified with appropriate description of the sample sites and respondents' characteristics. It also provides details of ethical issues and reflections the researcher gained through the fieldwork.

Chapter 5 sets out the analysis of the quantitative data derived from the 2010 Jiangsu Fertility Intentions and Behaviour Survey (JFIBS), to present an overall understanding of childbearing intentions of the one-child generation, prior to the policy changes in 2016. This chapter argues that the one-child generation are more in favour of small family size compared to their earlier cohorts. It provides evidence based on statistical modelling to examine the associations between socioeconomic factors and fertility intentions. The findings in this chapter demonstrate that level of education does not make a significant difference to young females' short-term fertility desires as reported elsewhere outside China. The findings from quantitative analysis also justify and inform the qualitative fieldwork in urban Jiangsu.

Chapter 6 discusses the results from the (thematic) analysis of the one-child generation's fertility intentions and reasons/factors behind their choices after the universal two-child policy was officially introduced, based on qualitative data from Wuxi city and Taizhou city in Jiangsu province. First of all, individual perceptions on policy effect are looked into for assessing the role of the two-child policy, laying a foundation for comparing current intentions with results in Chapter 5. General fertility intentions are then discussed with a focus on ideal family size, intended timing of childbearing and preference of sex at birth, to investigate individual's views on future childbearing. The obstacles to transitions to the second birth are further discussed to understand the mechanisms underlying childbearing decisions, pointing to the next chapter on the current strategy of one-child generation couples have adopted to overcome such obstacles.

Chapter 7 presents the analysis on family and career through a gendered lens. It argues that in China, women have undertaken more responsibilities and difficulties in both realms of work and family than men have. From one side, women in job market are facing more discriminations due to their potential childbearing commitments; from another side, the imbalances in the divisions of housework and childcare in a family deteriorate gender equality. Intergenerational support is highly essential for household care in China, and the role of grandparents is explored. The findings show evidence on how a family with children works in urban China and how this exerts a profound influence on both men and women of the one-child generation. The final section provides critical reflections on associations between policy trajectory and the one-child generation, women and varying fertility intentions.

Chapter 8 sums up the main findings and concludes the research with further discussions, policy implications, key contributions and limitations, as well as the future research recommendations.

Chapter 2 Fertility and family in China: a historical review

Unlike Western societies, China shares different cultures and traditional practices. The differentials have also led to the variability of fertility and family life in China. The historical one-child policy took China to a unique path towards low fertility and with economic development, it generated drastic changes to China's traditional pattern of family and society. Therefore, before reviewing the literature on fertility intentions and reproductive behaviour, we have to place China's one-child policy in a wider social and economic context.

The first two sections of this chapter present a detailed review of the history of birth control and family planning in China, before the establishment of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 to the latest two-child policy in 2016. The third section introduces the family dynamics throughout contemporary China and highlights the effect of Family Planning Programme after 1979, as well as the emerging one-child generation. The following section addresses the gender perspectives, reviewing women's status and gender inequality that are interconnected with childbearing desires.

2.1 Evolution of family planning in China

2.1.1 China's population before 1949

Prior to the establishment of PRC in 1949, Chinese people had experienced a turbulent period. The century between 1851 and 1949 witnessed societal breakdown, dynastic collapse, imperialist penetration and invasion and civil war. The year 1945 breaks the century into two stages, the warfare against foreign invasion and the civil war between Nationalist Party and Communist Party of China (CPC hereafter). Nationalist Party, also known as Kuo Ming Tang (KMT), was officially in charge from 1927 until 1948. The recorded population rose from around 429.5 million in 1851 to 582.6 million in 1953, with an annual average population growth rate of 0.3% (Banister, 1991). With strong conventional ideologies passed on from feudal era, the concept of birth control, embedded in introduction of modern scientific thoughts, still managed to come into view. During the era of the Republic of China (ROC), 1912-1949, different views on population strategies emerged, in contradiction with the long-lasting preference of population growth in the Feudal Times (Zhang, 1983; Zhang, 1996). The founding father and the first president of the ROC, Sun Yat-sen, showed inconsistent attitudes towards population growth. In his petition to Qing Viceroy Li

Hongzhang, he presented that China had been overpopulated. In 1924 however, he was concerned for the decrease in Chinese population evidenced by the census data the Western countries provided (Chen, 2002; Xia, 2009). Unfortunately, Sun Yat-Sen passed away in 1925 and therefore he was unable to initiate any fundamental measures on population.

Outside the government sectors, notions of birth control raised heated discussions among scholars, albeit no solid data on population during that time was recorded. The introduction of the Malthusian Theory of Population and Neo-Malthusianism that proposed the contradiction between faster population growth and relatively slower food production growth, called for restricting population growth widely among the public (Zhang, 1983; Gu, 2000). With the two visits of Margret Sanger, a famous birth control activist in America, to China during 1920s and 1930s, the ideology of birth control influenced China's intellectuals profoundly (Gu, 2000; Chen, 2002). The spread of modern birth control thoughts drove the use of scientific methods to practice contraception (Long, 2012; Li, 2013a). Notwithstanding, contraceptives were either too expensive for the public or of insufficient efficacy, resulting in the burgeoning abortion practices (Long, 2012). Apart from that abortion was established as illegal in the Criminal Law of the Republic of China in 1935 (Long, 2012), population problem was largely ignored in the policy agenda before 1940s. After four years of discussion and formulation, the National Government (headquarters then based in Nanjing) issued certain population policies in 1945, mainly for improving education and public health, along with some promotion of birth control (Chen, 2002). In the following years, the National Government recognised the issue of overpopulation and population quality (Chen, 2002) but this government collapsed soon and lost its legitimate status in mainland China. Similarly, for other areas of China that were commanded by CPC, little attention was drawn to population and reproduction as "the CPC had been preoccupied with surviving Nationalist attacks, repelling Japanese invasion, and conquering the country" (Greenhalgh and Winckler, 2005: 55). The introduction of birth control notions in 1920s and 1930s can be regarded as the emerging foundations for the later Family Planning Programme.

2.1.2 Birth control practice between 1949 and 1970

What the CPC inherited before 1949 was mainly pronatal and anticontraceptive approach to population growth. Karl Marx puts it forward that different population dynamics existed in different social systems: population probably outrun resources in capitalist systems, while in socialist systems, population would be a valued resource (Yang, 2003). In practice, childbearing was encouraged in the Soviet Union as the state was comparatively underpopulated because of war. Stalinism brought with Marxist and Soviet pronatalism formed the initial stance on population issues in People's Republic of China (Greenhalgh and Winckler, 2005). The ancient

Chinese tradition of having more children led people conforming to this pattern (Yang, 2003). Induced abortion, sterilisation and contraceptive use were totally prohibited from 1949 to 1953 (Guo, 2000). Consequently, during the three-year national economy recovery period (1949-1952), the birth rate was between 36 and 37 per 1000 population; the mortality rate remained as high as 17 per 1000 to 20 per 1000 population[2] (Yao and Yin, 1994). The population in 1949 was estimated as 541.67 million and the first census in 1953 recorded the population as 587.96 million (Yao and Yin, 1994), with around 46 million of net population increase since 1949.

The huge gap between the large population and poor development caught attention at the highest level and Premier Zhou particularly pointed out this discrepancy in the document of the First Five-Year Plan in 1953 (Zhu, 2015). During the first Five-Year Plan (1953-1957), the PRC endorsed limiting births and began to conduct propaganda, from just word of mouth and giving out pamphlets to wide publicity (Yang, 2003). At this stage, the government emphasised that it was the individual's own right to choose whether or not to practice contraception.

The Great Leap Forward campaign in 1958, which aimed to rapidly transform agriculture economy into socialist society through industrialisation and collectivisation, suspended the promotion of limiting births. A combination of adverse weather conditions and the aggressive strategy of industrialisation over agriculture led to a "three-year economic disaster", later resulting in a devastating famine. The population growth was rather slow and the year 1960 even saw the first negative population growth of -4.57‰ since 1949, whilst absolute population fell from approximately 672 million in 1959 to 662 million in 1960 (Yao and Yin, 1994; Yang, 2003; Zhu, 2015). Limiting birth was therefore laid aside by the government partly due to the unexpected population change.

A high compensation fertility rate arose from the end of the "three-year economic disaster" in 1962 as well as the following economic rehabilitation, with the natural growth rate speedily rebounding back to 26.99‰ and keeping ascending later in the following three years to 33.33‰, 27.64‰ and 28.38‰ respectively (Yao and Yin, 1994) . The government was intrinsically prompted to promote birth control in some urban areas (Guo, 2000). However, the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 interrupted previous efforts. Despite that the guiding principle of

[2] The population data according to different kinds of references is subtly different, particularly for the data of early PRC from 1949 to 1960. Based on a careful selection and scrutiny, the series of *Basic Data of China Population* published by China Population Publishing House is chosen as the main source of population data used in the research for the following reasons: 1. the publisher belongs to an authoritative institution of demographic research in China with its current name of CPDRC, China Population and Development Research Centre; 2. the series of data books are consistent from year to year; 3. the volumes are published every 10 years since 1994 and include data of every year from 1949 till the latest version of 2010.

birth control remained, the society was in fact close to anarchy, with the whole nation running in chaos. This also caused many local family planning service institutions to be shut down (Guo, 2000; Yang, 2003) and the family planning was disrupted to a greater extent.

2.1.3 Family Planning Policy from 1970s

The well-acknowledged family planning policy reform in China started from 1970 onwards. The family planning policy was initially described as postponing marriage and childbearing, increasing birth intervals and having fewer births ("*wan, xi, shao*") in 1973, also known as "later, longer and fewer" policy. "Later" represents that the government advocated a later marriage with males over 25 years old and females over 23 years old[3]; "longer" points to the birth interval of at least three years; "fewer" refers to that couples were encouraged to have one child, two at most (Zhu, 2015). The government also added the population growth index to the National Economic and Social Development Plan from 1973 to indicate its important position in the national development agenda (Yang, 2003). It is notable that within this period, all the articles abovementioned were encouragement instead of obligations. The total fertility rate (TFR) dropped remarkably from 5.43 per woman in 1971 to 3.58 per woman in 1975 and further to 2.75 in 1979 (Yao and Yin, 1994). The population size was nevertheless 975.42 million with a natural growth rate of 11.61‰ in 1979 (Yao and Yin, 1994), resulting in the population projection of over 1.5 billion in 40 years (Zhu, 2015). Due to the pressing demand of population control, the government decided to take firm actions on birth control and proposed stricter policies from 1979 onwards. Throughout 1979, relative flexibility in one or two children was tightened and a variety of publicity concentrated on one child only. The one-child policy was in fact carried out in 1979.

In September, 1980, the Central Committee of CPC issued an open letter, implementing the so-called "one-child" policy was implemented nationwide (ethnic minorities excluded) and put as a basic state policy. It was an emergency measure to slow down rapid population growth for modernisation as designed (Wang and Yang, 1996; Gu *et al.*, 2007). The regulated number of children was officially tightened from "two-children" permitted to "one-child" only (Zhu, 2015; Qin, 2016), accompanied by the development of specialised organisations. The Ministry of Health was assigned with the responsibility for implementing birth control from late 1950s, while the Maternal and Child Health Division administered specific propaganda and contraceptive methods. In 1981, the State Family Planning Commission was established and 28 out of 32 provinces/municipalities/autonomous regions set up their branches before 1984, as well as the

[3] The legally marriageable age is 22 for males and 20 for females.

following establishment of family planning offices in prefectures, counties and villages/towns (Yang, 2003; Qin, 2016).

Nevertheless, the "one-child" policy encountered much obstruction in rural areas as traditions of multiple births and having a son still remained strong (Yang, 2003; Gu *et al.*, 2007). To alleviate this situation, the policy of "opening a small hole" was adopted in 1984, referring to a second child allowed under certain conditions. Rural families were allowed to have a second birth if they have only one girl. During the process of several amendments, the slogan for family planning was eventually developed into "late marriage, late childbearing, fewer births and better births" ("*wanhun, wanyu, shaosheng, yousheng*"). The promotion of bearing and rearing better children ("*yousheng youyu*") proceeded from 1980s along with the proposed decrease in number of children, due to the demand of increasing the quality of population in both physical health and educational attainment (Mu, 1996; Liang, 2004). The longitudinal monitoring project presented a decline of physical defect rate at birth from 9.14‰ in 1986 to 6.77‰ in 1990 in rural areas (Mu, 1996); the illiterate and semiliterate rate[4] was as high as 51.8% in 1964 and declined to 31.9%[5] in 1982 (Yao and Yin, 1994) and 22.3% in 1990 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003). "*Shaosheng*" (fewer births) in fact facilitated "*yousheng youyu*" (better births and better childrearing) (Mu, 1996; Yang, 2017b) and this benefited from the prevalence of contraceptive use. Most married couples had easy access to contraceptive services that were free of charge. During the 1970s, the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) was below 60%, yet increased and remained 70% in the 1980s. The year 1992 saw the CPR reaching 83.4% which was much higher than the world average level (UN, 1994), with variations across different geographical regions (Guo, 2000).

In the period of 1984-1991, improvements were made to revise fertility policy and it was gradually modified and developed into regional regulations based on local situations (Table 2.1). The family planning policy on the provincial level can be divided into four main categories from 1984 onwards. 28 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions[6] had formulated their specific family planning policies and enacted local regulations by 1991.

[4] Illiterate and semiliterate population were related to population aged 7 and over. Figures for population with unknown educational attainment were not included.
[5] This rate was based on population aged 12 and over. The same indicator of population aged 7 and over as the above footnote shows was also available and it was 31.88%. The reason for the similar figure is that the primary school age in China is exactly 7-12.
[6] Province, municipality and autonomous region are at the same level as provincial administrative region in China's administrative division.

Table 2.1 Regional fertility policies by number of children

Number of children	Provinces/regions covered	Main feature
One child	All residents of urban areas; Residents of rural areas in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Sichuan and Chongqing	One child only
One and half children	Residents of rural areas in 19 provinces and autonomous regions: Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi, Shandong, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Shaanxi and Gansu	Two children permitted if the first one is a girl
Two children	Residents of rural areas in five provinces and autonomous regions: Hainan, Yunnan, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang	Two children
Three children	Ethnic minority herders in Qinghai and Xinjiang; rural minority couples in Ningxia (southern mountainous areas); rural minority couples with two daughters in Hainan and Inner Mongolia; rural minority couples in border areas in Yunnan	Three children

Source: Qin, 2016.

The family planning programme has been in steady implementation since 1991. The year 1992 recorded the fertility rate falling below the replacement level (TFR under 2.1) for the first time ever. The average rate for late marriage (male over 25 and female over 23) went up from 24% in 1985 to 35.4% in 1989 and soared to 60.12% in 1999 (Liang, 2004), with the woman's first marriage age climbing from 22.08 in 1989 (Mu, 1996) to 24.15 years old in 2001 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003). The CPC Central Committee stated that low-fertility rate should be stabilised. Figure 2.1 illustrates the computation of provincial policy fertility that indicates the average number of children a woman could have according to local policies (Gu *et al.*, 2007). In 2001, Law of the People's Republic of China on Population and Family Planning was enacted, which came into effect from September, 2002. Minor amendments were thereafter made by different provinces before the emerging negative demographic outcomes impelled the central government into reconsideration of fertility policy in the 2010s (Guo, 2000; Zhu, 2015).

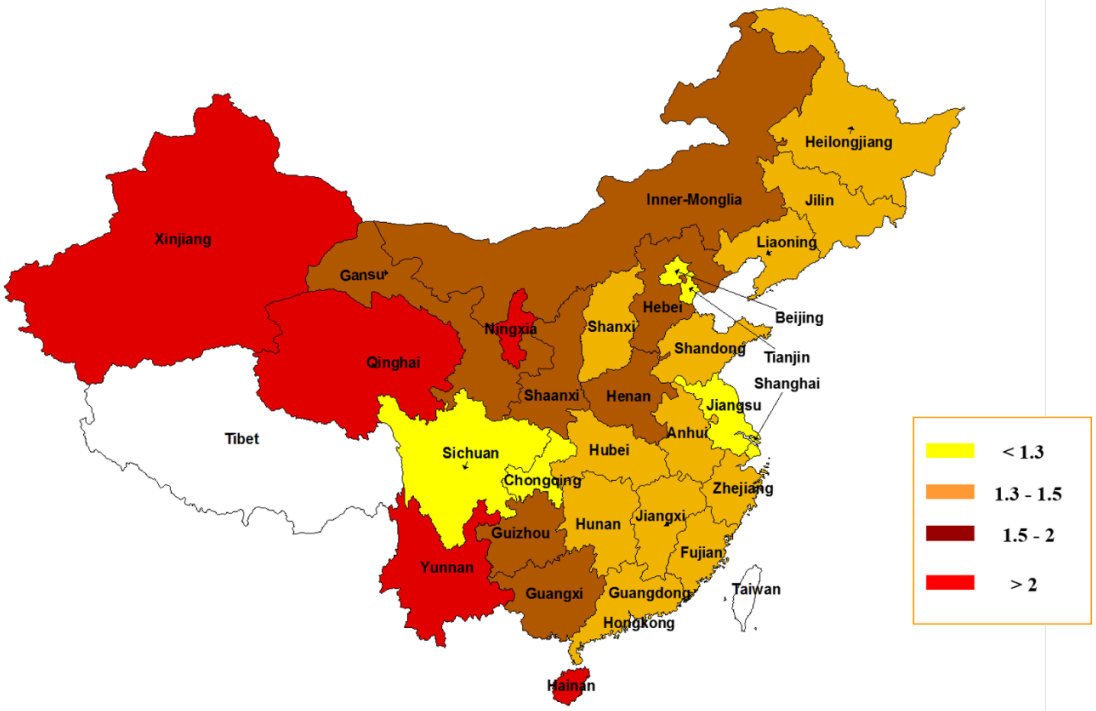

Figure 2.1 Map showing policy fertility rate in China

Source: Gu, 2012.

2.1.4 Implementation of Family Planning Programme

Public attitudes to family planning policy

The one-child policy is undoubtedly a contradiction to conventional concept of multiple births and strong disagreement with such strict birth restrictions existed (Qin, 2016). Some studies indicated that people in urban areas expressed understanding and remained tacit approval (Milwertz, 1997; Fong, 2004; Nie and Wyman, 2005). The older generation could recall clashes with the introduction of this state policy, however, they regarded this as an intervention that was needed nationally since no other alternatives were available to contain the severe population pressure. As Fong (2004: 73) put, they "spoke far less bitterly [about the one-child policy] than when they spoke about other sources of suffering".

Citizens in rural areas were more averse to the policy since childbearing was prominent in rural culture. To instantly reduce three and more children to one child in a rural family was extremely impractical (Guo, 2000; Zhu, 2015), engendering more regulatory relaxation and moderations in rural areas. Resistance to family planning policy includes evasion, cover-up, collusion and confrontation in general (Kaufman *et al.*, 1989; Greenhalgh, 1994; White, 2006; Qin, 2016). Evasion used to be popular as a means of opposition. Mobility was harshly restricted prior to economic reforms, yet the aim to boost economy after 1978 enabled the relaxation on mobility.

This generated the increasing difficulty in monitoring childbearing. A large number of rural workers flocked into cities and this inevitably added challenges to family planning workers engaged in birth control enforcement. On top of that, cover-up was another pervasive strategy for addressing the problem. Not only rural residents were helping each other to embellish the truth to local officials, but also reported directly to higher authorities (Zong, 2013). Some local officials would turn a blind eye under some circumstances and hid the truth in their reports submitted. On some occasions, collusion often occurred with cover-up when some family planning cadres would assist to cover truth owing to their sympathy and empathy for rural families' childbearing desires. The most aggressive reaction was confrontation. Violence was not uncommon in some areas in that the local officials were eager to fulfil the tasks, contradicting the peasants' preferences (Zong, 2013; Qin, 2016).

Incentives and disincentives

The government offered financial incentives to encourage one child in a family and even issued the "single-child certificate". In other words, couples who signed a pledge promising that they would have no more children after the first birth received the single-child certificate that also entitled them with economic benefits (Guo, 2000). In urban areas, eligible couples could receive a monthly cash payment continuously, free medical care for the child, priority given to registering children in kindergarten and school, and free schooling for the child. The monthly granted allowance was provided until their child reached the exact age of 14 (five yuan for a boy, six yuan for a girl). Single-child certificate holders also enjoyed priority in housing allocation and job assignment, which would possibly make a big difference to residents' life during that planned economy period (Banister, 1991; Guo, 2000). Award of benefits in rural areas seemed vague nevertheless due to the rural collective economy[7]. When the one-child policy was firstly proposed in January, 1979, rural collectives were still underway. Though benefits were decided by different local governments, the overall provisions were similar to a great extent. The provisions for rural couples signing the single-child pledge included extra work points, a private plot of land and a larger proportion of the team's collectively produced grain (Banister, 1991). However, the introduction of the Household Responsibility Contract System[8] in 1979 seemingly disabled the

[7] Collective economy is a type of economy advocated by socialism. It exerts collective control over production and distribution. All production is owned by the working people collectively and the distribution is based on the amount of work (recorded as work points) done.

[8] Household Responsibility Contract System adopted in agriculture means that households are held responsible for the profits and losses of an enterprise. Farmers as a relatively independent economic entity contract the collective land and other large-scale means of production and carry out production and management independently. Except for a small part of its operating income, which is paid to the collective and state taxes following the contract, all income is attributed to farmers.

utility of current benefits: as the size of the land allocated to a farming household is based upon the number of household members, fewer members imply a smaller share of farming land, while families with more than one birth may be denied the share of land. Contradictions occurred under such circumstances. Concurrent with the booming market economy, an increasing number of residents have seceded farming to seek jobs outside or run their own business in non-agricultural sectors. In this context, the combination of the production responsibility system and market economy made these rewards meaningless (Banister, 1991; Guo, 2000).

In terms of disincentives, urban residents were more subject to facing penalties, especially those with a permanent job. The violation of family planning regulations not only led to the deprivation of previous benefits for the only child, subsidies for the child's education, but also posed threats to couples' employment and promotion. Additionally, people would be fined for more than one birth, or "social maintenance fee", calculated according to the couple's annual income. All these could make a higher parity birth very expensive. The penalties for rural couples having more births included several terms and conditions. Work points were to be reduced for all the years while the child was growing up and the family's private plot of land would be no larger than that for smaller families. With special reference to the child, the child was to be allocated no grain ration and forbidden from enjoying the benefits of the Cooperative Medical System. The parents also had to pay for the child's schooling and even welfare assistance was not allowed for large families in financial difficulties in 1970s and 80s. As some of these penalties became obsolete and had trivial effect on the fertility behaviour of farmers, new policies were introduced. Social maintenance fee was applicable to rural citizens simultaneously and it was generally two to six times of the annual income (Banister, 1991; Guo, 2000).

Local enforcement and practice

Propaganda was the first step before local enforcement for better and easier implementation. In fact, all sources of information, ranging from the posters on the wall to radio news, served as media for delivering policy messages. Slogans such as "one couple, one child" can be seen everywhere in the city or the countryside (Nie and Wyman, 2005). There was simultaneously some verbal aggression revealed from the mottos, including "popularise one birth, control two births, eliminate three births" (普及一胎,控制二胎,消除三胎) and "not a single more birth is allowed even blood flows like stream" (宁可血流成河,不准超生一个) (Zong, 2013) to deter people from violation. When the government attempted to push forward the practice, wide variations occurred in interpretation and enforcement by provincial and local officials. There were both high and low performing areas, such as Heilongjiang and Fujian respectively (Kaufman *et al.*, 1992). Married couples were not likely to experience a voluntary programme of fewer births as it

claimed at first (Banister, 1991), especially in the high performing provinces. Although the national government defended that the voluntary programme is to encourage rather than to require compliance, they added political value to the implementation effect, imposing workload on local government. In order to accomplish the goal, the success and outcome of implementation even became an indicator of local government's performance appraisal (Yang, 2003).

On top of that, criticism on China's family planning programme pointed to its adverse impact on women (Banister, 1991; Hom, 1992). On the one hand, women continue to be deprived of their natural reproductive rights (Banister, 1991), and the introduction of the new two-child policy to a great extent replicated this deprivation as women are still unable to make their own decision of how many more children they would like to have. On the other hand, at the early stage of FPP, in order to achieve the birth control goals, some women were treated unfairly and brutally (Banister, 1991; Zong, 2013) and their reproductive health has been largely ignored (Banister, 1991). Despite the fact that the promotion of contraceptives and fewer births to deliver improved women's average health condition (Mu, 1996; Yang, 2003; Liang, 2004), forced abortions, involuntary yet compulsory sterilisations, implantation of IUDs as well as community pressures to persuade women to abort pregnancies were not uncommon (Hom, 1992).

There is a distinct discrepancy in family planning practice between urban and rural area. The incentives and disincentives were differentiated in urban and rural areas as the previous section disclosed and these supporting measures were not necessarily effective in the same way. In general, the penalties were more intimidating to urban citizens and it turned out easier for them to accept the policy (Zhu, 2015; Qin, 2016). Observations in rural areas however suggested that rural residents may actively contest policy rules, forcing local cadres to negotiate some terms (Kaufman *et al.*, 1992; Greenhalgh, 1994; Greenhalgh and Li, 1995). This resulted in the creation of informal rules accommodating part of their desire. The weakened political and economic control over rural population made it difficult to address their resistance and protest to family planning. To avoid criticism from both the superiors and the constituencies, deviations from national policy and reporting inflated birth control results were a solution for grass-roots cadres (Kaufman *et al.*, 1989; Greenhalgh, 1994).

Another key but notorious player in the local enforcement is "social maintenance fee", which largely resulted from that there were no standard and uniform criteria from the national government in early implementation. It was named as forfeit of over-birth in 1980s and revised as fertility fee outside the plan in 1992 (Kang, 2005). The exact amount of fines was calculated upon child's parity and birth order by local government, or sometimes the provincial government. This

chaotic phenomenon was more prevalent in rural areas. Grass-root officials imposed fines on rural families randomly, redundantly and repeatedly, even bringing difficulties to some people's basic living. The massive sum of money was supposed to be invested in public resources for children's upbringing while no transparent report on use was available previously. News had disclosed appropriation of the funds and missing legitimate foundation due to a lack of official regulations. The Law of the People's Republic of China on Population and Family Planning enacted in 2002 justified the social maintenance fee as compensation for increased investment of public expenditure because of citizens with over regulated number of children, followed by clarifications in provincial regulations (Kang, 2005; Yao, 2005; Ji and Hu, 2006).

2.2 Impact of the one-child policy on population change in China

Implementation of the one-child policy over three decades has brought about considerable changes, apart from declining births. The tremendous variations are reflected in fertility norms, demographic structure and family life and have developed at an unexpectedly fast rate, provoking the rethinking of the one-child policy. This section will briefly evaluate the family planning policy and discuss some of the major demographic consequences. Based on the evaluation of the one-child policy, reform of family planning programme commenced and gradually transformed to the universal two-child policy.

2.2.1 Fertility decline

The foremost goal of family planning policy implemented from 1979 was to limit population growth, and more specifically, to control the population size to approximately 1.2 billion by the year 2000 (Guo, 2000; Zhu, 2015). The nation did achieve a reduction in population growth pace and the absolute population was slightly over 1.2 billion, according to the census in 2000. The decline in population growth rate was achieved through sustained reduction in fertility levels (Tien, 1984; Feeney and Yu, 1987; Cai, 2010; Qin, 2016). The total fertility rate (TFR) was as high as 6 children per woman throughout until 1960s (Yang, 2003). As fertility transition gradually began in early 1970s, the national TFR recorded a steady decline thenceforth. The national TFR decreased from 5.8 in 1970 to 3.6 children per woman in 1975 and declined to 2.8 children per woman in 1978. The next 14 years witnessed the process of fertility level to fall below replacement rate of 2.1. In 1992, the national TFR dropped to 2 children per woman (Yao and Yin, 1994) while other data sources claimed it as 1.98 (World Bank, 2019). The low fertility maintained and the national TFR in 2015 was as low as 1.67 (World Bank, 2019). This longstanding demographic strategy of family planning has driven people away from the tradition of more childbearing and made couples accustomed to one-child family pattern (Nie and Wyman, 2005),

magnified by contributions from socioeconomic development (Nie and Wyman, 2005; Hou, 2015; Whyte, Feng and Cai, 2015; Zhang, 2017).

2.2.2 Ageing society

The trends in fertility below replacement level had implications in accelerating population ageing. The rapid decline in fertility towards below replacement level led to a gradual increase in the share of older people (Kallgren, 1986; Shen, Wang and Cai, 2013; Jin, 2014; Qin, 2016). Ageing population refers to population aged over 60 or 65. If the percentage of people over 60 is more than 10%, or the percentage of people aged 65 and above is more than 7%, then the nation could be defined as ageing society (He, 2014). In the 1950s, high fertility and high mortality rates shaped the population structure a typical pyramid pattern with the base consisting of a larger share of young population. This trend remained in 1960s until the mortality started to fall. However, the percentage of older people aged 60 and over increased sharply in early 1980s as a result of rapid fertility decline (Yao and Yin, 1994). The population aged 60 and above constituted only 7.6%, with 4.9% aged over 65 in 1982 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003). The 2000 census showed an increase in the share of older people aged 60 and above to 10.5% and about 7.0% for those over 65 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003). Table 2.2 provides an illustration of the number of years taken for a population aged over 65 to double its size in different countries. It can be seen that China took fewer years than other western nations to establish an ageing society. The increase in population ageing along with consistent decline in fertility has triggered a decline in the share of working age population. Previous research implied that the working-age population reached its peak in 2010 and the absolute number has been in decline later on (He, 2014), possibly giving rise to the upward dependency ratio.

Table 2.2 Years taken for the establishment of an ageing society

Country	Period	Years
France	1865-1980	115
Sweden	1890-1975	85
U.S.A	1944-2013	69
U.K	1930-1975	45
China	2000-2027	27

Note: the indicator is the percentage of people aged over 65 evolving from 7% to 14%.
Source: Kinsella, 1995; National Institute on Aging and U.S. Department of State, 2007.

2.2.3 Skewed sex ratio

Sex ratio at birth refers to the ratio of male to female infants at birth during a certain time period, described on the basis of every 100 female infants. The biological sex ratio at birth is 105 males or

between 103 and 107 males per 100 females (Jin, 2014). The balance of sex ratio at birth is prerequisite for a balanced sex structure demographically, and for remaining a healthy population and reproduction and human development. As shown in the 1982 census, the sex ratio at birth in China was 108.5, already slightly over the normal value of 105. The ratio reached 114.1 in 1990, then further to a high 117.1 in 1995. The fifth population census indicated that the figure rose sharply to as high as 119.9 in the year 2000. Thereafter the situation became less severe as the number turned to 117.7 boys to every 100 girls, still high at the population level. Survey data revealed the sex ratio at birth of 112.4 in 2015 before the termination of the one-child policy (He *et al.*, 2018). Regardless of the descending figure in the last few years, it still remains a critical social problem (Shen, Wang and Cai, 2013; Jin, 2014; Qin, 2016). Skewed sex ratio at birth has resulted in the lopsided sex structure throughout young age groups. The estimations imply an excess of 19.2-21.7 millions of males aging from 22 to 34 by the year 2040, and accordingly an unusual marriage squeeze and marriage market due to fewer females (Jin, 2014). The family planning policy is believed to be the main cause of this phenomenon, especially with the policy extension that it allowed rural couples with the first child being a daughter to have a second birth (Che, 2011; Qin, 2016).

2.3 Transition from one-child policy to two-child policy

With a longstanding stance of population control, fertility in China has been below the replacement rate since 1992. In addition, adverse effects of family planning policy have been too distinct to be overlooked. The government attempted to amend fertility policy on a more general level since 2013, namely the selective two-child policy. The selective two-child policy means that couples meeting certain conditions are allowed to have a second birth. This concept requires a clarification in that two-child does not necessarily equal two births. Apart from other certain criteria, there is a premise that the first birth of the eligible couple is not a multiple-birth. Therefore technically, it is usually called two-child rather than two-birth (Zhang and Wang, 2014; Yi, 2015).

Before the universal two-child policy was announced in 2016, the selective two-child policy was under way in many provinces and it could date back to 1980s as 1.5-child policy was adopted for rural couples with only one daughter. Further to this, relaxations of two children permitted continued to be released to rural couples either of whom is the only child of his or her original family (“Dandu Erhai”). Tianjin, for example, applied this selective two-child policy in rural areas in 1983, Anhui and Liaoning in 1984, and Jiangsu and Shanghai in 1990. This kind of moderating fertility policy can be regarded as a further compromise of the 1.5 children, nevertheless few couples of reproductive age were eligible. This selective two-child policy during that decade in

fact was not attainable. Another workable scenario in both urban and rural areas is for couples with both of them being the only child of their parents ("Shuangdu Erhai"), and likewise very few couples in 1990s and 2000s fit in this requirement. 27 out of 32 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions approved "Shuangdu Erhai" by the end of 20th century (Yang, 2003; Gu *et al.*, 2007; Gu, 2018). By late 1990s, estimations revealed the one-child policy covering 35.4% of the whole population in China, 1.5-children policy covered 53.6% and 9.7% for two children, 1.3% for three children (Yang, 2003; Gu *et al.*, 2007). The last province that carried out "Shuangdu Erhai" policy is Henan in 2011 (*Regulations of Henan Province on Population and Family Planning, 2011*). In other words, "Shuangdu Erhai" was made universal for all reproductive-aged couples in 2011, while it failed to attract much attention from both the media and the public. No further results or influences were followed with interest.

A wider fertility policy amendment was not initiated until November, 2013. The third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee launched the two-child policy for couples either of whom is the singleton child of his or her original family, "Dandu Erhai" policy, indicating the first huge change in the national family planning policy since 1979 (Feng, 2014; Luo, Xu and Dai, 2014). This selective two-child policy was targeting all eligible couples in both urban and rural areas. All provinces started to revise their regulations thereafter. By March, 2014, 21 provinces had enforced this policy and later in November, with the last province Tibet carrying it out, the revised policy was applicable to the whole China.

However, the relaxing fertility policy failed to receive a positive result as predicted. Approximately 1.1 million couples out of 11 million eligible couples applied for second birth by the end of 2014 (Feng, 2010; Chen and Miao, 2015; Feng, 2015; Ren, 2015). The application rate was only 9% (Feng, 2015). Two million eligible couples made applications by the end of 2015 (NHFPC, 2016). The year 2014 witnessed an increase of 0.47 million in birth population compared to that in 2013, while the following year 2015 experienced a dive as the birth population reduced 0.32 million (NBS, 2017). Not only the previously projected two million more births per year did not happen (Feng, 2015), but also there was no sign of a population rebound because of intended increase in fertility. When it comes to the provincial level, such as Hubei, Chongqing and Yunnan, a majority of studies (Luo, Xu and Dai, 2014; Shi and Yang, 2014; Ye, 2015) indicated a negative response from eligible couples and it was widely accepted that the factors involved were far more complex and challenging than the policy itself. People now are taking into account more practical factors, prenatal service availability, work status and living cost included. Consequently, the selective two-child policy was viewed as not producing a strong impact on China's low fertility rate (Chen and Miao, 2015; Feng, 2015; Qiao, 2015); and it created tensions that led to further considerations on

the type and implementation of family planning policy. This reform attempt seemed not working well, it served as the trial for a further and deeper amendment notwithstanding (He, 2014).

After over three decades of the stringent family planning practice, China's demographic trajectory has dramatically switched from overpopulation to slowly increasing population. The short lived demographic dividend and very low fertility level has become the principal characteristic. Besides, the selective two-child policy announced in 2013 ended up in an indistinctly growing birth population. Two-year's implementation received an indifferent response from the wider public, particularly young cohorts (Liu and Huang, 2015). The fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee made the decision in October, 2015 to adopt the universal two-child policy, for addressing the current and future demographic crisis. This new policy put an official end to the one-child policy as well as the compulsory contraceptive practices for women (He, 2014; Feng, 2015). From January 2016 onwards, all provinces were working on their local regulation revisions, and intended to introduce measures such as extending the maternal and paternal leave and cancelling late-marriage leave and rewards for singleton-child parents. To a greater extent, the two-child policy is in essence only applicable to urban residents as the various moderating conditions in rural area previously have already entitled most rural couples to have two children.

The influences of this new family planning policy are yet to be ascertained, but available data have produced some evidence. With an increase of 1.31 million in comparison to previous year, the new-borns in 2016 were 17.9 million and the second-child accounted for 45% of all new-borns (NHC, 2017). Likewise, the second-childbirth reached to a share of 51.2% in 2017, regardless of a decrease in total birth population (NHC, 2018). The tendency of declining new-borns preserved while the larger share of second birth continued simultaneously for 2018 and 2019 (NHC, 2019; 2020). It is projected that a substantial increase in total birth population is unlikely to occur while the downward trend sustains (Gu, 2018). On the other hand, the birth rate varied greatly by provinces. Populous provinces that normally observes higher birth rate, for example, Shandong, experienced a crude birth rate of 17.54‰ in 2017 with a second-birth constituting 66% (Gu, 2018). Some other provinces, however, could observe a very low birth rate. Jiangsu shared a birth rate of 9.71‰ in 2017, 9.32‰ in 2018 and 9.12‰ in 2019 (JBS, 2020). For metropolis like Beijing and Shanghai, permanent population began to slide (Gu, 2018). In this sense, the two-child policy has exhausted its effect on previously accumulated and unrealised fertility in all likelihood and the fertility future in China remains unpromising (Gu, 2018).

2.4 Family dynamics and the one-child generation

2.4.1 Family evolution in China

Family structures and patterns have been rapidly changed in the 20th and 21st centuries in China (Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, 2013; Yang and He, 2014; Yang, 2017b). Throughout the Chinese history, China followed a typical patriarchal family-oriented society and family has played a crucial role in social and economic life (Guo, 2000). Historically, extended family in the form of adult sons, wives and descendants living with their parents has been the dominant form of family in East Asia (Whyte and Parish, 1985; Unger, 1993; Guo, 2000). The well-established concept of multiple children in a family guided the formation of a large family with multiple generations living together (Yang and He, 2014). It is contentious, however, families with several generations may not be omnipresent due to financial constraint or high mortality (Fairbank, 1983; Zhao, 2000); and this was only an ideal and luxurious form existing in affluent regions (Goode, 1963; Fairbank, 1983). From 20th century, the combination of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation has produced a profound influence on families all over the globe, China included (Yang and He, 2014).

Theory of Modernisation proposes that the scale and complexity of family decreased with the course of industrialisation and urbanisation; traditional extended family are to be replaced by modern and independent nuclear family (Goode, 1963), and family structures become convergent (McDonald, 1992). In China's case, from 1978 onwards, the structural elements, such as the economic reform featuring "opening-up" policy, enhancement in women's education level, population mobility and employment opportunities in non-agriculture industries, have altogether reshaped Chinese family dynamics (Song and Tao, 2012; Yang and He, 2014). The average family size was 5.5 people per household in the 1911 Revolution (Yang and He, 2014) and it was never achieved to this high level thereafter. The household size and family forms have been changed after the establishment of PRC in 1949. Censuses have presented the fluctuating yet decreasing family size of 4.5 in 1953 and 1964 (Yao and Yin, 1994), 4.41 in 1982 (Yao and Yin, 1994), 3.96 in 1990 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003), 3.44 in 2000 (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003), and 3.1 in 2010 (Zhuang and Han, 2012). The percentage of small families of 1-3 people ascended speedily since 1990 and accounted for 65% in 2010 while the share of medium size of 4-6 and large size of over 7 people declined (NHFPC, 2016). The shrinking family size interacted actively with family mode. Figure 2.2 illustrates the evolving number of generations resident in a Chinese family throughout the last

eight decades[9]. From a long-term perspective, the two-generation families experienced fluctuations, however maintained a similar proportion; the other two modes both shared great changes. The two-generation household rose from 48.9% in 1930 (Li, 1930, cited in Ma, 1984) to 67.3% in 1982 and sustained for around a decade; then it dropped steadily to 47.8% in 2010 (Yang and He, 2014). The multiple-generation families were as typical as two-generation families in 1930 then nevertheless reduced sharply, steadily around 20% for the following 30 years (Yang and He, 2014). In this sense, multi-generation families did not wither away noticeably. In contrast, single-generation family increased markedly from the year 1990 and making up over one-third in contemporary families. Other survey-based research indicated the coexistence of coresidence and increasing popularity of nuclear family since 1990s, which is rather an irreversible trend (Chen, 1985; Logan, Bian and Bian, 1998; Chen, 2005b; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011). It is also notable that in single-generation families, the single-person household has constituted 13.66% in 2010 (Peng, 2020), demonstrating the trend of living alone.

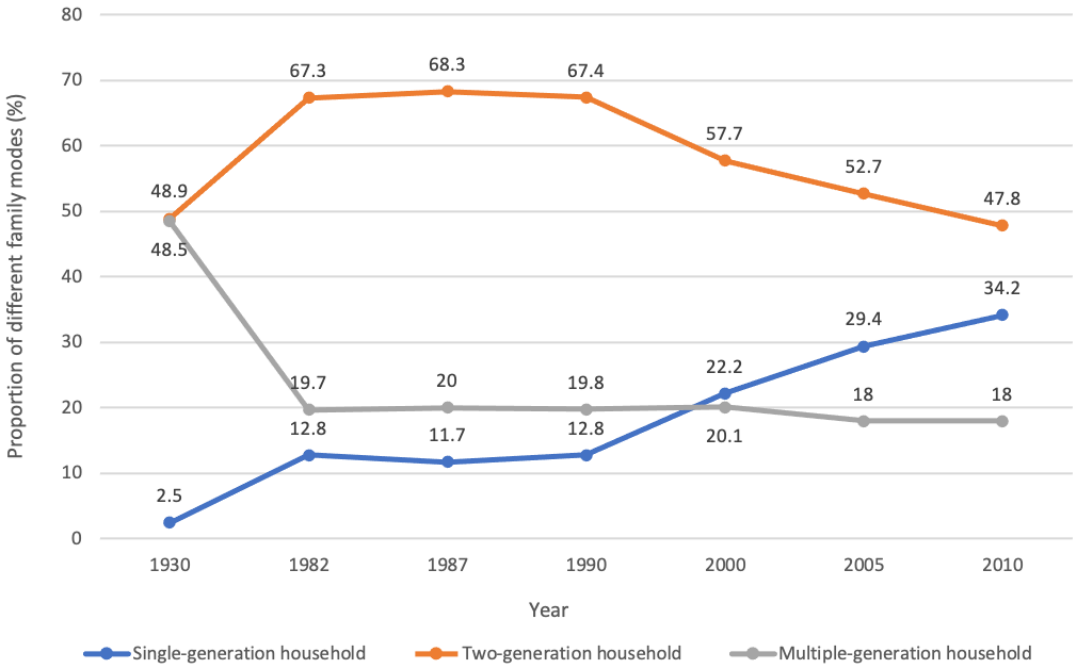

Figure 2.2 Trend of number of generations in the family, China, 1930-2010

Source: Yang and He, 2014.

[9] Single-generation household means only one generation resident in a household, including single-person household, a couple without children and others. Two-generation household mainly includes couples living with children, or older parent(s) living with adult children, and another important source is the left-behind child(ren) living with their grandparents in rural areas, as their parents stay in cities for months to work for better earnings.

In addition to industrialisation and modernisation, strong government intervention contributed substantially to family evolutions in China (Yang, 2017b). In 1979 alone, the first group of the singleton child had reached 6.1 million (National Family Planning Committee, 1986). The implementation of the one-child policy has created 150 million single-child families (Jin, 2014; NHFPC, 2016), and the single-child population was as high as 0.2 billion before the termination of the one-child policy in 2015 (Feng, 2020b). As listed in the evaluation of the one-child policy, ageing population structure comes after fertility decline. At the level of family, there was only 0.22 per household aged 65 and over in a family in 1982 and it rose to 0.41 in 2010; the children population younger than 14 years old fell from 1.48 (Guo, 2008) in 1982 to 0.51 per household in 2010 (Yang and He, 2014). Further to an ageing family structure, the living patterns of the elder altered accordingly. The proportion of elder couples that lived separately from their children has shown an expansion from 13.7% to 29.2% in the past four decades (Yang, 2017b). Three-generation coresidence experienced a decline from 47.2% to 32.8%, notwithstanding that this is still the main living pattern for elderly people (Yang, 2017b). This also varies in urban and rural regions with higher possibility for old people living with their children's family in rural area if they only have one son (Yang, 2017b). On the other hand, family planning in China moved the centre of family life cycle forwards as Figure 2.3 reflects. Traditional families share a rather long period of stabilisation and fertility exists and occurs throughout a woman's reproductive career while short life expectancy condenses empty nest and dissolution time. Fertility policies have modified this natural mode first by postponing family formation. The fact of fewer children shortens extension and stabilisation, moves forward and prolongs empty nest (Yang, 2017b). In 1980s, empty-nest families made up 10% of all elder families, with an increase to 42% in 2000 and nearly 50% in 2013 (Li, 2013b). This figure has reached as high as 70% in big and medium-sized cities according to Chinese National Committee on Ageing (Xinhuanet.com, 2015). Therefore, apart from the influence of industrialisation and urbanisation, state policies have also been regarded as an aggressive and powerful tool in the variations of family dynamics (Yang, 2017b).

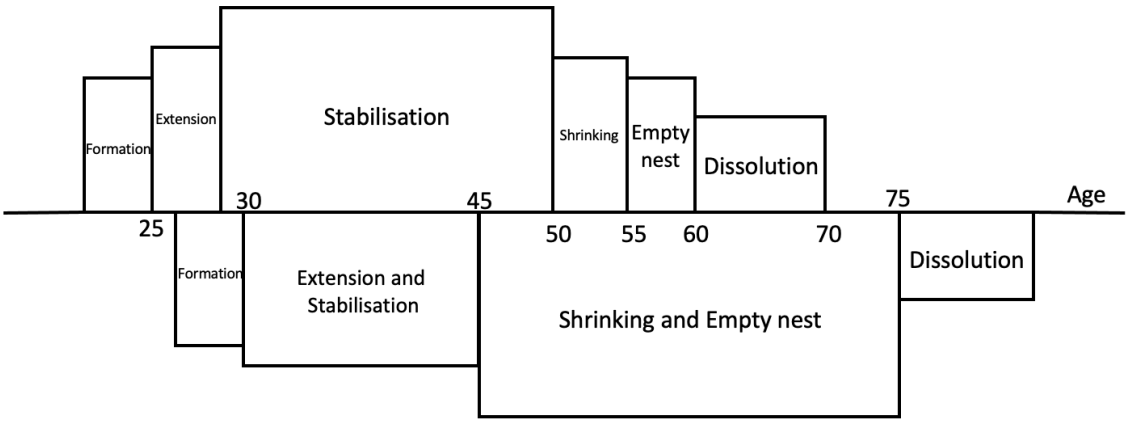

Figure 2.3 Family life cycle under conventional practice and fertility policy

Source: Wu, 2012; Yang, 2017b.

Along with the significant change in family structure, the mode of intergenerational exchange has been reshaped. Intergenerational reciprocity was the main reason for the convention of coresidence to maintain during 1982 and 2000 (Wang, 2006). Financial support is the dimension that has been least affected by family evolution since the failure to take care of old parents by adult children themselves (mainly the adult sons) prompted them to compensate for parents by financial means (Chen, 1998; Yang and Li, 2009). In the opposite side, as Chen et al. (2011) claimed, “The concept of filial piety, which historically emphasised the responsibility of children for parents, is now balanced with reciprocal or altruistic help from aging parents”. Nowadays, grandparents caring for grandchildren are increasingly common for families in both urban and rural China and this has been a “widespread” but “loosely documented” phenomenon (Silverstein, Cong and Li, 2007: 49). Coresidence between grandparents and grandchildren is an important but not necessary precondition of grandparents involving childcare as non-coresidential grandparents living in close proximity provide childcare as well (Greenhalgh, 1984; Logan, Bian and Bian, 1998; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011). In rural area, the situation is different yet has produced a similar result. Due to the fact that the adult children are attracted to work in urban area, the skipped-generation households (grandparents living with grandchildren, with no parent generation present) is prevalent. This leads to the major caregiving role undertaken by grandparents (Chen, 2005b; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Song, Wang and Qin, 2018; Xie and Wang, 2019). In the process of modernisation, the women masses participated in social production while structural constraints and insufficient public support have generated conflicts between work and family, manifesting a crucial role of intergenerational help (Davis, 1993; Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000; Davis, 2000; Yang and Li, 2009; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Yang, 2017b). Caregiving for grandchildren becomes an important form of instrumental support for the family and previous studies indicate that

women ranked grandparents' help as the "best" and most desirable instead of paid help (Short *et al.*, 2002; Whyte, 2003; Goh, 2009; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Ji *et al.*, 2017). Intra-family support used to be embodied by the husband's lineage in the patriarchal system, nevertheless parent generation of the wife's side are increasingly involved in contemporary China (Pimentel and Liu, 2004). In a word, intergenerational exchange still permeates in everyday care, financial support and spiritual comfort in China, regardless of distance between children and parents (Yang and Li, 2009). Family has remained as the final defence for the vast majority (Peng, 2020).

2.4.2 The one-child generation

The outstanding feature of the one-child generation is that they were born and grew up with the course of economic reform and opening up policy in China (Feng, 2020b). This generation, unprecedentedly documented in China's family planning history, captured academia's attention to their growing-up process. Despite that the term of "one-child generation" could cover all cohorts born between 1979 and 2016, a number of studies in 1980s and 1990s focused on the singleton child only. For example, early studies reported that the singleton child may have personality defects including strong aggression desire, achievement desire, cognitive deficiency and self-perception disorder (e.g. Xiao and Zhang, 1982; Wan, Fan and Lin, 1984; Zhang, Xiao and Cao, 1987). It is hard to imagine how high risks would lurk secretly if these defects are embedded in the young children (Fong, 2004; Jin, 2014). Receiving much controversy, these children were brought up with their parents' and grandparents' sole love, which is adverse for their personality formation and normal life experience (Feng, 2020b). A prevailing phenomenon of four "over" and four "worries" existed in singleton-child families: namely over-love, over-protection, over-care and over-expectation on children, as well as worries on children following bad examples, being untalented, showing no filial piety and encountering accidents (Yang, 1981, cited in Feng, 2020b). Later studies revealed that notwithstanding visible divides between the singleton child and children with siblings in early socialisation, more similarities and common characteristics were identified and developed in schools and various institutes; and finally produced a congruent result of socialisation on children (e.g. Feng and Zhang, 1992; Feng, 2000; 2006; Xiao, 2008). From 2000s onwards, academic research on the one-child generation put more emphasis on other characteristics such as cohorts and education, rather than the divide of having siblings or not. Another significant context is the expansion in higher education enrolment. The first enrolment expansion in higher education after resuming college entrance exam ("Gaokao") in 1977 occurred in 1998, in coincidence with the "Gaokao" time of the first group of the one-child generation (Feng, 2020b). Therefore, this generation enjoy greater likelihood of receiving tertiary education.

In contrast to their parent generation, the one-child generation held different views on a variety of matters, for example, they valued individualism more and expressed indifference to the one-child policy instead of dissent (Nie and Wyman, 2005). The interviews conducted by Nie and Wyman (2005) reported that most of the younger generation respondents deemed the one-child policy good for the nation. Internalising the policy into their everyday culture, young people comply with the stipulations without feeling any legal formality. On top of that, they have been in face with a more challenging scenario with regard to supporting the elderly. Unlike the responsibility of providing for the aged split by multiple children in previous times, the one-child generation couple have to support four parents. The new Chinese family structure has brought about a high dependency ratio of 2.5 to 3, with four grandparents plus one or two children, imposing a heavy burden on young parents. Conventionally, elderly parents in China are highly reliant on their adult children for both pecuniary and physical support. Since China entered the ageing era in 2000, the old-age dependency ratio has been creeping up from 11.9% to 14.3% in 2015 and it is predicted that the figure will be 42% in 2050 (NBS, 2017). Although existing research indicated that most elderly who have only one child lived and supported themselves independently without confronting intensive care needs (Feng, 1991; Wu, 2018; Feng, 2020b), it is acknowledged that parents of the first one-child generation were rather young elderly (Feng, 1991; 2020a). In other words, they are likely to demand further and higher-standard caregiving provision when they age. The traditional elderly care mode will possibly fail under such circumstances and result in more support demanded from the public spheres.

2.5 Women's status and gender inequality

2.5.1 Women's status and women's employment

China's modernisation course and the journey towards gender equality are closely linked to the history of Chinese women's employment (Bao, 2004). Women's participation in labour market was the first step of gender revolution. Women workers constituted only 7.5% of all workers in 1949 (Pan, 2002). The governmental encouragement of women's participation into social production took place from 1958 to 1960 during the Great Leap Forward as China was in urgent need of labour force to develop industrialisation (Jin, 2006; Jin, Manning and Chu, 2006). The large-scale recruitment created opportunities for housewives to work. Statistics revealed that women employees ascended from 3.29 million to 10.09 million from 1957 to 1960, with an incredible increase of 206.7% (Jin, 2006). This could only be achieved by strong intervention from the government and many of women labour force were accepted by state-owned enterprises (Jin, 2006; Jin, Manning and Chu, 2006). Women walked out of family domain and took part in social

production, breaking the long-lasting traditional gender division that the man as provider and the woman as mother and caregiver (Yang, 2017c). Women began to gain economic independency and their attachment to men was correspondingly weakened. During Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), "desexualisation" reached its peak owing to strong political mobilisation, for example, "iron girls" (Jin, 2006; Jin, Manning and Chu, 2006; Yang, 2020b). "As a newly created heroine that belonged solely to the Cultural Revolution, the iron girl both epitomised Mao's proclamation that women and men were 'the same' and embodied the idea that women could accomplish whatever their male comrades achieved" (Jin et al., 2006: 618). Women's improved status and gender equality, however, were not the purpose of mobilising women to enter traditional male occupations and women in fact served as a reserve labour force to compensate for men's labour shortage (Jin, Manning and Chu, 2006). Yang (2020b: 45) explained this as, "The uplifting status of women workers was not determined by gender, but rather by their identity of 'worker'; that is, women benefited by association with PRC's favourite son—working class". This was further evidenced by women's higher chance to be transferred to other positions or to be laid off when China turned to market economy and launched reform of state-owned enterprises after 1985. By the end of 1997, the number of workers laid off from state-owned enterprises had been 20 million, women accounting for 60% (Bao, 2004).

As a charity bestowed by political campaigns, the advocacy and practice of gender equality in China blended too many subjective and artificial factors and broke its natural course of evolution (Yang, 2017c). This equality outlook has come across great challenges and appears hard to continue in front of market economy. For example, although many women with education and skills were able to compete with men in labour market, discrimination on gender increased in the market at the same time (Hannum, 2005; Goh, 2006; Jankowiak and Moore, 2017; Zhang, 2017; Liu *et al.*, 2019). Major increases in gender inequalities in urban unemployment rates and wage gap were noted (Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, 2013). The employment rate of men and women both decreased from 1990s onwards while the extent for women far exceeded that for men; incomes of both gender increased while the growth rate was much higher for men (Yang, 2020a). Data from Chinese Household Income Project indicated that in 1995 the female unemployment rate was 3.62%, which was 0.69% higher than that for males; by 2007, it increased to 9.42% and it was 4.19% higher than the rate for males. During the same period, among urban wage workers, the ratio of female to male wages declined from 84% to 74% (NBS, 2008). Specifically, census data in China demonstrated that in 2010, the employment rate of women aged between 16 and 59 was 69.9%, 13.8% lower than men (NBS, 2010). The decrease in women's employment rate of 2000-2010 was larger than that of 1990-2000. In light of this, a widened gender gap has been observed in both work opportunities and income level as marketisation advances in China. It has

been a normality to set higher threshold for women to enter the labour market and higher human capital (especially in education level) fails to be transformed into advantage in seeking employment. On the contrary, the fact that a growing number of well-educated women flood in the workplace has resulted in fierce competition among all women, objectively providing a situation in favour of men's employment (Li, 2016a; Yang, 2019a). Survey data in 2013 uncovered that among groups of same education background, the employment rate of female graduates from prestigious universities was considerably lower than their male counterparts, with a gap of 10% (Li, 2016a). Even among university students, the number of job interview invite received by males was 42% larger than that for females (Ge, Deng and Zhang, 2018). The inferior position of women in labour force market has been hitherto strong rooted.

On the other hand, feminist campaigns and gender equality advocated by government previously stressed the desexualisation in wage work, however failed to emphasise the same desexualisation in intra-household divisions (Yang, 2020b) and some researchers considered the division of domestic labour remained unaltered (Zuo and Bian, 2001; Zuo, 2003; Chen, 2005a). An early study that examined urban Chinese couples' perception of the fairness of the division of domestic labour found that the husband's breadwinner role and the wife's housekeeper role retained dominant places in contemporary Chinese households, and that most couples regarded the current allocation of household labour as fair even though this division in fact remained unequal (Zuo and Bian, 2001). Drawing upon 1990, 2000 and 2010 National Survey on the Status of Chinese Women, traditional gender division has regained more endorsement in 2010 than 10 years ago, albeit the gender outlook in China is generally more modern and in favour of gender equality (Yang, Li and Zhu, 2014; Yang, 2017a). The improvement in education and job position brought about evident inclination to gender equality yet people's perceptions on gender division turned out more conservative in comparison to the general agreement on gender equality (Yang, Li and Zhu, 2014; Yang, 2017a). It transpires that traditional division that the man as provider and the woman as mother and caregiver has penetrated every unit in the society. In a word, it is clearly presented that the women's status improved during the early socialist setting in the way of participation into production. Despite that, the general gender inequality remains in household divisions and marketised workplace. Women in China are put into a complex scenario, as Yang (2017a: 70) explained: "As people's perceptions cannot completely get rid of traditions and with the interplay of conventions and modernisation, women are both regulated by the 'past' and shaped by the 'present'".

2.5.2 The one-child policy and young women

The family planning programme, especially the one-child policy, has exerted a complex influence on young women in China. On the one hand, the fertility policy in China aimed to push social and economic development by "controlling population size and improving population quality". The concept of replacing the quantity with quality, nevertheless, resulted in the sex emerging as an indicator of "quality" in some areas brimmed over son preference (Yang, 2017b). The 1.5-children policy was interpreted and practiced in a twisted way, generating a severely skewed sex structure within families in areas covered by this policy (Yang, 2009; Yang *et al.*, 2009). The high sex ratio at birth indicated infant girls missing in China (Johansson and Nygren, 1991; Gu and Xu, 1994; Li and Zhu, 1996; Li, Li and Jiang, 2006). This was specifically verified by the distinctly varied sex ratio at birth for different birth orders: it was normal for the first birth, however it soared for the second and higher births (Gu and Xu, 1994). Compared to other countries, China observed an abnormal sex ratio in infant mortality, higher mortality of girls, from mid-1980s (Johansson and Nygren, 1991; Li and Zhu, 1996; Li, Li and Jiang, 2006). Reasons underlying the abnormality varied while one fact is ascertained: girls faced severe discrimination and their survival became difficult under strict family planning rules (Hom, 1992; Li and Zhu, 1996; Li, Li and Jiang, 2006).

On the other hand, the one-child policy was another milestone for maintaining gender equality to some extent. As elaborated in previous sections, the family planning programme has exerted a profound influence on gender, family dynamics, and demographic structure. The birth control was not only proposed because of growing population, but also to call for females to participate in the national recovery and construction. Apart from more mothers having more time in paid work, the fertility policy also provided a better upbringing environment for newborn girls. Notwithstanding variations applied in certain regions, most urban couples followed the rule of having one child only. They lived under the opening-up policy as well as the advocacy of gender equality. For example, FPP has promoted gender equality especially in education to some extent (Ye and Wu, 2011). In 2000, the average number of schooling years among women aged between 18 and 64 was 6.1 years while by 2010 this had increased to 8.8 years (SSTCS, 2014). The gap of schooling years between men and women decreased as well, with 1.5 years shorter than men's schooling in 2000 and only 0.3 years of gap in 2010 (SSTCS, 2014). First of all, thanks to the launch of nine-year compulsory education and government's efforts in its implementation, gender gap in enrolment in primary school and middle school had been roughly eliminated by 2006 (SSTCS, 2020). In secondary and tertiary education, women's proportion has greatly escalated. At the stage of high schooling (including average high school and secondary vocational school), girls made up of 47.4% in 2018 and they outnumbered boys in average high school (SSTCS, 2020). Furthermore, at the

Master level, women's share has increased from 25.1% in 1991 to 51.2% in 2018 (SSTCS, 2020), showing a higher education level of young women over young men (Yang, 2019a).

The presence of few children in a family in essence is beneficial to girls. A study on education for girls disclosed that more siblings lead to a more inferior position for young female involved, and the presence of brothers had more adverse influence on females' education chance (Ye and Wu, 2011). Therefore, with the declining fertility rate, fewer children in one family facilitates gender equality in education. The reasons lie in two facts that fewer children enabled the parents to invest similarly on both boys and girls and secondly, the girls do not have to drop out to support family and other siblings' schooling (Ye and Wu, 2011). Under such circumstances, more newborn girls were able to set out at the same starting point as boys did and they enjoyed equal educational opportunities and parents' tender love, which enabled girls to acquire better competencies. All these qualities can in turn strengthen their positions and status, indicating a positive trend for bringing up girls.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has introduced the evolution of birth control history in China, presenting the trajectory of family planning programme over the past five decades. The population growth was efficiently controlled, while unexpected adverse influences arrived earlier. Low fertility has settled in China and how to increase fertility level becomes the new issue. Dramatic changes have also been observed in family development. Notwithstanding the miniaturisation of family in China (Peng, 2020), the ageing society has presented greater challenge to a family's function of eldercare provision. With transitions in family structures, the capability of a family to bear both childrearing and elder support tends to decrease (Peng, 2020). Family members are still firmly tied to some extent and intergenerational bonds and exchange are strong and necessary in consideration of current heavy burden on young people, particularly young women. Throughout the years after 1949 Revolution, women have been involved in a wider range of domains, they are targeted with ubiquitous discriminations nevertheless, either implicit or explicit. For example, the threshold for women to get wage work is higher and they are in higher risk of unemployment (Yang, Li and Zhu, 2014). The fact that women enter public realms and their status is improved are attached to the premise that the gender division in family and public spheres is not challenged. In other words, women's status is climbing yet lower to men's status (Yang, 2020b). The elaboration of China's contexts here will facilitate understanding and exploration of the one-child generation's fertility desires and choices. The next chapter will deliver a review to provide evidence and knowledge that are known in researching fertility intentions.

Chapter 3 Fertility intentions and realisations: review of literature

Fertility intentions, as the start of the process progressing to reproductive behaviour, have been studied under different contexts. It reflects people's attitudes towards having a child and it does not necessarily indicate actual reproductive behaviour. A comparison of fertility goals and achieved fertility has been explored widely in demographic research (e.g. Philipov, 2009; Yang, 2011; Li, 2014). Not only in low-fertility societies in Europe, but also in non-Western settings including Asia, Africa and Latin America, the phenomenon of unrealised fertility is far more prevalent (Casterline and Han, 2017). This is particularly evident when a woman's reproductive career comes to an end. The total fertility rate at aggregate level does not necessarily reflect the fertility desire or behaviour at the individual level. Therefore, the implications for the formation of population policy can be drawn upon the process of translating fertility intention into fertility decision (Harknett and Hartnett, 2014; Wang, Ma and Li, 2019).

The key sources of literature included web of knowledge, Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar and so forth. The literature search started from a variety of key words, such as fertility intentions, fertility decisions, childbearing desire, reproductive plan; and then other relevant key words and sources of materials were accumulated and obtained from the literature search and reading process. More literature was incorporated and reviewed during the data analysis and thesis writing to strengthen the analysis. The type of literature covers published papers, working papers, online blogs, conferences and so on; and nationally from China and other Western societies.

This chapter aims to provide a literature review that synthesises evidence from previous studies on fertility intention and the mechanisms behind it. It first clarifies the use of several terms about fertility intentions and decisions, and then gives an overview of the process from fertility intention to realisation. Section 3.2 presents a literature review on current knowledge on researching fertility intentions, including theoretical perspectives and factors that influence individuals' fertility intentions, and further encapsulates policy responses to low fertility traps from different countries. Section 3.3 reviews the trajectory of fertility intentions in China, with a highlight of young women's motherhood in contemporary China. The final section establishes the conceptual framework applied in the thesis.

3.1 From fertility intention to realisation

A woman's reproductive career usually starts at age 15 with the onset of menarche and ends at age 49 or earlier depending on the onset of menopause. A variety of terms have been used in the research to measure and compare the individual's perceptions and wills of fertility (Philipov, 2009). The use of different terms is due to the pursuit of more reasonable and accurate estimation for fertility and fertility trend, as there is always a difference between intended and actual fertility. Fertility intentions and actual behaviour vary considerably at different stages across a woman's reproductive career. Additionally, their fertility goals can be reformulated from an early age towards old age as the reproductive career unfolds. Within the fertile period, women are likely to realise their ever-changing fertility goals. Research evidence shows that females tend to adapt their fertility desire to the real achieved fertility towards the end of their reproductive career (Philipov, 2009; Casterline and Han, 2017). The concept of fertility intention, applied broadly in research, includes life-time intentions and short-term fertility intentions.

Compared with fertility intention, another important concept to describe fertility goals is the ideal number of children. This term is basically interpreted as the ideal family size an individual would wish to have under ideal conditions of life (Philipov, 2009). Literally, it is not difficult to infer that "ideal" conditions of life can be hardly fulfilled. Therefore, as an indicator, ideal family size is meaningful if the purpose is to understand a broad picture in cultural perspectives, but not sufficient for real estimation and policy purposes. Philipov et al. (2009) regarded reporting of ideal number of children as biased upwards. Unlike ideal family size, fertility intention is a realistic measure of reproductive behaviour. Fertility intentions can hardly remain unchanged across the reproductive career, and are influenced by cultural norms and socioeconomic conditions. Life-time intention, also known as intended family size, indicates a long-term intention to have children. Previous research shows that the realisation of intended family size is rather low at the level of the whole population, and that intended parity also decreases with increase of age (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan, 2003; Heiland, Prskawetz and Sanderson, 2008; Liefbroer, 2009; Philipov, 2009). The research conducted by Liefbroer (2009) in the Netherlands shows that intentions constructed at age 26 may remain unrealised 18 years later as the fertility intentions change downwards. The life-time intentions are a useful indicator yet its uncertainty prevents it from predicting achieved fertility at certain point. In terms of the possibility of fulfilling intentions, short-term intentions are regarded as the intention to have a child within certain time period such as two to three years (Philipov, 2009), which are also referred to as timing fertility intentions. Understanding the timing of childbearing intentions, specified by parity and couples' decision, is

of great significance for predicting fertility more accurately and influencing family planning policies.

From intentions to childbearing decisions is a complicated process. As intentions are a fundamental concept in social psychology, relevant theories have been applied in demographic research, including Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour elaborated in the following section. Both life-time and short-term intentions have been used in analysing the realisation. Certain study, for example, discussed the relationship between life-time intentions and its realisation in Austria. It was inferred that intended small family size does not necessarily explain the gap between intended and achieved fertility in Austria (Prskawetz *et al.*, 2008). Individual factor such as education did not make a difference in realising fertility, while it did influence the timing of childbirth. In terms of short-term intentions, Speder and Kapitany (Kapitany and Speder, 2012; Speder and Kapitany, 2014) used a panel survey based in Hungary to compare intentions recorded in the first wave with the outcome in the second wave and then classified the respondents as intentional groups (persons who fulfilled intentions), postponers (persons who did not fulfil the intention but keep it unchanged over the next three years) and abandoners (persons who did not fulfil the intention and switched to the intention not to have a child over the next three years). This kind of approach helps to shed some light on fertility realisation. Individual factors such as age, partnership status and parity all play a role in the realisation (Kapitany and Speder, 2012; Speder and Kapitany, 2014). Factors influencing this process are key in the research and will be discussed in detail in the following section.

The lack of correspondence between fertility intention and achieved fertility is of common interest. The term fertility gap is used to describe the large difference between the desired number of children and the observed fertility rate at the macro level (Chesnais, 1999). Unrealised fertility and unwanted fertility are proposed at the micro level. Unrealised fertility, describing the gap at the micro level, refers to a failure of achieving the fertility goal, which is measured in quantum and tempo (Casterline and Han, 2017). The quantum level indicates a reproductive career ending with more children desired, while tempo means the timing of births. On the contrary, there are females exceeding their desired births, namely unwanted fertility. Under the wider global context, unrealised fertility is more common and falling short of births is dominant on an aggregate level. Many studies (e.g. Noack and Østby, 2002; Chen and Jin, 2011; Iacovou and Tavares, 2011; Chen and Gu, 2014; Harknett and Hartnett, 2014; Speder and Kapitany, 2014) over several continents have verified this trend. A set of studies on the United States (Quesnel-Vallée and Morgan, 2003; Hagewen and Morgan, 2005; Morgan and Rackin, 2010) explored the consistency between females' fertility goals in their early reproductive phase (early 20s) and achieved fertility towards the end of reproductive career (early 40s). They indicated that the

majority failed to realise their goals. A variety of studies on European countries share similar findings (Noack and Østby, 2002; Iacovou and Tavares, 2011; Harknett and Hartnett, 2014; Speder and Kapitany, 2014). A key result of these analyses is that a positive intention that means the intention to have another child is not as helpful as a negative intention in predicting the future fertility. In other words, a positive intention is less likely to contribute towards realisation. According to Harknett and Hartnett's (2014) analysis, for example, a gap of 39% categorised as unrealised fertility was disclosed since the ratio of women having a birth to those desiring to have a birth was only 61%.

Unlike extensive studies based on Western countries, fewer relevant empirical studies can be discovered in Asia, Africa or Latin America on the translation process from fertility intention to behaviour. Several studies on East Asia revealed the same trouble of unrealised fertility in place (e.g. Park, 2012; Luo and Mao, 2014; Eguchi *et al.*, 2016). People are reluctant to have more children regardless of their inherent desire of more than one child. Casterline and Han (2017) conducted the first comparative analysis of this significant phenomenon in Africa, Asia and Latin America and found out that unrealised fertility falls somewhere in between 13% to 45%. However, in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, unrealised fertility is moderately common with it higher in sub-Saharan Africa (Casterline and Han, 2017).

3.2 Fertility intentions and decision-making: mechanisms and elements

The fertility intention is one of the determinants of reproductive behaviour due to their high association (Bongaarts, 2001; 2002; Li, 2014), regardless of the gap sometimes observed at the end of one's reproductive career. In the context of a nearly perfect contraceptive regime, a realistic assumption is that having a child is a result of a reasoned, although imperfect, decision (Mencarini, Vignoli and Gottard, 2015). Drawing upon this assumption, this section firstly reviews the theories explaining the fertility decision-making process, featuring the widely-acknowledged Theory of Planned Behaviour. The next section introduces a series of influencing factors involved in individuals' considering reproduction. The final section encapsulates the role the social and public context could play in changing people's childbearing desires, followed by policy responses in recent decades to addressing low fertility.

3.2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour applied in fertility decision-making process

Fertility decision-making process is theoretically built upon couple's assessment of the costs and benefits of childbearing in general. Theoretical studies have been concentrated on economic rationality (Barro and Becker, 1989), or both economic and psychological rationality (Bulatao,

1981), the structural value of children (Nauck, 2007) and the mediating effect between micro-level and macro-level (Philipov *et al.*, 2009) as well as the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (used as TPB hereafter) is a psychological theory involving the link between attitudes and behaviour (Mencarini, Vignoli and Gottard, 2015). Demographic research has very much involved the framework of TPB in the fertility domain to analyse fertility intentions and realisations (Iacovou and Tavares, 2011; Ajzen and Klobas, 2013; Speder and Kapitany, 2014; Dommermuth, Klobas and Lappegard, 2015; Mencarini, Vignoli and Gottard, 2015). As abovementioned, at least in developed countries with a variety of accessible contraceptive methods, having a child is a reasoned action (Mencarini, Vignoli and Gottard, 2015), as behaviour is directly based upon an intention which itself is developed over a process of reasoning. TPB portrays the process in the following way: when couples form their intentions to have a child, they are driven by three literally different but interconnected types of determinants: behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs.

Behavioural beliefs towards having a child, either favourable or unfavourable, are internally accessible or distinct beliefs about the possible consequences of an anticipated course of action. Aggregately, behavioural beliefs lead to the formation of either a positive or a negative attitude towards having a child (Ajzen and Klobas, 2013). In terms of fertility decision-making, people are supposed to reflect on their attitudes towards having a child prior to fertility desire. The *attitudes* come from an individual's intrinsic assessment of advantages and disadvantages of having a child.

*Normative belief*s for having a child are concerned with the widespread beliefs and expectations that certain referent groups will place upon others to affect their behaviour. Individuals are inclined to complying with the behaviour of reference groups. These beliefs are therefore generating a perceived social pressure, causing people to internalise them into *subjective norms* (Ajzen and Klobas, 2013). Under such circumstance, individuals are expected to follow certain norm with respect to childbearing, psychological support perceptions and the upbringing process.

The third kind of consideration has to do with control beliefs. *Control beliefs* include factors that can increase or impede individuals' ability to complete the behaviour, ultimately producing the *perceived behavioural control* (Ajzen and Klobas, 2013). Since many behaviours face obstacles in execution, it is assumed that people should consider perceived behavioural control over childbearing based on intentions. Parallel to attitudes and subjective norms, perceived behavioural control conform to readily available beliefs regarding powers that facilitate or interfere with bearing a child. To name some, income, employment status and education are all among them (Billari, Philipov and Testa, 2009).

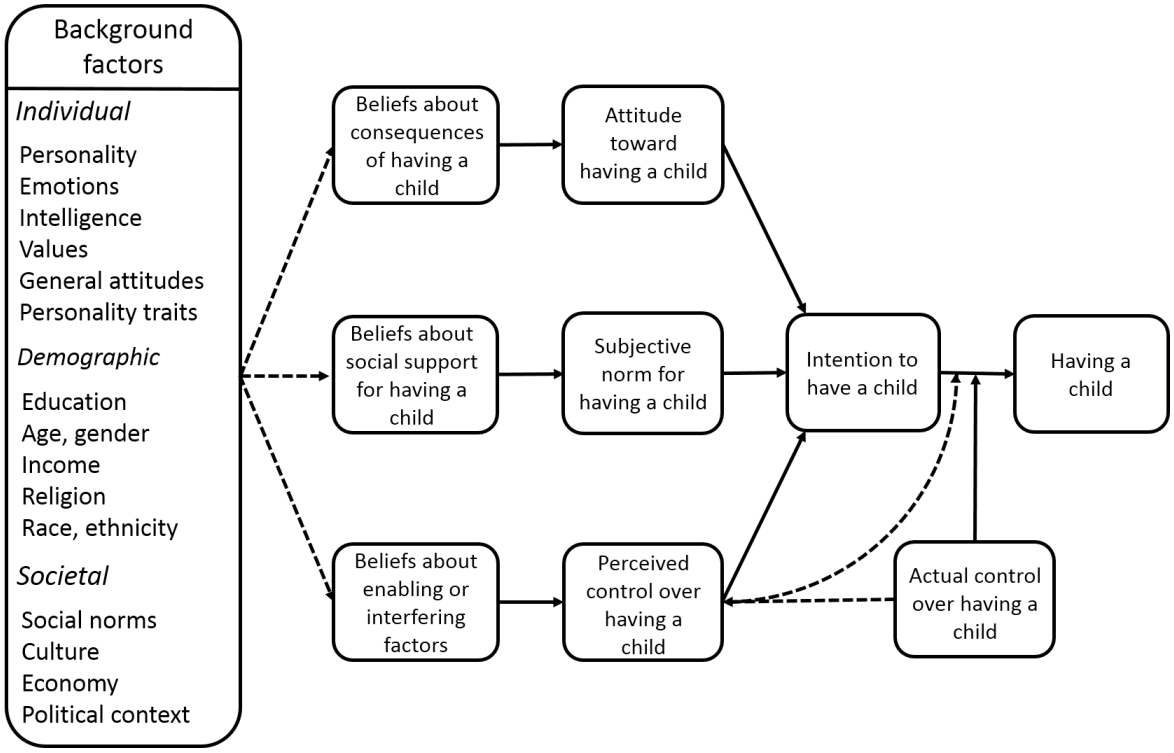

Figure 3.1 Representation of Theory of Planned Behaviour

Source: Ajzen and Klobas, 2013: 206.

Generally speaking, the more favourable the attitudes and the subjective norms concerning having a child, and the greater the perceived control are, the more chance there is for an individual to intend to have a child. With the formation of fertility intentions, the realisation or not is related to the extent that individuals are capable of achieving the result. Therefore, actual behavioural control is presented to mitigate the influence of intentions on behaviour (see Figure 3.1). Two major limitations emerge in the application. The primary one lies in the assumption that having a child is a behaviour. As Ajzen and Klobas (2013) proposed, the concern in using this model in fertility issues is defining an appropriate behavioural criterion. In previous demographic research, having a child is generally regarded as a (reproductive) behaviour. However, in practical situations, giving a birth is an outcome of a series of events, including intercourse, not using a contraceptive or using artificial reproductive technologies (Mencarini, Vignoli and Gottard, 2015). In light of this, having a child is beyond a simple behaviour, but more an outcome that may reach the behavioural goal. Another problem is with factors influencing actual control over having a child in that it could be quite difficult to identify all the factors involved. To moderate the trouble, *perceived control* often serves as a proxy for *actual control* in practice as self-perceived control indicates actual control reasonably well (Ajzen and Klobas, 2013).

3.2.2 Individual considerations in shaping fertility intentions

Individual fertility intentions and decisions are influenced by a range of cultural, psychosocial and economic factors. Apart from influences exerted by demographic factors such as age, place of residence, gender and parity (Schoen *et al.*, 1997), some certain considerations at the individual level have turned out expressly instrumental, for instance, the spouse's fertility intentions, the divisions of domestic labour between the couple, and the opportunity cost of having a child (Eguchi *et al.*, 2016). Social networks through which individuals are connected and influenced play a role as well.

Within the household realm

Fertility decision is a joint decision that involves both partners, debates exist, however, with respect to whether the dominance over fertility decisions is held by the wife or the husband. There has been a longstanding argument that men and women differ in their ideal family size. Empirical evidence indicates that both men's and women's preference impact on final fertility result (Freedman, Freedman and Thornton, 1980; Dodoo, 1998; Fan and Maitra, 2013; Jennings and Pierotti, 2016). Furthermore, Fan and Marita (2013) presented that in Australia women ruled fertility decisions. This means the fertility preference of females was paramount in predicting subsequent births, regardless of whether their initial fertility desire was lower or higher than that of their spouses or partners. In Nepal, Jennings and Pierotti (2016) reported that wives' preferences dominated couples' progression to a third birth while this differed from the traditional expectations of women's relative disadvantage.

Housework division is another key player in decisions of having a child since family life requires unpaid domestic labour. Even though both partners work full time, women generally assume over twice as much domestic labour as men do (Baxter, Hewitt and Western, 2005). In the presence of children, the gap in the division of domestic labour has intensified (Craig and Mullan, 2009). The inequity in income and domestic labour costs would lead to intentions contrary to having a child, especially in the case of parity decisions (Craig and Siminski, 2010). Craig and Siminski (2010) stated that it is less likely for mothers who have a heavy domestic burden to have more than one child in Australia. The relationship between domestic labour division and fertility preferences is observed in Asian context as well. In one study based on four countries and regions of China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, wives' preferred number of children was positively associated with husbands' participation in housework (Kan and Hertog, 2017). Women, instead of men, bear the brunt of conflicts between the high demands of housework and paid work, and thus their fertility decision is strongly linked to the share of housework responsibilities.

Opportunity cost

Opportunity cost is a term in economics, emphasising the loss of other alternatives when one alternative is selected (Buchanan, 1991). In fertility research, opportunity cost is therefore the sacrifice of other benefits the couples make for their children. The family can attain positive benefits from nurturing children as most parents enjoy the emotional rewards from their roles. Opportunity costs, however are also large enough to raise their concerns (Joshi and Newell, 1989; Joshi, 1990). Apart from children, paid work is able to bring individuals psychological and social benefits that are occasionally left out. Parents, typically mothers, may have to forego opportunities of promotion due to lack of time. With more time placed on children, either parent may divert time from non-paid activities such as sleep, or social and leisure activities of previous childfree style. Other than these intangible costs, cash opportunity costs and other direct costs of resources such as expenditures for commodities are pulling back parenthood entries as well. Cash opportunity costs like forgone earnings are a major element in the costs of fertility and are becoming more prominent in explaining fertility decisions.

Implicitly included in the opportunity cost is the presence of "motherhood penalty" and "fatherhood premium" (Glauber, 2008; Killewald and Gough, 2013; Abendroth, Huffman and Treas, 2014; Miller, 2014). This implies that, to have children is one of the worst career moves a woman can make while it is the hard-headed career advice for a man to move upward (Miller, 2014). In terms of job opportunities, the rank of the most desirable employees in the employer's list is fathers, followed by childless women, childless men and then mothers (Correll, Benard and Paik, 2007; Benard and Correll, 2010). Mothers are the least likely to get hired. With regard to wage, the broad group of mothers were influenced. Men's income increased over 6% when they had children, yet women's income declined 4% for each child they had (Budig and England, 2001). Furthermore, numerous studies (e.g. Budig and England, 2001; Correll, Benard and Paik, 2007; Benard and Correll, 2010) observed that low-income mothers have been inflicted upon the largest penalty effect. There are contradictions in results of research related to high-income mothers' penalty. Some studies claimed that high-income mothers were imposed on higher penalty, reaching 10% (England *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, women in the top 10% of earners received no income loss after they had children (Budig, 2014). Possible explanations proposed by researchers were that high-performing mothers in these rarefied jobs were regarded as similar to men and they may work more for higher pay for the purpose of affording household and childcare provision (Budig, 2014). On average, "motherhood penalty" prevails commonly in all types of jobs. After controlling for working hours, experience lost due to temporary unemployment as well as work performance, the penalty effect on mothers still persisted (Budig and Hodges, 2010; Abendroth, Huffman and Treas, 2014; England *et al.*, 2016). Some mothers reduced hours or

accepted lower-paid yet family-friendly jobs, which could only account for one third of the penalty at most (Miller, 2014). In other words, the widened pay gap is largely produced by employers' own ingrained discrimination, rather than women becoming less productive upon motherhood (Miller, 2014). From a long-term view, penalty effect maintains the strongest when women are younger and attenuates by age (Kahn, García-Manglano and Bianchi, 2014). That is to say, young mothers, especially with babies and toddlers, receive largest adverse impact on their employment.

Social networks and interactions

The intention to bear a child, the value placed upon a child, the norms of entering parenthood, the support provided for parents, etc. are all delivered and influenced by social interactions to some extent (Park, 2012; Bernardi and Klarner, 2014). Retrospectively, the possibility of using them as explanations appeared during the first demographic transition in historical Europe (Bernardi and Klarner, 2014). As early as in 1980s, studies indicated that fertility decline in Western settings from the 19th century was far beyond the effect of structural factors such as economic development. The diffusion of cultural preferences for smaller families also contributed to the transition through social learning and social influence mechanisms. Demographers assume that social networks and social structures moderate individual beliefs and behaviour. Demographic models therefore have increasingly involved social networks within the mechanisms. The ideological factors, for example, conversation topics covered far beyond the techniques of birth control, including the costs and benefits of raising a child (Watkins, 1995). Under this circumstance, social interactions and social networks play an invisible role in shaping individuals' behaviour.

Bernardi and Klarner (2014) proposed four different ways in which social interactions influence reproductive preferences, namely social learning, social pressure, subjective obligation and social contagion. The exchange of information that occurs in social interactions produces social learning apart from the additional pieces of information essential to the decision-making. It does not necessarily take place in conversations as the exposure to others' experiences can affect one's perception of imminent obstacles. Previous research also revealed that potential parents or the women experienced pressure from parents, siblings, friends during the process of making the decision, and they would attempt to get close to like-minded couples who supported their choice (Veevers, 1975; Houseknecht, 1977; 1979). The social pressure from parents was influential and they were normally successful in exerting this kind of pressure due to emotional bonds used (Bernardi and Klarner, 2014). Friends failed to produce pressure in the same way notwithstanding, commenting on the differences was a typical way to remind individuals of the "normal" pattern.

In the third place, subjective obligation has some association with TPB model abovementioned. In other words, individual perception of what others think are often sufficient to change one's behaviour. Subjective beliefs originated from the consciousness of other people's preferences and attempts to conform to others' expectations (Bernardi and Klarner, 2014). Lastly, individual emotional reactions, like a sense of guilty, embarrassment or madness can possibly induce people to adjust to others' behaviour mode. It is rational to hypothesise the inclination to a synchronisation (Bernardi and Klarner, 2014). Social contagion is likely to reach everyone nowadays due to the prevalence of social media. Individuals' opinions are largely swayed by numerous contents online, so as the fertility decisions. In addition, social network media, the product of modern technology, is a new way for people to seek support and self-identity. For instance, there are a growing number of people standing for a childless life, which affects other individuals' reproductive behaviour through social contagion (Basten, 2009).

3.2.3 Macro-context contributing to fertility decision-making

Factors at the macro-level are mostly linked with cultural and societal issues, such as economic development, unemployment trends and policy measures (Eguchi *et al.*, 2016). Macro-context implies the trend and restrictions that will impact on individuals' life. Research on the effect of economic recession on fertility mostly support the statement that fertility responds negatively to downward trend in economy in developed world (Sobotka, Skirbekk and Philipov, 2011). Recessions usually bring about the postponement of childbearing in couples' decisions, particularly of first births, which can later be compensated during periods of economic prosperity (Sobotka, Skirbekk and Philipov, 2011). This trend has been noticed not only in developed countries, but also in sub-Saharan Africa with a temporary fertility decline (Eloundou-Enyegue, Stokes and Cornwell, 2000). As reviewed in the previous chapter, it turned out the same in China when people overcame the three years of natural disaster between 1959 and 1962, and the fertility climbed immediately after the crisis. Economic recession is always accompanied by increasing unemployment and thus unemployment trend works in a similar way in terms of fertility variations. The stage of life when unemployment episodes occur, and how long they are expected to last make a huge difference to determining the impact on fertility decisions (Adsera, 2011). The influences are extremely discernible on young women. With less experience in labour market, young females fear that time spent in childbearing impedes their potential employment or increases their exposure to the risk of unemployment. Women may tend to postpone maternity to secure their job positions or to deliver their career commitment to future employers. In several European societies, researchers have found that unemployment at the regional level

matters more than individual's own unemployment, and unemployment rates were followed by a significant postponement of first births (Sobotka, Skirbekk and Philipov, 2011).

Policy responses to low fertility

Other than economic and employment trend, policy measures serve as another player in reproductive decisions. For countries implementing family planning measures, policies provide the base of fertility decision-making. The most well acknowledged one is the family planning programme in China, which directly curbs the population growth and results in low fertility to a large extent. The China case is special in the transition from fertility intention to fertility decision due to the strict intervention from the government. As reviewed in the previous chapter, Chinese government attempted to practice birth control several decades ago when Chinese people just started to live in relative stability after the torture in long-time wars and they were very much likely to conform to the government's appeal with all hearts. Based on the thoroughness of implementation, the citizens have assimilated in the notion of small family size over years. Since the number of children is restricted, people in China are not entitled with the decision-making rights in practice compared to their counterparts in other countries.

However, in many developed countries, low and very low fertility has become a critical problem. A great number of countries in Europe and East Asia, for example, Italy and Japan, have been in low fertility for a long time and many of them have implemented family policies to stimulate births. Unlike restrictive policies, these policies cannot force people to have more children. Therefore, according to various studies, the effects are not as positive as expected (Whittington, 1992; Zhang, Quan and Van Meerbergen, 1994; Mills *et al.*, 2011). European countries have shown substantial variations in family policy and based on empirical research, extensive studies have explored whether policies influence childbearing decision-making in the contexts of very low fertility (Gauthier and Hatzius, 1997; Gauthier, 2002; Sleebos, 2003; Grant *et al.*, 2004; Kohler, Billari and Ortega, 2006; Pampel, 2010; Luci and Thevenon, 2011; Billingsley and Ferrarini, 2014).

Family policies implemented so far can be grouped into three types, family cash benefits, family-friendly policies and childcare provisions. Studies have shown a diverse range of results. A weak but positive association between family cash benefits and the total fertility rates is suggested by several studies reviewed in the work of Sleebos (2003). The estimated impact of policies, however, is small in general. Gauthier and Hatzius (1997), for example, predicted that a 25% increase in family allowances would bring about approximately an increase of 0.6% in the short-run and 0.4% in the long-run in fertility rates, amounting to an increase of the total fertility rate of 0.07 children per woman. Studies of Addio and Ercole (2005), Luci and Thévenon (2011) both found that cash transfers have a positive impact on fertility. Luci and Thévenon (2011) also

indicated that the average cash benefits granted after the childbirth year has a great positive effect on total fertility rate. This impact is again confirmed when adjusted-tempo fertility rates are taken into consideration for controlling the timing of births, reflecting that these cash benefits affect not only the timing of births but also produce a quantum influence on fertility rate. However, this result contradicts Kalwij's findings (2010) of no significant effect of public family spending per child in European countries, either on the probability of having children or on the final family size.

Regarding work-family reconciliation policies, a number of studies for Austria, Canada, Italy, Norway, Netherlands, etc. all conclude that work-family reconciliation policies, maternity or parental leave and childcare subsidies included, have a positive effect on fertility (Hyatt and Milne, 1991; Gauthier and Hatzius, 1997; Del Boca, 2002; Castles, 2003; Sleebos, 2003; Adsera, 2004; Luci and Thevenon, 2011). The effect, however, is also minimal. Hyatt and Milne (1991), for instance, estimated that only 0.09 to 0.26% of increase in total fertility rate in Canada could be attributed to the 1% increase in the real value of maternity benefit. On the contrary, Gauthier and Hatzius (1997), claimed that not much of the variation in TFR across OECD countries could be explained by either the duration or the benefits provided by maternity leave. Another favourable measure is to increase the availability of jobs suited to the demands of mothers. Both Del Boca (2002) and Castles (2003) reported such a positive effect on fertility rates. The former one focuses on the percentage of employees working flexible time across OECD countries and the latter concentrates on the scale of accessible part-time jobs in Italy. In addition, Adsera (Adsera, 2004) stated that a large share of public employment through providing employment stability, along with generous maternity benefits in countries like Norway and Sweden, boosts fertility rates of the 25–34 year-old women. Similarly, Luci and Thévenon (2011) found a positive link between paid leave and fertility rates.

Variances are also identified on the impact of childcare on total fertility rates, partly influenced by the form of childcare. A strong positive association between total fertility rates and formal childcare availability was documented from several studies (e.g. Castles, 2003; Hilgeman and Butts, 2009; Rindfuss *et al.*, 2010), in particular for children below three years old. Nevertheless, other analyses found no effect of childcare availability on the decision to have the first child (Hank and Kreyenfeld, 2003; Andersson, Duvander and Hank, 2004; Kalwij, 2010). A possible explanation raised for these inconsistent findings may be attributed to a lack of control on the determinants used to examine childcare provision in existing studies (Kohler, Billari and Ortega, 2006). Rindfuss et al. (2010) discovered a strong, statistically significant and positive effect of childcare availability on the transition to motherhood in Norway, using childcare availability data from 1973 to 1997. Furthermore, based on a policy introduced in Spain that provides working mothers with a monthly

childcare benefit amounting to one hundred Euros for each young child, Sánchez-Mangas and Sánchez-Marcos (2004) found that the introduction of this policy led to the expanded labour participation rates of mothers with young children. For women with low and medium education, more than 40% of the 3.5% increase in female labour force participation during 2002 and 2003 can be explained by the policy change. Hilgeman and Butts (2009) showed a significant impact of childcare enrolment on the total number of children for women aged 18-45 in the early 2000s, implying the positive role of caregiving provisions. Kalwij (2010) proposed that childcare subsidies have a positive effect on higher-order births in spite of its none effect on the timing of births. Likewise, Luci and Thévenon (2011) found a strong positive effect of childcare coverage on fertility once female employment rate is controlled for. All these studies highlight the importance of available childcare services to prevent a conflict between childbearing and mothers' labour market participation.

Several East Asian countries and districts have also introduced pronatal policies after a low fertility level sustains. Singapore's total fertility rate fell under 2.1 since the late 1970s and it announced policy changes from 1980s, including increased enhanced child relief for better-educated women and sterilisation cash incentives, etc. Nonetheless, Yap's study (2003) indicated that Singapore's procreation incentives appeared to have certain effect in the early period after its introduction notwithstanding fertility started to decline and returned to the level of pre-policy period. Similarly, rather than a major effect of policy incentives, the increase in fertility level in South Korea seemed to be more attributable to changes in demographic factors referring to the increase in number of women in childbearing age, economic recovery (Lee, 2009b). Taiwan's fertility reached the below replacement level in 1984 and the fertility decline accelerated thereafter (Lee, 2009a; Lee and Lin, 2016). New policies targeting pronatalist were accordingly formulated. The TFR is between 0.9 and 1.27 per woman before pronatalist policies were first introduced while the average TFR was 1.06 between 2008 and 2013 (Lee and Lin, 2016). In light of this, it is difficult to evaluate the effects of new policies at the aggregate level as Lee and Lin (2016) indicated.

Overall, the effects of a single kind of family policy vary whereas in general they have produced positive effect on fertility. Taken together, as a study by Billingsley and Ferrarini (2014) evaluating a broader set of family policies in 21 European countries, namely the package of childbirth benefits, highlighted, both traditional (child allowances, tax subsidies, marriage subsidies and home-care allowance included) and earner-carer family support (earnings-related leave and childcare provision included) generosity were positively associated with first-birth intentions for men and women. Conversely, only earner-carer support maintains a positive relation with second-child intentions.

3.3 Fertility intention studies on China

3.3.1 Review of research on fertility intentions in China

Research on fertility intentions in China have started from the 1980s. Feng and Zhang's comprehensive review (2002) on empirical studies of fertility intentions before the 2000s demonstrated the transition of fertility desire among urban and rural residents. Their review found that urban residents generally shared a smaller ideal family size than their rural counterparts. This had been below the number of two children since early 1980s, with a salient decline in the next two decades (Feng and Zhang, 2002). The ideal family size, for instance, dropped from 1.8 to 1.2 in metropolises like Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai (Sun, Hou and Ma, 2014). Yet, this downward trend applied to all residents universally. For the sex preference of a son, it prevailed stronger in rural areas compared to urban area before 2000 and this was weakened along with time (Feng and Zhang, 2002). "One son and one daughter" was a common wish in China, with its presence in rural areas mainly as a compromised result under the family planning programme (Feng and Zhang, 2002). An increasing number of surveys related to fertility intentions were conducted after 2000 (e.g. National Reproductive Health Survey, 2001; Sampling Survey on "Double-Singleton" Couple in Beijing, 2006; 2008; Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey, 2007; 2010) and some similar findings on fertility intentions in the 2000s are therefore concluded. The disparity of the ideal family size has gradually narrowed between urban and rural residents while the difference in sex preference was still salient (Yao, Wu and Li, 2010; Ma, 2011; Wu, 2014; Zheng, 2014).

Fertility intentions of urban young people were inclined to agree, with smaller variations between singletons and non-singletons. The rising childbearing cost has become the main reason for the falling fertility desire (Yao, Wu and Li, 2010; Wu, 2014). Sex preference at birth is another interesting research question embedded in people's fertility intentions, like other East Asian countries (Chen and Xu, 2009; Shi and Jiang, 2011; Tilt, Li and Schmitt, 2019). Sex preference, mostly taken as preference over sons, is regarded to contribute to a larger family size (Zheng, 2004; Liu, 2005b; Yang, 2008). Tan (2005) put forward a categorisation based on the intensity of sex preference, namely interest-driven preference and sentiment-driven preference. The former is more rigid and inflexible while the latter is an individual's emotional choice. He proposed that son-preference mainly belonged to the former one, meaning that people with this preference tended to realise their preference, and thus intended number of children (Tan, 2005). Urban young people, in general, were more emotionally preferring the baby's sex and this is not strong enough for them to realise it. Using a sampling survey on young men and women in Beijing in 2009, Song and Tao (2012) then presented that young people with "dual preferences of sex and

quantity" (both a son and a daughter) were more likely to have two and more children, compared to those with no or single sex preference.

The declining childbearing desires could be better understood with the unprecedented rural-urban migration. China is a unique setting unlike other nations. The economic reforms and accordingly accelerated urbanisation resulted in great migration from rural areas or less developed regions to certain economic zones including Shenzhen, Shanghai and Beijing (Wang and Klugman, 2020). In 1982 about 20.6% of Chinese population lived in urban areas (Yao and Yin, 1994) while in 2015 the scale rose to 56.1% and further to 60.6% until 2019 (NBS, 2020). Around 247 million rural migrants lived in urban regions in 2015, and they accounted for 30-40% in big cities (Wang and Klugman, 2020). Among all migrants, female migrant workers constituted more than half, featuring the feminisation of migration (Wang and Klugman, 2020). Recent studies demonstrated that migration and residences impacted on women's fertility intentions (Chen and Jin, 2011; Li and Guo, 2014), The high female labour participation rates and migration, in general reduced women's fertility intentions and fertility level (Zhou, 2015; Deng and Yuan, 2017; Yang, 2018b).

Studies have intensively investigated the fertility intentions of all eligible residents while the one-child generation's fertility desires under the universal two-child policy still remain much to explore. Bao (2017) reported that highly educated women in Shanghai refused more childbearing due to the plights between family and career choice. Another study on women of childbearing age in Shanghai (Tian, Lu and Zhang, 2020) disclosed the relationship between childcare and second-child intention. Their quantitative results suggested that double-singleton couples were more willing to have a second birth compared to other young couples as the former could receive more financial and time support with caregiving (Tian, Lu and Zhang, 2020). Similarly, a qualitative study conducted by Zhou (2019; 2020) looked at the dual demands imposed on well-educated women in two big cities, Nanjing and Beijing, in China. She found that although one child was normal for the young men and women, a host of obstacles remained when considering the transition to a second birth, mainly time availability and financial affordability. Ji and her colleagues' qualitative study in a small city in the Yangtze Delta supported these findings as high costs of current childrearing practices are prominent factors in women's mindsets (Ji *et al.*, 2020). This was also observed in other cities such as Guangzhou and Chongqing (Xu, 2004; Liu, 2005a; Wang and Liu, 2017; Wei, 2018; Zhao, 2019). Similar surveys covering a larger population were also carried out by national institutes. A survey conducted by National Health and Family Planning Commission in 10 cities in 2016 uncovered that 42% of interviewed mothers with one child reported no desire for second child, a dominant reason being no childcare provision (Yang and Sun, 2019). In a report of assessment provided by All-China Women's Federation in 2018 on universal two-child policy

effect released in the same year, more than half families had no intention for two children and the percentage of well-educated individuals in developed cities was 60% (Yang and Sun, 2019). Excessive opportunity cost and sharpened contradictions between work and family were the major causes.

On the contrary, there are also studies indicating that other than the fear of heavy economic burden and no extra time, many couples subjectively held that having one child is good enough (Feng, 2017). Moreover, researchers have growingly focused on young women's situation and dilemmas under the new policy context (Ji *et al.*, 2017; Liu, 2017; Ji *et al.*, 2020; Shen and Jiang, 2020b). For example, Shen and Jiang (2020a) pointed out that childbearing would interrupt women's career and further impair their career development. Liu (2017) centered on the conflict between work and family for women of childbearing age and found it adversely impacted on their fertility intention to have a second child.

Beyond individuals' childbearing desires, several studies (e.g. Nie and Wyman, 2005; Hou, 2015; Whyte, Feng and Cai, 2015) highlighted the dominant influence of socioeconomic factors on reproductive decisions from 1990s, rather than the overwhelming effect of the one-child policy as the majority previously assumed. In summary, fertility desires of the one-child generation have been partly touched on but due to the variations in different cities, it is difficult to exhaustively research China's young people's fertility intentions in general and many other places or groups have not been researched yet. Women's work-family plights have been noticed by researchers, yet it is still relatively unexplored.

3.3.2 Research on motherhood for young women in urban China

As discussed in section 2.5, women's status in China has been improved while they have been in a complex situation in contemporary society, carrying a dual-commitment of work and family care. The perceptions of potential burdens imposed on women once they have children greatly influence childbearing desires of women of the one-child generation. Two premises have to be recognised to contextualise motherhood for urban young women in China. The first is the predominant trend of women getting married and having one child (Yang and Sun, 2019). In spite of the increasing diversity of lifestyles in urban China, to enter marriage and to have one birth still maintain a common option that over 95% of people of a proper age would take (Yang, 2019a). In addition, wage work has become a spontaneous decision for contemporary Chinese women (Zhou, 2020). Previous chapter has introduced the history of women's employment after the establishment of PRC and as a "legacy of notion" passed on, Chinese women's employment rate has always been higher than world average level over last three decades; for instance, the world

figure is 46.9% while China's figure is 59.9% in 2020 (World Bank, 2021a). The moralisation of maternal employment turned it as essential and opting for being a housewife instead became unwise (Zhou, 2020). Entering labour force market, no matter an instinctive or an induced decision, is prevalent and normal for urban young women. Double-income families are the mainstream in urban area (Yang, 2019a; Yang and Sun, 2019) and women only spent 47 minutes less per day in paid work than men did in 2018 (SSTCS, 2020).

Well documented in sociological research in Western settings, having young children negatively impacted on mothers' labour force participation (e.g. Desai and Waite, 1991; Waldfogel, 1997; 1998; Taniguchi and Rosenfeld, 2002). Mothers' labour market outcome in China has raised more attention in academia in the recent two decades. Mothers are more likely to become the disadvantaged in terms of employment, which has been consistently found out (Cook and Dong, 2011; Du and Dong, 2013; Ji, 2015; Zhang and Hannum, 2015; Ji *et al.*, 2017; Yang, 2019a). They are inferior to men and women without children (Staff and Mortimer, 2012; Ji *et al.*, 2017; Yang, 2019a). Data from the Third Survey on Women's Social Status in China elucidated that mothers' employment was lower than other women in 2010 and the gap widened in comparison to 2000 (Yang, Li and Zhu, 2014; Yang, 2017a). Higher threshold has been produced for mothers intending to enter or return to workplace and this gave rise to a longer period of career interruption (Yang, 2019a). Zhang, Hannum and Wang (2008) put forward that women's disadvantages in human and political capital failed to explain much of gender gaps in either employment or salary. By contrast, it is mainly married women and mothers that were affected by these gaps and this turned out extremely true for women with young children (Du and Dong, 2013). In terms of salary, distinct gender gaps are also identified (Jia and Dong, 2013; Yu and Xie, 2014; Zhang and Hannum, 2015; He and Wu, 2016; Yang, 2019a; Liu, 2020). Yu and Xie (2014) suggested that motherhood penalty appeared greater for Chinese women as a 7% decrease in income was found while the decrease was 5% in the West (Staff and Mortimer, 2012). The loss in income could be as high as £33,930 for an urban woman according to latest research (Liu, 2020). In light of the empirical evidence, Yang and Sun (2019) proposed "gender-motherhood double taxation" to explain women's, especially mothers', weakening position in labour force market, as Figure 3.2 indicates. They argued that this taxation mechanism underlay young women with two-children desire who hesitated to practice it (Yang and Sun, 2019).

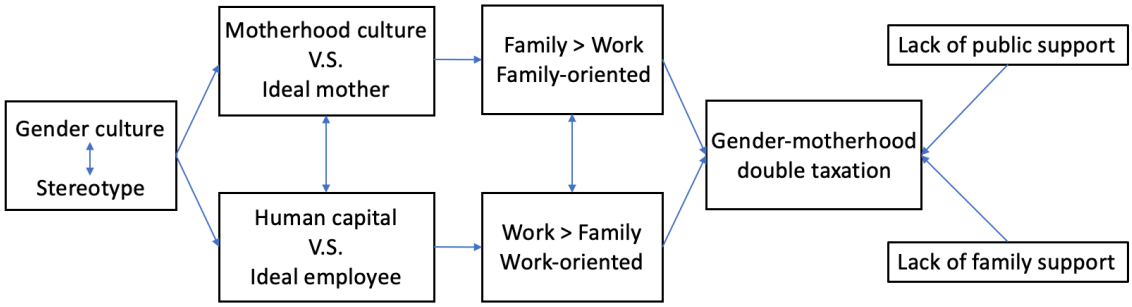

Figure 3.2 The mechanism of "gender-motherhood double taxation"

Source: Yang and Sun, 2019: 94.

In the family sphere, unequal distribution of unpaid housework between men and women has been a normality (Federici, 2012), both China and the world sharing the similar trend (Chen, 2005a; Yang, 2006; Yu and Xie, 2011; Dong and An, 2015; Liu, Tong and Fu, 2015; Bloomberg, 2019; Yang, 2019a). The traditional division of male as provider and female as caregiver was embodied by the disproportionate time on unpaid labour. Women spent two hours and six minutes on housework while men spent only 45 minutes in 2018 and the gap was already closed for 29 minutes compared to that in 2008 (SSTCS, 2020). Taken together with the 47 more minutes on paid work by men, women in total have a more occupied day. Other studies also pointed out a similar pattern of time consumption in earlier years (Chen, 2005a; Yang, 2006; Dong and An, 2015). Other than housework, childcare was another important task in unpaid work. Women spared about six hours per day on childcare and the child's study and showed more participation into childcare labour all over the past several decades (SSTCS, 2004; 2020). The considerable caregiving work has to be understood in the context of transition from planned economy to market economy as well as the refinements and improvements in childrearing. As mentioned in the previous chapter, before the transition to market economy, urban women worked mostly for state-owned enterprises and their economic and social life were well incorporated in "Danwei" system, which featured covering various social functions like life employment, comprehensive care provision, children's education service as well as workers' everyday life (Ji *et al.*, 2017; Ji *et al.*, 2020). This was also known as enterprises taking charge of all social responsibilities ("企业办社会"). In this way, women workers' family burdens were greatly removed and raising multiple children was not unachievable. Transition to marketisation caused "Danwei" system to collapse and the all-embracing benefits were no longer available, which handed the bulk of reproductive responsibilities over to women (Ji *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, urban residents have gradually internalised the higher childrearing standard during the implementation of family planning programme (Yang, 2017b). Families have placed more emphasis on children's education and overall excellence. The reduction of children's number in a family paved the way for better

cultivating a child yet parenting anxiety and accumulation of time on children arrived along (Yang, 2017b). Together with the conventional gendered division, motherhood has been overwhelmed by loads of commitments. Ji et al. (2017) also pointed out a lack of differentiated research on working-class women and middle-class women as work-family conflict of the former is possibly intensified owing to scarce resource accessibility.

It is similar to studies in Western countries that being a good mother requires more than being a good father and fathers are still considered as helpers (Arendell, 2000; Guendouzi, 2006; Johnston and Swanson, 2006; Pedersen, 2012). Motherhood has become a difficult job in urban China while one-child policy sustained a subtle balance between mothers' own life and family commitments. Yet the two-child policy is making a huge difference. By investigating the association between female employment and first/second child, the influence exerted by the second child was more considerable than that by the first child; the second birth often resulted in women's career interruption, accompanied by transfers and salary decline (Liu, 2017). Transition to second birth is expected to be struggling for many urban young women.

3.3.3 Summary: gaps in the research on fertility intentions in China

Current literature has in general covered diverse perspectives of fertility intentions and behaviour in both developed countries and China. However, there still remain gaps. First of all, with the recent shifts in the population policy in China, the childbearing intentions of Chinese couples await for more in-depth research under the new policy context. Secondly, previous studies in China mostly investigated women's views on childbearing, leaving men's childbearing beliefs relatively unexplored. As childbearing decision is a joint decision within a couple, we have to add the layer of partners and families in some scenarios. Gendered difference in perceptions and notions of childbearing may be another critical and useful aspect to explore in contemporary China. Thirdly, a great proportion of fertility studies used survey data or large datasets to investigate people's fertility intentions and this facilitates a review on general opinions. With too much reliance on questionnaires and quantitative methods notwithstanding, this strategy fails to understand people's fertility intentions deeply and comprehensively. Quantitative analysis appears insufficient for fertility issues, especially when evidence from existing literature has pointed to the homogeneity in fertility intentions of the wide public: small family of one or two children (Zheng, 2020a). On top of that, childbearing desire goes beyond questions related to the number of children, which has to be situated and interpreted under a wider social context. In this sense, qualitative research is able to address relevant questions in a better way. Moreover, established studies have focused on the vast group of women at childbearing age in China while fewer studies paid attention to the one-child generation alone. As a generation born and raised in

a rigid family planning era, this generation deserves more investigation on their perceptions and notions of fertility and family planning. Finally, gender and intergenerational relations together on childbearing have yet to be explored, in spite of the fact that there are a few studies considering them respectively in fertility decision-making. Family is still a strong and sound unit in Chinese society and family relations, particularly intergenerational reciprocity is to be taken into account when it comes to young couple's fertility decisions.

3.4 Conceptual framework of the thesis

Building on the above review of literature and Chinese context, this thesis follows the conceptual framework below (see Figure 3.3).

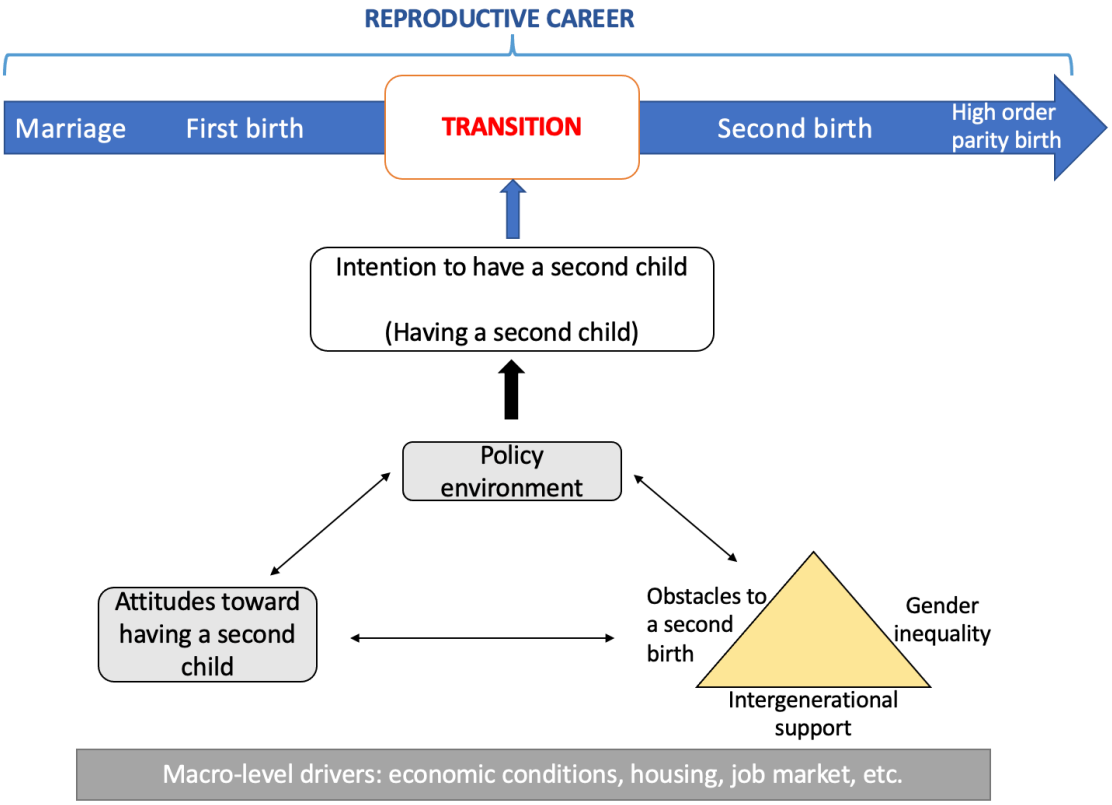

Figure 3.3 Conceptual framework (author's own work)

A Chinese woman's complete reproductive career normally follows the steps of marriage, first birth, second birth and higher-parity births. The current fertility policy ceases the majority's reproductive career after two births are delivered. With the universal trend of marriage and one birth in China (Yang, 2017b; 2019b), the first birth comes naturally without sophisticated planning while the transition to the second birth is a planned behaviour. Fertility intentions of urban young people under different policy contexts will be investigated and this thesis then concentrates on their transition process from one child to two children. Previous research (e.g. Mao and Luo,

2013; Hou, 2015; Zhang, 2017) has laid a foundation that in urban China, easy accessibility to various contraceptive methods and the decreasing effect of the one-child policy from 1990s have jointly rendered childbearing a rationalised action.

The process of second-childbearing transition is portrayed as the illustration shows: three types of determinants drive couple's intentions to have a second child, under the wider context. The long grey box at the bottom represents the macro-context that situates young individuals' fertility intentions as these macro-level drivers crucially suggest the foreseeable capability of their childbearing and childrearing. The first and foremost determinant is the policy environment. The ongoing family planning programme in China has regulated people's number of children manifestly and directed the public atmosphere from early on. Though policies worked better in planned economy and the reform of market economy has diluted such political impact on urban residents, the governmental regulations or advocacy still plays a vital role in social morality and public order in China. The childbearing decision in China is constrained by fertility policy and therefore the transition to a second birth is initially reliant on the policy shifts. In light of this, the current two-child policy basically corresponds to the function of public discourse on childbearing as social norms to a great extent.

The second element refers to attitudes towards having a second child. People's ideal family size is a proper indicator to reflect their attitudes towards second birth by the means of their imagined and desired number of children. The varied policy contexts exert a certain yet limited impact on people's attitudes towards second child for two reasons: firstly, their attitudes represent an ideal state irrespective of policy restrictions; and secondly the one-child generation are less likely to take into account political advocates as previous studies implied. People's attitudes on childbearing also produce potential influences on future policy design.

The third element, as underscored in yellow, reveals its significance in the analysis. The reason is that the review above has demonstrated the importance of enabling and interfering factors to childbearing intentions in urban China; in other words, practical considerations outweigh young people's own attitudes to and policy contexts for having a second child. This element is assumed to include three distinct yet interconnected players and then works as a composite: perceived obstacles to a second birth, gender inequality and intergenerational support. The first player reveals people's individual perceptions of difficulties in having a second child; the second one encapsulates the broad women's disadvantages in family domain and workplace when it comes to multiple births; the third element intergenerational support adds to young people's ability to accommodate two children and thus serves as a mediator to the other two players.

The three determinants influence each other in different ways. Policy context plays a fundamental role and thus it produces an impact on the other two elements; people's attitudes towards having a second child and the composite triangle are adjusted by each other and may alter across time; the operation result of the composite may affect the policy design. These three elements collectively lead to people's (strong) intention to have a second child. Since the interplay among the three well indicate actual control over having two children, the fertility intentions produced at the end could be regarded as strong and deliberated, implying its rough equivalence to the reproductive behaviour of having a second child.

To summarise, most people in China start their reproductive career after they enter marriage. One birth is a prevalent practice for Chinese couples and the second birth mainly follows a reasoned process. People's own attitudes towards having one child or two children, the policy environment they are in, perceived behavioural control on having two children, together shape their fertility intentions and pave the path to the second birth or ultimately stopping at one child. Higher order parity birth is conditionally possible, however, this thesis focuses on the first birth and the second birth of the one-child generation in urban area of Jiangsu province. The following chapter will elaborate the methodology adopted by this study, as well as the data collection process and analysis.

Chapter 4 Data and methodology

This chapter introduces the methodology of the thesis. It provides an overview of the data and research method, including the mixed methods research design, secondary dataset, interviews and focus groups as research instruments. In addition, a diagram showing the logic of the design and methods (quantitative and qualitative) is presented. It also provides the ethical considerations that were followed throughout the research.

4.1 Mixed methods approach—the convergent design

4.1.1 Rationale of using mixed methods strategy

The dichotomous paradigms of quantitative and qualitative methods have been widely acknowledged and applied in social sciences. As Bryman (2012) articulated, quantitative method is a distinctive research strategy and has been dominant in social research for a long time. Restructuring and reducing a complicated problem into a number of measurable variables, quantitative methods allow researchers to use statistics to generalise a finding. Quantitative data are often recognised as more reliable, objective and population representative. Dealing with numbers leads to less subjectivity of researcher's judgment in conducting a new social research. Moreover, longitudinal measures are useful to predict changes in individual attitudes and behaviours in a consistent and systematic manner. Due to its nature, quantitative research is also commonly criticised for less detailed data as well as the failure to give subjective information on the context of data collection (Bryman, 2012). Quantitative data usually do not have the means to disentangle, for example the processes or mechanisms underlying a specific behaviour. Qualitative research, on the contrary, focuses more on discourses and interactions that exist in the fundamental beliefs. By obtaining a more realistic feel of symbolic activities, qualitative methods can resolve the problem beyond the numerical level. The researcher is able to interact with respondents in a great number of possible ways depending on his or her preference. Besides, there are a variety of flexible ways to collect and interpret data that makes qualitative approach enchanting. Interview and focus group strategies are frequently selected for research. Apart from the rich information that could be provided, the built-in flexibility of interview helps to easily adjust the interview itself as well as to explore more unexpected questions. Focus group can help to gather information collectively and to see the relation and action of participants when sitting in a group (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The researcher should not get involved too much in the discussion process nevertheless for less bias that may occur. Furthermore, conducting a qualitative research requires a high level of experience and knowledge from the researcher.

Otherwise, the reliability and representativeness of data, and analysis are questionable (Bryman, 2012).

Mixed methods research, called the “third research paradigm” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), stood out from 1990s. It has been a controversy to use mixed methods in social sciences and the debate over mixing methods has lasted for over three decades. The gulf between quantitative method and qualitative method is primarily based on two arguments. The former has different epistemological and ontological stances and the second concerns separate paradigms (Bryman, 2012; Brannen, 2016; Hammersley, 2016). The traditional framework indicates quantitative research strategies work under positivism of epistemology and objectivism of ontology. On the contrary, qualitative research strategies are applied on the basis of interpretivism of epistemology and constructionism of ontology. Further to the distinct epistemological commitments, quantitative and qualitative research are regarded as paradigms that embrace incompatible epistemological assumptions, values and methods (Bryman, 2012; Brannen, 2016; Hammersley, 2016). However, advocates of mixed methods argue against the incompatible feature (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2012; Brannen, 2016; Bryman, 2016). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2012) proposed *Methodological Eclecticism* which is derived from the rejection of the inappropriateness of mixing quantitative and qualitative strategies because of epistemological differences. *Paradigm Pluralism* is another opposition towards conventional one-to-one linkage between methods and paradigms (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2012). They believe that oppositional component of paradigms is an invalid assumption as other alternatives exist. The nature of mixed methods also collects advantages when it is applied in research. Mixed methods can provide a way to harness strengths and offset weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods as either method has specific disadvantage and this could be partly complemented by mixing them up (Bryman, 2012). With mixed methods, more evidence can be provided for studying a research problem. Moreover, it helps answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone (Bryman, 2012).

The research adopts a mixed-methods strategy due to its compatibility with the research objectives. The research seeks to investigate the one-child generation’s fertility intentions and the underlying mechanism in Jiangsu province. The main benefit of mixed methods approach is that it allows the general trend and intricacies of fertility behaviour to be explored at the same time. This strategy enables proper procedures and answers to research questions of interest. Despite the anticipated cost of time and resource, the mixed methods strategy could offer a comprehensive investigation of urban young people’s fertility intentions.

4.1.2 Research design

The research design needs to be confirmed upon choosing mixed methods strategy. Different scholars have established their typologies, based on different types of decisions and features of mixed methods designs. This thesis follows the typology developed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), frequently used in social science and applied to the general social sciences while other typologies target specific disciplines such as education and nursing. The typology of mixed methods research developed by Creswell and Plano Clark has also changed and evolved over time. The latest version they proposed in 2017 contains three core designs: convergent design, explanatory sequential design and exploratory sequential design. There could be difficulty and confusion as multiple core designs may be involved in a single study. The key standard for this categorisation nonetheless is the primary intent of collecting and gathering both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell and Clark, 2017). Based on this principle, this thesis adopts the convergent design overall as the quantitative and qualitative data are essentially connected and compared. In practice, more weight is placed on qualitative data and analysis because they mainly deal with the fertility and family after the introduction of two-child policy which is the priority of the research. The diagram below shows the research design.

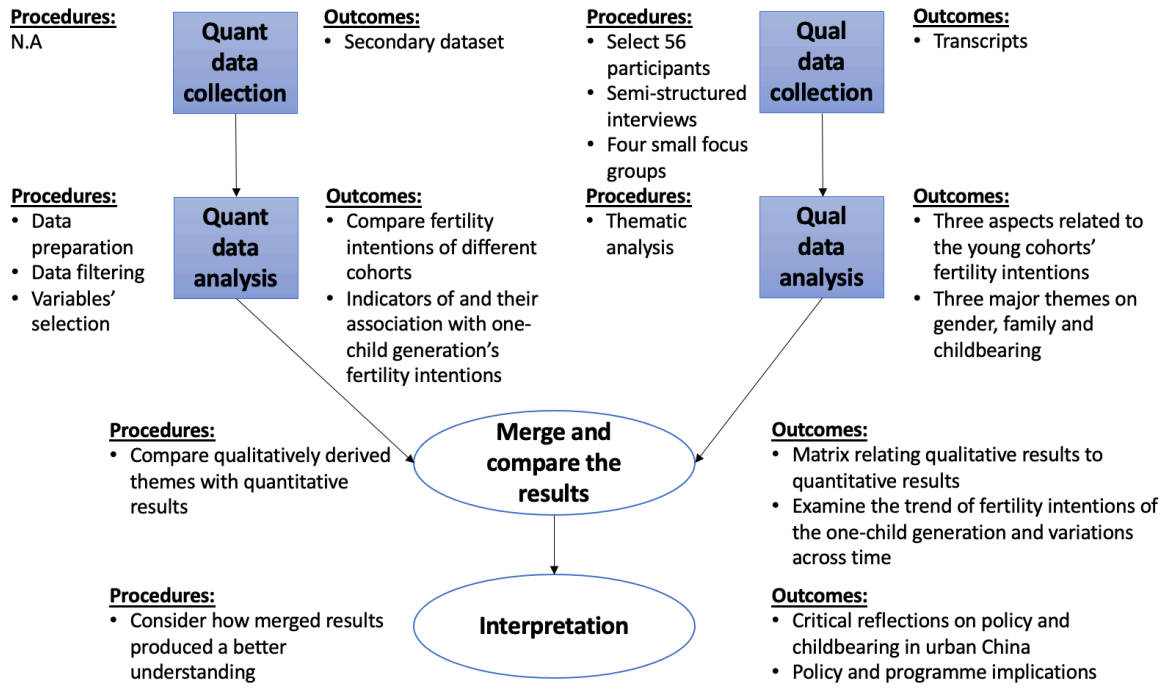

Figure 4.1 Diagram of research design for the thesis (author's own work)

As the diagram illustrates, this study incorporates quantitative and qualitative methods, with more weight on qualitative part. Secondary quantitative data was used, and logistic regression was applied to compare fertility intentions of different cohorts and examine relevant indicators for the one-child generation under the one-child policy. Building on the quantitative data analysis,

qualitative part focuses on fertility intentions and behaviours of the one-child generation as well as their family functioning in the two-child policy era. In total 56 participants were selected for semi-structured interview and 12 of those who responded also attended a focus group discussion. Thematic analysis is the main analysis method. Results from both quantitative and qualitative data were compared to explain the transition and formation of fertility beliefs and intentions of the one-child generation under different policy contexts.

4.1.3 Area of research: Jiangsu province

Jiangsu is one of the most representative provinces in Eastern China for its affluence and stringent implementation of the one-child policy as reviewed in the previous chapter. Located at the east coast, Jiangsu province partly represents the highest economic and social development level in China, along with other partners in that area. Jiangsu Province covers an area of 107,200 km^2 (roughly half of UK) and the population size was 8.05 million in 2018 (8.9 million population for London in 2018), respectively constituting 1.1% of whole China and 5.8% of population (JBS, 2019). Regardless of its smaller size compared to other provinces, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amounted to 9.26 trillion RMB (1.05 trillion GBP) in 2018 and accounted for 10.30% of the whole nation's (JBS, 2019). In terms of family planning programme, Jiangsu province is one of the two provinces that stringently implemented the one-child policy[10]. As a result, Jiangsu has witnessed low fertility as early as in 2000, with the TFR of 0.97 for whole Jiangsu and 0.82 for urban Jiangsu (Zhuang and Zhang, 2003), making it a distinct province with a good representation of small families. Figure 4.2 shows birth rates by Jiangsu and national level from 1978 till 2019, demonstrating a clear-cut feature that Jiangsu follows a highly similar trajectory to the whole China's birth rates; and this is particularly true since 1990 onwards. It is therefore a proper case to investigate and it should be able to depict the fertility trend for the whole of China in the future.

[10] There were exceptions larger than one-child family on an individual level in Jiangsu, while in terms of provincial regulations and policies, only two provinces, Jiangsu and Sichuan, required one child universally in urban and rural areas. The other four areas sharing the same degree of strictness in family planning are all central-governed municipalities, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing.

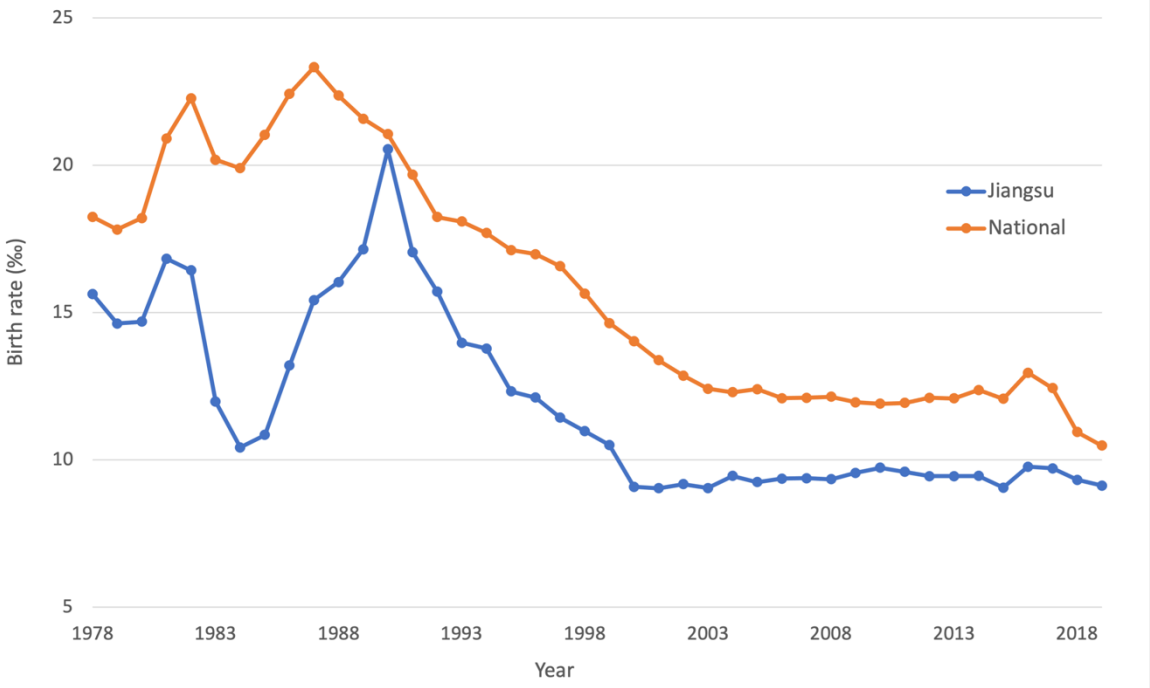

Figure 4.2 Birth rate by year in Jiangsu and China

Data source: Yao and Yin, 1994; Zhuang and Zhang, 2003; JBS, 2020.

4.2 Quantitative approach: 2010 Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey

Quantitative analysis is mainly aimed to address the first research objective: to establish an overview on the one-child generation's fertility intentions prior to the two-child policy in Jiangsu province as a reference. The data selected are derived from Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey (JFIBS). The selection of this dataset is due to: 1. This thesis takes Jiangsu Province for research and this dataset perfectly fits in the chosen area; 2. All waves of the survey were conducted before the introduction of the two-child policy, leaving it a good option to achieve the first research objective; 3. Fertility-related questions were usually affiliated to other large social research in China while JFIBS purely contained questions on reproduction. It turned out more reliable and in-depth in terms of exploring fertility issues.

The general information about this survey is elaborated as follows. At the beginning of 2006, Jiangsu Population and Family Planning Commission collaborated with Institute of Population and Labour Economics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to launch a project entitled "Research on Fertility Desire and Reproductive Behaviour in Jiangsu". The initial aim of the project was to undertake a longitudinal survey to understand fertility history and intention, family dynamics and family beliefs of women between age of 15 and 49. The research team selected six

counties/cities, Zhangjiagang, Taicang, Haian, Rudong, Dongtai and Dafeng respectively from Southern, Central and Northern Jiangsu to conduct the research, including questionnaire, focus group and in-depth interviews. This dataset is derived from the questionnaires implemented for JFIBS. The purpose of the questionnaire survey is to understand fertility attitudes, fertility desires, reproductive plan and reproductive behaviour of residents eligible for different fertility policies, and other influences on fertility such as society, economics, family and policy prior to the reform of Chinese family planning programme. The sample consists of women aged 18-40 years. Through stratified cluster random sampling, 24 neighbourhood committees and 25 village committees were selected. Women with local household registration ("Hukou") from these committees were interviewed.

There are two waves in total, 2007 and 2010, and the wave selected for this study is 2010. The reason for this selection is that the target group for this research is the one-child generation who were born between 1980 and 1994 (men)/1996 (women) and the wave of 2010 involves more respondents of the one-child generation due to the time point of survey. Longitudinal analysis is not applicable in this thesis as two waves are insufficient. There are new entrants in the second wave and the majority of them are among the one-child generation. As the one-child generation is the target group, 2010 JFIBS was finally chosen for a single analysis. The whole sample size of 2010 JFIBS is 20,827 and the number of respondents of one-child generation is 7,301. The analysis considered binary logistics regression because of the characteristics of explanatory variables and nature of outcome variables, which will be further discussed in the next Chapter.

4.3 Qualitative fieldwork and reflections

Following investigations of fertility intentions and behaviour before the introduction of the two-child policy in 2016, current beliefs on fertility intentions of the one-child generation under the new policy context is worthy of exploration. As the two-child policy was implemented from 2016, large dataset related to the fertility intentions of the one-child generation is not available at the time of conducting this research project. Apart from that, qualitative method is considered more in-depth and is able to disentangle the myths behind research problems (Bryman, 2012; Creswell and Clark, 2017), which is suitable for exploring and explaining fertility intentions and behaviours. Qualitative methods are adopted therefore.

To facilitate comparisons with quantitative results and explore variations after policy shifts, the target group in both data were those born in the 1980s and 1990s. The survey questionnaires used for JFIBS served as reference for qualitative data collection for certain consistency. The recruitment standard was also designed based on preliminary findings of quantitative results to a

certain extent. Level of education, for example, made little difference to younger cohorts' childbearing desire, and thus a great diversity of different educational backgrounds for informants was not required.

4.3.1 Selection of fieldwork sites

Two cities, Taizhou and Wuxi, were selected for data collection for two main reasons - location and level of development (Figure 4.3 illustrates the location of Jiangsu province and its own administrative divisions). First of all, Jiangsu province is geographically divided by the longest river in Asia, Yangtze River (the bold black line in the map representing the section of the river in Jiangsu), and the province is accordingly acknowledged as Northern and Southern Jiangsu. Taizhou is located in Northern Jiangsu and Wuxi is located in Southern Jiangsu. Secondly, the two cities are quite different in terms of demographic and economic development. Wuxi city is ranked 3rd out of 13 cities in terms of GDP in Jiangsu in 2018 while Taizhou is slightly slower in economic development and ranked 9th in GDP (JBS, 2019). Table 4.1 describes certain characteristics of the two cities. The gap between population with Hukou and permanent residents reflected that Wuxi was a city of population inflow while Taizhou was a city of population outflow. In fact, it is common that residents of Northern Jiangsu work in Southern Jiangsu, with their place of Hukou unchanged. The Yangtze river, as a boundary line within Jiangsu, also marks differences in lifestyles and dialects. For example, people of these two cities share totally different tastes and have developed unlike cuisines (Wei and Ye, 2009). These distinctions could lead to diverse mindsets and behaviour patterns of the residents, including aspects of fertility intentions and decisions. In terms of these reasons, these two cities are the chosen places to recruit study participants. This selection therefore aims to cover both parts of Jiangsu province to obtain diverse data.

Table 4.1 Population and economic characteristics of Wuxi and Taizhou, 2018

Characteristics	Wuxi	Taizhou
Population with Hukou (million)	4.9721	5.0339
Permanent population (million)	6.5745	4.6357
Area (km^2)	4,627	5,787
GDP (billion RMB/GBP)	1143.9/129.28	510.8/57.73
GDP contributed by three industries (%) (1st industry : 2nd industry : 3rd industry)	1.1 : 47.8 : 51.1	5.5 : 47.6 : 46.9
Disposable income per capita (RMB/GBP)	50,373/5692.85	34,642/3915.03

Data source: JBS, 2019.

Figure 4.3 Map of Jiangsu Province, China

Source: Chinafacttours.com.

4.3.2 Data collection and reflections

Based on the quantitative analysis on JFIBS, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were designed to collect in-depth accounts from both male and female of the one-child generation on their fertility decisions (including couples) under the two-child policy context and the reasons underlying their decisions. These will address the second and third research question. The one-child generation used hereafter refers to these young people who were born in the one-child policy era (since 1979), rather than the singleton child only. In other words, the analysis incorporates the one-child generation in a broad sense and some of them may have siblings. The major inclusion criteria for respondents are as follows: 1. The age/birth year is based on the legally marriageable age in the year 2016 in China, which for men is 22 years old and for women is 20 years old. In this regard, men should be born between 1980 and 1994, and women should be

born between 1980 and 1996. 2. Participants either permanently live in urban Wuxi or urban Taizhou, Jiangsu Province, or they have Hukou (household registration) in these two cities.

In total, 56 in-depth interviews were conducted: 32 from Wuxi and 24 from Taizhou. Four small focus groups of three to four previously interviewed participants were carried out for some complementary information, with two in Wuxi and two in Taizhou. Table 4.2 illustrates general characteristics of the informants.

Table 4.2 Characteristics of the informants interviewed for this study

	Wuxi	**Taizhou***
Number of informants	**32**	**24**
Men	8	5
Women	24	19
Birth cohort		
1980s	25	19
1990s	7	5
Age		
20-24	2	3
25-29	7	3
30-34	17	6
35-39	6	12
Siblings		
0	19	14
1	10	8
2 and more	3	2
Employment status		
Employed	29	21
Unemployed	3	3
Marital and child status		
Married, two children	5	1
Married, one child	13	19
Married, no child	7	1
Divorced	1	0
Never married	6	3
Level of education		
High school	1	0
College and Undergraduate	13	12
Postgraduate	18	12

*Only one male informant was recruited online and he was from Nantong. As Nantong is similar to Taizhou in social and economic indices, as well as they both located in Northern Jiangsu, this case was included in Taizhou in this table.

Fieldwork was conducted between March and June 2018. I spent three months conducting fieldwork in both cities. Interviews were completed first. Snowball and purposeful sampling were employed to recruit the informants. Both samples were purposeful in their nature (Patton, 1990). However, while snowball sampling was applied to search for a possible interview subject through previous informants, the latter sampling technique was applied to search for potential informants

through other sources (Silverman, 2015). This allowed me to collect interviews from different networks of people. These two sampling techniques were used to ensure that the informants came from economic backgrounds as diverse as possible.

The purpose was not to generate a representative sample of the entire population of the two cities but rather to interview a diverse enough group of individuals to enable a study the differences in behaviour along a number of axes. The initial target sample size was 60 participants. The aim for acquiring the diversity within the sample was also the reason why 56 but not 16 interviews were collected. In other words, more than 56 interviews could have been conducted, yet at certain stage I realised that many patterns I had investigated started to recur. These were mainly those patterns concerning childbearing desire and family living arrangements. These patterns also correspond to the result chapters in this thesis.

I found it difficult to recruit male participants for interviewing. At the time of interviewing, I attempted to include more couples and some female informants came alone and told me their husband felt quite weird to discuss this issue with a stranger. This is the reason that the final sample has only 13 male informants. Eight of them were the spouse of certain woman respondent while five of them were independent of women participants. Although limited by number, the male respondents finally involved were very willing to share their beliefs and perceptions regarding childbearing with me. They provided rather rich data.

The first point worth clarification in the table is the status of having siblings. 13 respondents from Wuxi and 10 respondents from Taizhou have siblings. As indicated earlier, there is some likelihood for the one-child generation in Jiangsu to have siblings as some people insisted on having two or three children despite the policy (e.g. 6 out of 10 Taizhou informants with siblings were natives). The second underlying reason is that some informants were migrants from outside Jiangsu, where the one-child regulation was more relaxed. 10 out of the 13 Wuxi participants, 2 out of the 10 Taizhou participants who have siblings were originally from other provinces.

Another challenge I encountered in recruiting informants is their general high education background. Though preliminary quantitative analysis presented a minimal role of education in young people's childbearing desire, a sample of different educational backgrounds was still expected if possible. On one hand, during the recruitment, I found it quite difficult to identify and approach samples with primary and secondary education nevertheless, partly as a result of snowballing sampling. Moreover, even two informants in my sample reported that they originally had only secondary education, they then managed to upgrade their education certificate or pursue further studies to obtain a college-equivalent diploma as they recognised the importance

of university/college education for their career development. Therefore, the study participants generally had a good education background from college to postgraduate.

On the other hand, an important premise for the better education profiles of the sample is that young people in urban Jiangsu share relatively higher educational levels. Data from the One-percent Intercensal Population Sampling Survey in 2015 illustrated that (see Table 4.3), Chinese young people of 20-35 years old (born between 1980 and 1995) from urban areas are generally better educated and 48.67% of them have received tertiary education. In Jiangsu, the figure is even higher as nearly 55% of young people had tertiary education. In this sense, the increased educational attainment of young people in urban Jiangsu considered, the sample of this study is still representative.

Table 4.3 Percentage of educational levels of the one-child generation (born in 1980-1995)

	China		**Jiangsu**	
Level of education	Whole China	Urban area	Whole Jiangsu	Urban Jiangsu
Primary and uneducated	6.05%	2.29%	2.58%	1.45%
Secondary education	64.01%	49.04%	58.54%	44.17%
Tertiary education	29.94%	48.67%	38.88%	54.38%

Data source: JBS, 2016; NBS, 2016a.

It is much easier to approach potential informants in Wuxi than Taizhou. One possible reason is that resident in Taizhou are more conservative, either about getting interviewed or talking about childbearing issues to strangers. Hence at the later stage, most samples in Taizhou were firstly approached in pairs or groups. Among the 24 informants in Taizhou shown in Table 4.2, there is one informant from another city. One male informant is from Nantong and was interviewed through phone calls. This informant was grouped into Taizhou's case since the location of Nantong is quite close to Taizhou (the map in Figure 4.2 could tell the location clearly) and they are both located in Northern Jiangsu. This particular informant was born in 1990 and he is married, working as an engineer.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, four focus groups were conducted after the interview. Interviewees were invited to attend focus group at the end of interviews. It turned out difficult to recruit interviewed informants as focus group participants. Due to their multiple commitments, especially for their childcare responsibility, it was hard to agree on a convenient time for everyone to sit for the discussion. Among 56 informants, 39 were parents and had childcare responsibilities. Taken these practical issues into account, I decided to put interviews the main source of qualitative data and focus group as a complementary source for any extra data.

4.3.3 Data analysis

The interviews were collected and transcribed verbatim in Chinese. All quotes used in the following chapters are translated to English carefully to make them readable and understandable. The fieldwork provided incredibly rich data and the analysis method is thematic analysis following the conceptual framework.

With the help of NVivo 12, thematic analysis was chosen to serve as analytical method. As a method widely used to study people's views and perceptions, it minimally organises the data in rich detail yet is also able to interpret various facets of research data. There are two types of coding in using this method, inductive and theoretical. Inductive is a bottom-up process, in which codes are derived from the data to a large extent, while theoretical coding goes in an opposite order, with a top-down process. As a matter of fact, aspects of both may be combined. In view of the data collected, inductive coding was employed to act as the main tool and theoretical coding may be of some use in practice.

Several steps have been taken in data analysis:

1. Reading and re-reading the data were performed to scrutinise data from interview and focus groups, including transcripts, notes, etc.

2. An attempt was made to search for patterns that are labeled with codes.

3. Memos were made around the codes to identify what the codes mean.

4. Codes were systematically sorted, compared until reaching a theoretical "saturation".

5. An iterative process of all the above mentioned took place to reassess and refine current codes. In the meantime, moving between data and literature was an auxiliary approach.

6. Until no new codes were produced, all transcripts and codes were reviewed together to detect connections between them and therefore themes were becoming evident by grouping codes together.

7. Emerging themes were identified based on centrality.

8. For analysis, all themes were placed into previous studies and other related materials

4.3.4 Further reflections on fieldwork and quality of data

During the data collection process, as a researcher, I have encountered some difficulties and challenges. First of all, the recruitment was not that easy, especially in Taizhou. People in Taizhou were more cautious and vigilant. Many of them were not willing to take part in interviews and it was difficult to get them involved. Therefore, purposeful sampling was adopted to recruit more participants. Certain screening criteria were still followed, such as their job type and marital status in order to guarantee a relatively full coverage.

Secondly, the number of interviewees was not evenly distributed under each age group compared to the original design. While checking the data during data collection, it became clear that females who were born between 1980 and 1984 had different views on childbearing from later cohorts. They were also aged over 35 years which forced them to think carefully about having a second child or not currently and this could generate rich data. Moreover, this makes them a quite different group that can be compared with other groups. The study therefore recruited more participants who were born in early 1980s.

Overall, the researcher tried many ways to maintain objectivity in data collection process. The overall quality of data was guaranteed during the whole process and each in-depth interview and FG discussion provided rich information. The interview took approximately one hour for each participant, and covered topics related to participants' knowledge on fertility policies, their fertility intention and underlying reasons, (potential) childbearing's effect on their career as well as the possible influences of social network on fertility decisions. The interviews went smoothly after some warm-up questions and the participants were sufficiently engaged and offered detailed narratives on each topic/area. The feedback they gave also indicated that it was a pleasant experience for them and they said the process also developed their considerations on some questions that they were not aware of before. The interview itself generated rich data and enabled a platform for sharing knowledge. The recruitment for focus group was more difficult as elaborated previously. The alternative of doing smaller groups was hence applied here. Each group has three to four participants. In spite of the limited number of groups, all group members were fully involved and they seldom showed any hesitation to speak. The focus group discussions focused on participants' awareness and understanding of population policy transitions, their motivations for childbearing and views on family beliefs.

4.3.5 Ethical considerations

The ethical approval (ERGO ID: 31980) concerning qualitative data collection was obtained in February 2018. Participant information and informed consent sheet were provided in advance for

the participants to read and questions were answered if they had any concerns. All participants were happy with the interview design and the process. This procedure replicated for focus group participants. Relevant documents for ethics application are provided in Appendix.

Prior to the fieldwork, ethical issues were considered carefully and in detail. The interviews and focus group discussions were carried out in Chinese as the researcher is a native Chinese speaker. In terms of the study design, there was little chance that the participants will feel uncomfortable during interview. In case of possible discomfort, preparations were made, including slowing down the pace of interview, informing participants of their rights to refuse to answer and withdraw, and so on. For focus groups, disclosure of personal information within group members may be of concern. The researcher explained this issue before starting the discussion and asked all participants to respect each other's confidentiality. All focus group participants were required to adhere to a confidentiality protocol. All documents related to focus group can be found in Appendix B.

The main ethical implications possibly raised by this research include anonymity and distress.

1. Anonymity

Initially the information sheet and consent form states clearly that the participants' anonymity and data confidentiality will be maintained all the time. Only basic demographic data will be collected in the interview and these will only be used for summarising the participants' characteristics. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants in analysing and writing up, as well as in any possible publications. Anonymity cannot be guaranteed within the focus group but all group members will be required to adhere to a confidentiality protocol. In practice, anonymity is guaranteed throughout the research all the time.

2. Distress

In the design, the research participants will be asked about their fertility intention and specific factors including career and social interactions. There is little chance that these questions will be sensitive to them. However, cautiously speaking, this may cause some distress if the participants and their family (especially the elders) do not share agreement on fertility decisions. In such case, I will firstly try to guarantee the slow pace of the interview that does not make them feel pushed. I will pause the interview and give time to the participants to calm down if they are distressed or upset. The participants can also refuse to answer any questions that will cause discomfort and they are free to withdraw at any time up to four weeks after participation. Participants will be advised to identify a trusted friend or family member to discuss any concerns that they may have as a result of the interview/focus group prior to their participation. Based on my observations and

instant feedback received after interview or focus group, distress was not incurred among all participants.

Chapter 5 Fertility intentions of young people prior to the introduction of the two-child policy: analysis of survey data from Jiangsu Province

Abstract

Context: Over three decades' implementation of the one-child family planning policy in China has led to low fertility in China. With both policy impact and modernisation process, people, especially the one-child generation, may naturally desire small family size.

Aim: To investigate the fertility intentions and underlying socioeconomic factors of the one-child generation prior to the change in the population policy.

Methods: Logistic regression on data from 2010 Jiangsu Fertility Intentions and Behaviour Survey.

Results: The one-child generation are more in favour of one-child family than their preceding cohorts. Education has less influence on young people while other socioeconomic factors such as residential place and family income play a more important role.

Conclusion: Regardless of a universal desire of small family, the one-child generation are different from their parent generation in childbearing desires as they tend to prefer one-child family more. Social and economic factors have a greater impact on young people's fertility intentions.

5.1 Introduction

As elaborated in the literature review, since 1970s, China started to experience a fertility transition as a result of strong government intervention. China has become one of the below-replacement societies as its total fertility rate fell below the replacement rate of 2.1 from 1992 onwards (World Bank, 2019). Since the introduction of the Family Planning Programme and especially the one-child policy, there has been a significant change in the fertility rates among women of childbearing age, with many desiring for a small family size of one or two children. Having one or two children seems to be a typical pattern nowadays. In particular, people from the

economically developed Eastern region, such as Shanghai and Jiangsu, are showing higher preference for late birth and fewer births, compared to their counterparts from Central and Western areas in China (Li, Su and Zhang, 2011).

Based on previous research on fertility intention in China, the ideal family size was as low as 1.73 in a national survey in 2006 and this figure has been quite stable (Zheng *et al.*, 2009). Fertility intentions vary greatly from region to region and between rural and urban areas (Zheng *et al.*, 2009; Li, Su and Zhang, 2011). There are a variety of factors involved in women forming their fertility intentions; but due to the practical difficulty of obtaining micro level data, including the latent reasons for their choice, individual life history and couple's decision-making process, it is not possible to have a thorough quantitative understanding of the processes underlying fertility intentions. Some factors have been regarded as more significant, such as education. When females are more educated, they are likely to have fewer children (Hannum, 2005; Treiman, 2013). Within the context of family planning in China, females have gained higher social status and education is more accessible to them (Hannum, 2005; Wu and Zhang, 2010; Treiman, 2013). Apart from educational attainment, household socio-economic status, especially a couple's income, plays a key role (Meng, 2008; Li and Luo, 2009; Zheng *et al.*, 2009). Concerns over the household's financial situation prevents people from considering a greater number of births.

The one-child generation who were born during the 1980s and 1990s, are a unique group reflective of the population policy. Though they have been well researched from a sociological perspective, they have not yet been sufficiently understood in the context of fertility studies. With the implementation of nine-year compulsory education in 1986 (Treiman, 2013), females of the 1980s and 1990s in Jiangsu province have been overall better educated (JBS, 2018), compared to earlier cohorts, making it attractive to investigate their associations with childbearing notions.

It is of great importance to examine the fertility intentions of the one-child generation prior to the change in the population policy in order to understand whether there is a shift in their views on childbearing under the new policy context.

The 2010 Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey (JFIBS) provides an opportunity to examine *whether there are clear differences in fertility desire between the one-child generation and preceding cohorts and the associated socioeconomic factors underlying the one-child generation's fertility intentions.*

Based on the literature, two research hypotheses are put forwarded:

RH1: The one-child generation are more likely to desire fewer children than those who were born in the 1960s and 1970s.

RH2: Higher education level has a positive association with lower fertility intentions among females of one-child generation.

The chapter is organised as follows: Section 5.2 describes the selection of response and explanatory variables and analysis methods; Section 5.3 presents the characteristics of survey respondents to get an overview of the profile of female respondents, followed by a regression analysis to examine the difference of fertility ideals and fertility intentions between four cohorts and the factor of education is tested for the one-child generation (1980s and 1990s cohorts). The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings and discussions.

5.2 Key measurements and variables

The whole sample of the 2010 Jiangsu Fertility Intention and Behaviour Survey (JFIBS) consists of 20,764 women aged 18-40 years. The one-child generation, 7,301 participants (35%) in total, is the main sample of research interest. There are two response variables for the analysis. One variable is the ideal family size and another one is fertility intention. With the focus on the level of education as a primary explanatory variable, with other demographic, socio-economic and social security characteristics; age, region of residence, household registration type, siblings, employment, family income and self-rated economic level, marital status and access to old age insurance are included as control variables.

5.2.1 Measures of fertility intention

As elaborated in Chapter 2, there is more than one way to measure "fertility intention". Based on the survey questions, two variables are related to intentions in this dataset. One is the ideal family size regardless of fertility policy or other factors; another variable is the fertility intention of respondents. The corresponding questions were: 1) What is the ideal number of children in a family generally, disregarding the fertility policy and other conditions? 2) How many children do you yourself want? The former helps to understand individuals' ideal perceptions regarding family size, while the latter implies real and reasonable fertility choice. Both of these two measures contribute to interpreting individuals' perceptions of childbearing. More interestingly, fertility intention is not consistent with ideal family size as shown below in Figure 5.1 as *Inconsistency*[11]. Therefore, the researcher decided to examine both variables as separate dependent variables.

[11] The grey bars in Figure 5.1 represent inconsistency—the percentage of inconsistent answers in the ideal number and intended number of children in each cohort.

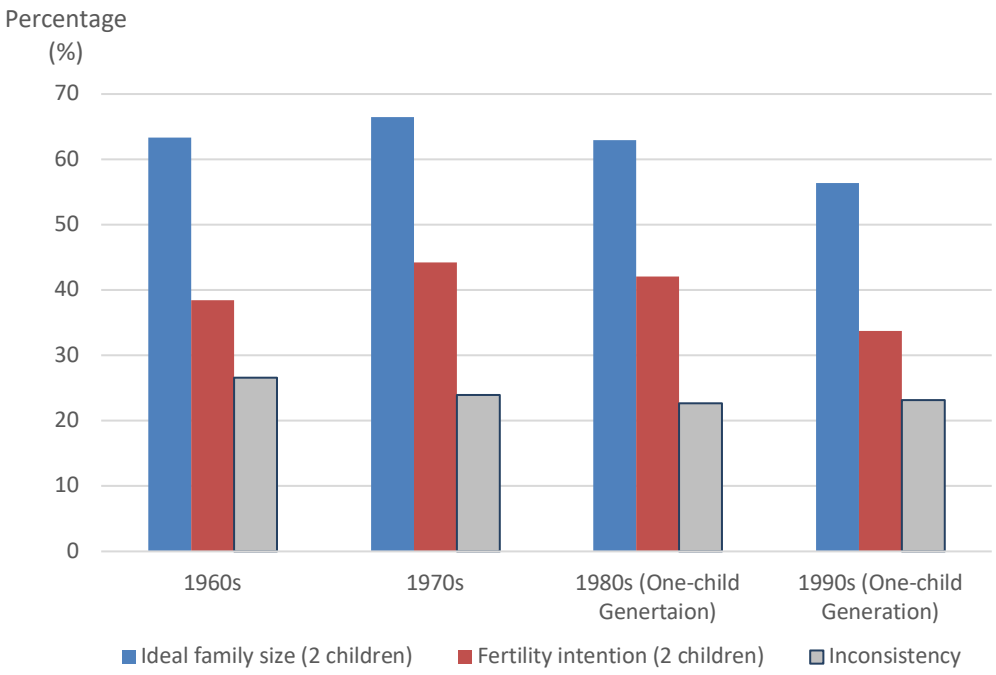

Figure 5.1 Relationship between ideal family size and fertility intention by cohorts

Source: author's own analysis.

The survey shows that there were very few respondents answering 0 or more than 2 (less than 1%) to the abovementioned questions (see Table 5.1 below). These cases were therefore removed from further analysis. The two outcome variables were constructed as binary variables, with 1 representing one child, and 0 representing two children. Figure 5.1 reveals the percentages of respondents preferring two children as the ideal number and outcome of fertility intention. It is clear that all cohorts mostly prefer two children to only one child as the ideal family size, while the one-child generation shows a stronger preference for one child. In terms of fertility intention, less than 40% of the 1960s and 1990s cohorts favour two children while the share is higher for the 1970s and 1980s cohorts. The bar of *inconsistency* indicates that around 25% of respondents from each group share different opinions with regard to ideal family size and intention, with slightly more females born in the 1960s giving inconsistent answers. In general, among all inconsistent answers, the absolutely dominant type (96.2%) is the ideal family size higher than their intended number of children.

5.2.2 Level of education and covariates

Table 5.1 presents the actual response to questions on ideal family size and fertility intention. For the one-child generation, 2% (157) had received only minimum education, 55% (4,028) secondary education while around 43% (3,114) received tertiary education. As mentioned earlier, answers of 0 or over 2 are quite rare, which therefore are eliminated in the final analysis. For this generation,

the majority agree on two children as the ideal family size. However, in terms of their own intention, one child is still the dominant trend. Specifically, respondents with higher education have a stronger belief in a two-children family. When it comes to fertility intention, regardless of level of education, 60% of them shared a preference for fewer children.

It is interesting to see that for 3,114 one-child generation respondents who are highly educated, 0.2% of them reported a fertility intention of no child, approximately six people, and this would be further reflected on in qualitative fieldwork in Chapter 6.

Table 5.1 Descriptive statistics for the fertility desires of the whole sample and those with different educational level

	Whole sample	**One-child generation**[12]			
		Whole sample of one-child generation	**Level of education**		
			Primary education	Secondary education	Tertiary education
	(*n* = 20,764) %	(*n* = 7,299) %	(*n* = 157) %	(*n* = 4,028) %	(*n* = 3,114) %
Ideal family size					
1	35.5	38.1	42.7	39.5	36.1
2	63.4	61.9	57.3	60.5	63.9
3	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fertility intention					
0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2
1	58.0	58.7	58.6	59.0	58.6
2	41.7	40.9	41.4	40.9	41.1
3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Although the focus of this analysis is on the effects of education on fertility desire, it is important to control for other factors in order to produce a reliable result. Demographic, socio-economic and social security characteristics are applied in the analysis. Control variables include age, region of residence, household registration type, siblings, employment, family income and self-rated economic level, marital status and access to old age insurance.

[12] The one-child generation in the analysis are the respondents who were born after 1980 onwards.

Table 5.2 Characteristics of the one-child generation by level of education

	One-child generation			
	Whole sample of one-child generation (*n* = 7,301) %	Level of education		
		Primary (*n* = 157) %	Secondary (*n* = 4,028) %	Tertiary (*n* = 3,114) %
Age group				
15-19	6.6	1.3	6.7	6.7
20-24	43.2	24.8	35.5	54.1
25-29	41.7	62.4	47.6	32.9
30-34	8.5	11.5	10.2	6.3
Region of residence				
Southern Jiangsu	40.1	25.5	28.2	56.4
Central Jiangsu	27.0	40.7	29.5	23.0
Northern Jiangsu	32.9	33.8	42.3	20.6
Household registration (Hukou)				
Rural	56.4	85.4	71.2	35.8
Urban	37.0	9.6	24.5	54.6
Others	6.6	5.0	4.3	9.6
Number of siblings				
0	61.7	28.7	53.6	73.8
1	29.3	34.4	33.7	23.4
2 and more	9.0	36.9	12.7	2.8
Employment status				
Employed	67.7	69.4	76.4	56.6
Unemployed	32.3	30.6	23.6	43.4
Family income level[13]				
Lowest level	17.0	28.0	17.0	16.5
Lower	17.9	24.8	20.4	14.4
Average	19.6	16.6	21.8	16.9
Higher	24.9	17.8	25.9	23.9
Highest	20.6	12.8	14.9	28.3
Self-rated economic level within the community[14]				
Lowest	0.6	3.2	0.5	0.5
Lower	8.4	17.8	8.2	7.7
Average	74.2	68.8	74.3	75.8
Higher	13.3	8.3	13.5	12.9
Highest	3.5	1.9	3.5	3.1
Marital status				
Currently single	46.2	21.7	31.9	65.8
Currently married	53.8	78.3	68.1	34.2
Old age insurance				
Had social insurance	40.9	23.6	37.5	46.4
Had commercial insurance	7.0	1.9	8.4	5.4
Had both	4.4	3.2	3.9	4.7

[13] Family income level is following the classic categorisation in China, divided into five levels equally from lowest level to highest level.

[14] The correlation between variables *Family income level* and *Self-rated economic level within the community* is 0.33, Hence, both variables are thus included in the analysis.

	One-child generation			
	Whole sample of one-child generation (*n* = 7,301) %	Level of education		
		Primary (*n* = 157) %	Secondary (*n* = 4,028) %	Tertiary (*n* = 3,114) %
None	47.7	71.3	50.2	43.5

In terms of these characteristics, key differentials are evident among different levels of education (Table 5.2). Respondents from the one-child generation who received tertiary education have distinct characteristics: they are younger, single, the only child in their family, more likely to come from urban areas in Southern Jiangsu, as well as having higher household income and access to pension scheme. Females who have primary education and secondary education share similar characteristics, as they are older (over 25), employed (69.4% and 76.4% respectively), married (78.3% and 68.1% respectively), live in rural areas (85.4% and 71.2% respectively), in the north (33.8% and 42.3% respectively) and are less likely to have higher income and any type of old age insurance (71.3% and 50.2% respectively). In addition, it is more likely for less well-educated respondents to rate their economic level as below average. In terms of the number of siblings, females with minimal education seem to have more siblings. However, in total, the majority are the only child of their parents, which could also mirror the effect of the stringent implementation of the one-child policy in Jiangsu province.

5.2.3 Analysis method and limitations

Considering the type of response categories in fertility desire, a binary logistic regression is used. Both the variable of *ideal family size* and the variable of *fertility intention* are categorised into two: those reporting 1 child (reference category) and those with 2 children. Model 1 examines the effect of birth cohorts on ideal family size and fertility intentions. Model 2 examines the effect of the level of education only, while Model 3 adds demographic, socio-economic and social security variables to investigate whether the effects of education on fertility desires are mediated by these factors. Model I and II are for the one-child generation only, with Model I examining the effect of education and Model II adding control variables.

Multicollinearity has also been tested prior to the analysis. The correlations between cohorts and age group, marital status and age group are both higher than 0.6. Therefore, the variable of *age group* was removed in most regression models. However, this variable was included in Model II for the one-child generation so that further dimensions of age can be applied since two categories of birth cohorts may not be sufficient.

One inevitable limitation for this analysis is that many respondents who were born in the 1990s cannot be included in the analysis because at the time of the survey, they were students classified as unemployed without any income, and were not married and these characteristics rendered them not comparable to their counterparts of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Quantitative data analysis here was unable to deliver explanations for some differences shown in the results and it failed to include certain potential factors such as conflicts between family and work. Another limitation with this dataset is that this investigation was conducted on women only, leading to some biases in reporting and understanding fertility ideals and intentions. The following chapters address some of these limitations and put forward qualitative analysis to further understand the one-child generation's fertility choices and make possible comparisons.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Descriptive characteristics

As shown in the Table 5.3, the dataset includes 20,764 female respondents and those born in the 1970s take up the largest share, with 1980s-respondents the second, 1960s-respondents the third, and respondents of 1990s are the smallest group. The respondents born in the 1980s and 1990s form the target group for analysis, the so-called one-child generation. In terms of their age, there is a relatively well-balanced distribution in the age groups 20-24, 25-29, 30-34 and 35-39, while approximately 30% of the sample are 40 years old and over. The respondents are also categorised by their region of residence: southern, central or northern part of Jiangsu province. The rural-urban divide is the most common and is typically represented by household status (Hukou) in China. Most respondents hold a rural 'hukou' and about 25% of them hold an urban 'hukou' at the time of the survey.

With regard to level of education, this is the primary explanatory variable of interest. According to the survey, the majority of the sample have had secondary education, including middle school and high school level. Over 20% of them had tertiary education, while few of them had little or no formal education. Meanwhile, less than 30% are the only child in their family. The vast majority have siblings, most of them having only one or two. Three or more siblings are uncommon in Jiangsu province, while in other provinces this share should be slightly higher. Over 80% of all respondents were employed. Those who were not employed at the time of the survey were mostly either housewives or still in education. Over 80% of the whole sample were married, including a small number remarried (2%). Around 16.4% of the sample never married while 2% of them were once married.

The one-child generation shows a different picture in terms of individual characteristics. Firstly, most respondents were born in the 1980s, hence the majority of the respondents were aged between 20 and 29 at the time of the survey. In terms of their region of residence, 40% of them lived in southern Jiangsu, and about 33% and 27% lived in northern and central areas respectively. For the household registration status, the one-child generation share similar characteristics with the whole sample, over half registered in rural areas. However, the one-child generation were generally more educated than the whole sample as over 40% of them had tertiary education which doubled the group in the whole sample. There were still 55% with secondary education but very few females had little or no education. More than 60% are the only child in their family and nearly 30% have one sibling. Two and more siblings are rather rare for one-child generation. Additionally, two-third of the one-child generation were employed. One-third who were not employed were still at school as mentioned earlier. Nearly half of the one-child generation respondents were single and the other half were in their first marital union.

Table 5.3 Descriptive characteristics of whole sample and one-child generation

	Whole sample (*n* = 20,764) %	**One-child generation** (*n* = 7,301) %
Birth cohorts		
1960s	24.0	n/a
1970s	40.5	n/a
1980s	30.4	85.6
1990s	5.1	14.4
Age group		
15-19	2.3	6.6
20-24	15.4	43.2
25-29	14.8	41.6
30-34	18.0	8.6
35-39	19.7	n/a
40+	29.8	n/a
Region of residence		
Southern Jiangsu	35.5	40.1
Central Jiangsu	30.7	27.0
Northern Jiangsu	33.8	32.9
Household registration (Hukou)		
Rural	59.5	56.5
Urban	24.7	37.0
Rural-urban transfer within 5 years	0.8	1.1
Small town	4.3	4.3
Family Hukou	0.7	1.0
Others	0.0	0.1
Level of education		
Uneducated	0.9	0.4
Primary school	7.0	1.7
Middle school	48.0	27.2
High/Secondary technical school	21.7	28.0

	Whole sample (*n* = 20,764) %	One-child generation (*n* = 7,301) %
Junior college	13.9	26.2
Undergraduate and above	8.5	16.5
Number of siblings		
0	29.4	61.7
1	35.7	29.3
2	18.9	5.6
3	8.7	2.1
4	4.4	0.8
5+	2.9	0.5
Employment status		
Employed	81.7	67.2
Seasonal employed	0.6	0.6
Unemployed	17.7	32.2
Marital status		
Single	16.4	45.3
Married	79.2	53.3
Remarried	2.2	0.5
Divorced	1.7	0.8
Separated	0.0	0.0
Widowed	0.5	0.1

n/a: not applicable

5.3.2 Regression analysis

The results from the logistic regression models for reporting **2-child preference**[15] (Table 5.4) show that there is a considerable difference in ideal family size and fertility intention between cohorts. Generally, women who were born in the 1990s are more likely to prefer one child only, while the other three cohorts are in favour of two children instead, among whom the respondents of the 1970s have the strongest preference for two children (Model 1 for both outcome variables). Respondents born in the 1960s and 1980s share a similar fertility belief and desire. However, after controlling for demographic, socio-economic and social security factors, the effect of birth cohorts decreases and it turns into the opposite direction—women who were born in the 1960s and 1980s are more likely to favour one-child ideals while 1970s and 1990s people share stronger ideals of two children (Model 3 for ideal family size). In terms of fertility intention, the one-child generation, from both the 1980s and 1990s, prefer two children, compared to their counterparts born in the 1960s and 1970s after controlling for other factors (Model 3 for fertility intention).

To examine the second hypothesis, the level of education is tested in Model I, which shows that for the one-child generation, higher education leads to a larger family ideal. Nevertheless, when it

[15] For the binary response variables, "0" is assigned to one child, while "1" is assigned to two children.

comes to more realistic fertility intention, the level of education contributes little. In order to make a comparison, the level of education is individually tested for the global sample as well (Model 2 for both outcome variables). Higher education leads to larger family ideals and intentions, thus indicating that education makes a larger difference to the sample as a whole. When controlling for demographic, socio-economic and social security factors, it depicts the same tendency in ideal family size for the one-child generation (Model II for ideal family size), with a narrower gap between those who received primary education and secondary education, but it still makes no difference to young people's fertility intentions (Model II for fertility intention).

Model 3 and Model II for both response variables turned out to be a good fit based on checking predicted probabilities. For the two explanatory variables of particular interest, namely cohorts and level of education in the analysis, Figure 5.2 indicates the predicted probabilities of fertility desire for the one-child generation and shows a clearer picture of differences within the one-child generation by education. By comparing the means, the intended family size is smaller than the ideal family size generally. Respondents from the 1980s are also more likely to prefer two children than those from the 1990s. This echoes the results of regression models as well: there is a distinction within the one-child generation. Adding the layer of education brings out more variances. Overall higher education increases likelihood in beliefs of a larger family size, and education again plays a minimal yet similar role for the two cohorts of one-child generation respondents as identical patterns are observed for both the 1980s and the 1990s cohorts. It is also quite interesting to see education does not work well in predicting the fertility intentions of these young people.

With reference to the regression models, in terms of demographic, socio-economic and social security factors, region of residence, family income, self-rated economic level and marital status are statistically significant for both the global sample and the one-child generation. The profile of people from Jiangsu who prefer only one child is being single, living in the central or northern areas, earning less, considering themselves less financially capable and having no pension security. The "Hukou" divide and employment status explain little variances when they form their fertility beliefs and are not statistically significant: this in fact validated the universal one-child regulation in both urban and rural Jiangsu. The number of siblings play different roles for the global sample and the one-child generation. For the global sample, having more than one sibling highly increases their ideal and intended family size, while for the one-child generation, the number is of less consequence. Besides, within the one-child generation, people of different age groups share different opinions on fertility desire: the older they are, the higher the chance of desiring more children.

Table 5.4 Odds ratios of reporting two-children preference in ideal family size/fertility intention among whole sample and the one child generation

	Ideal family size					**Fertility intention**				
	Global sample			One-child generation		Global sample			One-child generation	
	Model 1 ORs (95% CI)	Model 2	Model 3	Model I ORs (95% CI)	Model II	Model 1 ORs (95% CI)	Model 2	Model 3	Model I ORs (95% CI)	Model II
Birth cohorts										
1960s	1.34 (1.17-1.53) ***		0.92 (0.76-1.10)		-	1.22 (1.06-1.40) **		0.77 (0.64-0.93) **		-
1970s	1.54 (1.35-1.75) ***		1.03 (0.86-1.23)		-	1.55 (1.35-1.77) ***		0.98 (00.82-1.18)		-
1980s	1.31 (1.15-1.50) ***		0.92 (0.79-1.08)		0.91 (0.75-1.11)	1.42 (1.24-1.63) ***		1.01 (0.86-1.18)		0.93 (0.76-1.15)
1990s (ref)										
Level of education										
Primary		0.65 (0.58-0.73) ***	0.61 (0.53-0.71) ***	0.76 (0.55-1.05) *	0.78 (0.55-1.12)		0.79 (0.70-0.89) ***	0.78 (0.68-0.90) **	1.01 (0.73-1.40)	1.02 (0.71-1.45)
Secondary		0.82 (0.76-0.88) ***	0.73 (0.67-0.80) ***	0.87 (0.79-0.95) **	0.81 (0.71-0.92) **		0.85 (0.79-0.91) ***	0.80 (0.73-0.87) ***	0.99 (0.90-1.09)	0.98 (0.86-1.11)
Tertiary (ref)										
Age group										
15-19					1.05 (0.81-1.35)					0.85 (0.65-1.11)
20-24 (ref)										
25-29					1.07 (0.93-1.24)					1.03 (0.89-1.18)
30-34					1.29 (1.04-1.60) *					1.13 (0.92-1.39)
Region of residence										
Southern Jiangsu (ref)										
Central Jiangsu			0.35 (0.33-0.38) ***		0.39 (0.35-0.45) ***			0.41 (0.38-0.45) ***		0.38 (0.33-0.43) ***
Northern Jiangsu			0.70 (0.65-0.76) ***		0.74 (0.65-0.84) ***			0.60 (0.56-0.65) ***		0.56 (0.49-0.63) ***
Household registration (Hukou)										
Rural (ref)										
Urban			0.95 (0.88-1.02)		0.95 (0.84-1.07)			0.89 (0.83-0.95) **		0.93 (0.83-1.05)
Others			1.12 (0.98-1.29)		1.11 (0.89-1.39)			1.01 (0.88-1.14)		0.91 (0.73-1.12)
Number of siblings										
0 (ref)										
1			1 (0.92-1.09)		0.96 (0.86-1.08)			1.00 (0.92-1.08)		1.05 (0.94-1.17)

	Ideal family size					Fertility intention				
	Global sample			One-child generation		Global sample			One-child generation	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model I	Model II	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model I	Model II
	ORs (95% CI)			ORs (95% CI)		ORs (95% CI)			ORs (95% CI)	
2 and more			1.20		1.05			1.18		1.04
			(1.09-1.33) ***		(0.87-1.27)			(1.07-1.29) **		(0.87-1.25)
Employment status										
Unemployed			1.02		0.94			1.11		1.04
			(0.93-1.11)		(0.82-1.06)			(1.02-1.21) *		(0.92-1.19)
Employed (ref)										
Family income level										
Lowest level			0.69		0.73			0.79		0.84
			(0.62-0.77) ***		(0.61-0.88) **			(0.71-0.88) ***		(0.70-1.01) *
Lower			0.72		0.69			0.77		0.77
			(0.64-0.80) ***		(0.58-0.82) ***			(0.70-0.86) ***		(0.65-0.91) **
Average			0.78		0.82			0.81		0.86
			(0.70-0.87) ***		(0.69-0.96) *			(0.73-0.89) ***		(0.73-1.01) *
Higher			0.84		0.90			0.82		0.85
			(0.76-0.93) **		(0.77-1.05)			(0.74-0.90) ***		(0.73-0.99) *
Highest (ref)										
Self-rated economic level within the community										
Lowest			0.91		0.77			1.02		0.90
			(0.76-1.10)		(0.56-1.05) *			(0.86-1.21)		(0.67-1.20)
Lower			0.88		0.72			0.96		0.74
			(0.75-1.05)		(0.53-0.96) *			(0.82-1.13)		(0.56-0.98) *
Average			1.02		0.64			0.86		0.57
			(0.84-1.24)		(0.46-0.91) *			(0.71-1.03)		(0.41-0.79) **
Higher			0.56		0.30			0.77		0.58
			(0.39-0.80) **		(0.15-0.63) **			(0.54-1.12)		(0.28-1.22)
Highest (ref)										
Marital status										
Currently single			0.60		0.63			0.53		0.58
			(0.54-0.66) ***		(0.55-0.73) ***			(0.48-0.59) ***		(0.50-0.67) ***
Currently married (ref)										
Old age insurance										
Social insurance (ref)										
Commercial insurance			1.41		1.47			0.90		1.07
			(1.24-1.61) ***		(1.18-1.82) **			(0.79-1.02)		(0.87-1.32)
Had both			1.47		1.10			1.26		1.19
			(1.24-1.73) ***		(0.85-1.43)			(1.09-1.46) **		(0.93-1.52)
None			0.96		1.07			1.01		1.11
			(0.89-1.03)		(0.94-1.22)			(0.94-1.09)		(0.98-1.26)
Adjusted R^2	0.004	0.004	0.087	0.002	0.079	0.005	0.002	0.065	0.000	0.076
-2 log likelihood	26810.315	26796.153	25275.673	9690.130	9137.143	27807.101	27838.805	26615.905	9842.803	9300.971

****p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.1.*

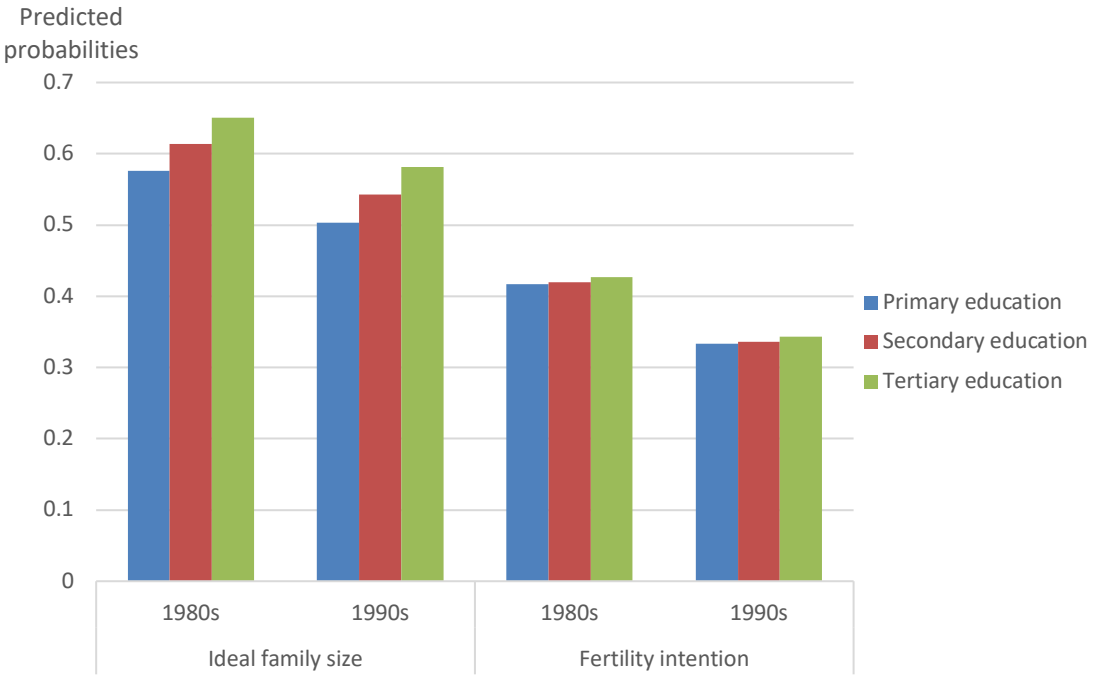

Figure 5.2 One-child generation's predicted fertility desire by cohorts and education
Note: The predicted probabilities presented are those reporting two-children as ideal/intended family size.

5.4 Conclusion

This analysis investigated the difference of fertility ideals and fertility intentions between cohorts and the influence of education on the one-child generation in Jiangsu province prior to the introduction of the two-child policy. It is expected to find that the range of answers to both ideal family size and fertility intention are smaller than those of previous demographic studies. The Family Planning Programme in China has made a marked contribution as the policy prevents people from having multiple births. Three decades of implementation has made it natural and normal for people to favour a smaller family size, as verified by the results. However, previous research also indicated that unlike the first few years after implementation, the phenomenon of low fertility for the recent two decades is the result of many social and economic factors intertwined rather than the effect of government policy alone (Merli and Smith, 2002; Li, Zhang and Zhu, 2005; Zhang, 2007; Zheng *et al.*, 2009; Li, Su and Zhang, 2011).

The one-child generation are more in favour of the one-child family size than earlier cohorts, validating the first research hypothesis, yet there is also a variation in responses between the 1980s and 1990s cohorts. Taking into account other essential factors, different cohorts become insignificant in predicting fertility intentions. The intergenerational differences partly support findings from previous research showing that people born after 1980 embraced fertility intentions

distinct from those who were born earlier (Li and Luo, 2009). Regardless of the number of siblings, they are a new generation living under the context of huge changes taking place in China (Feng, 2004; Meng, 2008). The variances in fertility desires between the 1980s and 1990s are rarely researched. The explanation of this difference is possibly the marital status as marriage is an important event of life course. In other words, the distinctions based on different age groups may also reveal that fertility desires change over time from a life-course perspective.

The level of education does not have a significant influence on the one-child generation as hypothesised. In terms of the ideal family size, highly educated women prefer the two-children family, which is also verified in earlier studies indicating that those who received tertiary education are more willing to have two births (Li and Luo, 2009). A possible explanation is that highly-educated and well-paid people can afford to raise two children and having both a son and a daughter is a priority (Li and Luo, 2009). However, education only plays a minimal role in predicting fertility intention according to the model results. This is in accordance with Feng's study (2004) on earlier one-child generation presenting that fertility desire is similar among young people in different cities, despite the different education background and marital status. It is interesting to see that education influences the earlier cohorts of 1960s and 1970s in a different way: women who were less educated are more into the one-child family ideal yet they share a similar fertility intention of one child with younger generation. This may be due to that older cohorts' absolute obedience to state policy makes them internalise the one-child ideal.

Other than level of education, emerging social, economic and demographic factors, including residential place and family income have also influenced the fertility desires, as shown in the models, especially for this younger generation. The little variance that Hukou divide could explain turns out to be identically alike for the one-child policy implementation in both urban and rural areas in Jiangsu province. Some previous research has provided similar evidence on the relations between socio-economic change and fertility intentions (Zhang, 2007; Meng, 2008; Li and Luo, 2009; Zheng *et al.*, 2009). Concerns around income is the main reason for people stopping at one child. Dynamics of socio-economic factors' influences on childbearing intentions are further identified and reflected from the fieldwork.

In summary, the findings illustrate that there is a distinct intergenerational difference in childbearing desire. For the ideal family size and more realistic fertility intentions, the one-child generation endorses the one-child family more than the preceding cohorts while certain variations also exist within this younger generation. Furthermore, the level of education does not have a great effect on young people's fertility intentions. This may suggest that the implementation of the one-child policy provides a small-size-family friendly environment in which

these younger residents were brought up. The overall atmosphere possibly minimised the difference that education could make in changing fertility desires.

Based on this piece of analysis in pre-two-child policy era, a one-child family pattern is common and normal for residents in Jiangsu. It appears unlikely to alter their minds easily with the policy shifts, especially when modernisation has paved the way for increasing possibilities in life for young people to select. How much variation in people's views on fertility and family formation can be detected two years after the announcement of two-child policy? The new policy encourages people to have a second birth but how will the one-child generation couples respond to this? Transition to more births is a contemplated process and it may not be a painless decision to make in contemporary China. What types of barriers are confronted by the one-child generation couples who intend to have a second birth? The next chapter adopts a qualitative strategy to address these questions raised above.

Chapter 6 Young people's fertility intentions and concerns on more births under the two-child policy context

Abstract

Context: The two-child policy was announced in 2016 in response to the low fertility challenge in China. Birth rates of the following five years first rebounded a little but then fell down again (NBS, 2020). Jiangsu has encountered a similar scenario (JBS, 2020).

Aim: To investigate the variations in fertility intentions of the one-child generation with the introduction of the two-child policy (2016) in urban Jiangsu and the mechanisms underlying their reproductive choices.

Methods: Thematic analysis based on 56 in-depth interviews; 32 from Wuxi, 23 from Taizhou and one from Nantong; 43 women and 13 men of age 22-38.

Results: The one-child generation dominantly shared the ideal family size of one child or two children, with more of them favouring two children. Without a clear timeframe, most women set a latest timing of childbearing of age 40, while men rarely considered this. Regardless of no preference of sex at birth reported by the majority, an implicit desire for one son was observed. A very limited influence of the two-child policy has been identified as minimal support is provided by current policy design. Household economic status and anticipated heavy load of childcare for women become the top barriers to having two children.

Conclusion: The fertility intentions of the one-child generation remain much unchanged, in comparison to those in the one-child policy era. With more practical obstacles encountered by urban young people, the current policy cannot accommodate the needs of their childbearing and childrearing and generally fails to increase their childbearing desire.

6.1 Introduction

Fertility intention is regarded as an important indicator to predict the individual's or couple's reproductive behaviour. For the one-child generation of which the majority are still in their

reproductive career, their fertility intentions are worth further exploration for understanding Chinese young people's perceived notions of childbearing. Following the analysis of their fertility intentions prior to the new population policy, this chapter moves to their childbearing beliefs and principal causes behind their choices under the new two-child policy context. As reviewed in family planning history, the one-child policy was moderated to accommodate the two-children desire of rural residents in China from 1984. The universal two-child policy therefore targets predominantly the urban residents. As a generation brought up under the influence of and preference for smaller families, young people may well be less likely to embrace a larger family size. Some recent research (e.g. He *et al.*, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2019) has touched upon young people's childbearing intentions in the two-child policy era from an aggregate level and mainly adopted large datasets, leaving implicit mechanisms unexplained. Some qualitative research has been carried out (e.g. Zhou, 2019; Ji *et al.*, 2020; Shen and Jiang, 2020b) while less research focuses on the case of Jiangsu. This chapter therefore applies qualitative strategy in cities of Wuxi and Taizhou in Jiangsu to uncover detailed information underlying the one-child generation's reproductive decision-making.

The research questions pertinent to this analysis are:

1) How does the two-child policy influence fertility desires of the one-child generation cohorts?

2) What is the current trend of fertility intentions of the one-child generation under the new fertility (two-child) policy?

3) What are the main obstacles to transition to the second birth amongst the one-child generation?

To address the abovementioned research questions, this chapter analysed qualitative data from the 56 in-depth interviews to investigate young people's perceptions, expectations and reasons related to family formation and childbearing, connected to comparisons with reported results in Chapter 5. Section 6.2 investigates the effect of two-child policy on altering young people's fertility intentions to understand the influence of the new policy. Section 6.3 presents narratives and reasons for the three aspects of describing fertility intentions, including ideal family size, intended timing of childbearing and sex preference of children. The quantitative findings have shown a marginal effect of education level on childbearing intentions and therefore the qualitative design did not place much emphasis on the diversity of education backgrounds. Instead, variances in childbearing desires are reported by gender, city of residence and cohorts.

Section 6.4 discusses main obstacles that young people face to transition from one birth to two births.

6.2 Limited influence of the two-child policy

The introduction of the two-child policy signals a significant change in the population policy in China. The previous one-child policy has produced a profound influence on people's everyday practice, especially on people's beliefs and notions on childbearing. This shift in the population policy seems natural based on current demographic situations. Young people, constituting the one-child generation, share varying opinions on the impact of the new two-child policy and how it changes their fertility intentions. The findings show that although the policy shift gave certain informants who work in state institutions or government sectors a chance to consider more births, it generally had a minimal effect on changing the majority's fertility intentions.

6.2.1 A minimal effect on increasing most people's fertility intentions

As revealed from overall interview accounts, more than 50% of all informants believed that the two-child policy exerts a very limited or no influence on their fertility intentions. Informants offered several reasons, and a lack of supporting policies is a common complaint. Wei's response is very typical of all informants' discontent with non-existent supporting benefits:

> "Since you (the government) encourage second birth, you have to offer more benefits. You want to attract a mother to give birth? Give her more maternal leave, or more breastfeeding leave, not just an hour per day. There should be some more tangible benefits such as cutting down our expenses or providing more benefits for future schooling. It is of no use to just announce that you are allowed to have a second birth."
>
> **(Wei, female, 36, married, one son, worker of a municipal library, Taizhou)**

Discussions on supporting policies center on two parts, parental leave and other kinds of tangible benefits to attract young people to give more births. From most informants' views, the two-child policy is announced as a single policy without any supporting measures. Currently maternity leave in China is in the general form of "basic maternity leave + bonus leave", the former being 98 days and the latter being 30-90 days designed by local governments (Yang, 2019b). Women in some provinces, for example, Heilongjiang and Gansu, are entitled to 180 days of the maternity leave in total (Yang, 2019b). Jiangsu Province offers the maternity leave of 128 days (SCJP, 2016). Compared to the maternity leave in the one-child policy era, there is actually no added leave specialised for the second birth and the short length of current maternity leave fails to

accommodate informants' urgent needs of childcare after parturition. As a mother of a two-year-old boy noted, without more help, an intensive four-month leave does not allow sufficient time before sending a child to a nursery[16]. Extra time for childcare leave after the maternal leave is in demand (Yang, 2019b), particularly when the child is too little. Likewise, the "missing" paternal leave receives criticism.

Though very few male informants cared about this, more female informants complained about the very short paternity leave. Official paternity leave is offered between 7 days and a month, in most occasions 10-15 days (Li, 2016b), and in Jiangsu the leave for new father is 15 days. In 2018, a new regulation enacted in Jiangsu encourages employers to allocate a co-parental leave of five days for the husband when his wife is in maternity leave (SCJP, 2018). Some informants nevertheless argued that the state paternity leave may not be fully offered by some companies. It is questionable that the co-parental leave in Jiangsu could be carried out properly. The alternative solution that most couples would take is to use all the leave that the husband could take, including paternal leave and annual leave, while most couples still "struggled and felt overwhelmed" as a mother of twin daughter described. This makes the decision of second childbearing less feasible. Moreover, the incomparable lengths of maternal and paternal leave also implicitly strengthen the gender roles and increase the risks of disruption the leave could exert on women's career trajectories (Zhou, 2019).

In addition, Wei's quote implies informants' wishes for tangible benefits that could alleviate latent costs of childbearing and childrearing, including pregnancy, parturition, the child's living and education. This is not uncommon in China as people are clearly aware of the possibly high expenses of raising a child. Certain reimbursements for pregnancy and parturition have been provided in the form of fertility insurance benefits, using a lump-sum payment. The resources and stipends required in the long run for raising a child are ignored, however, all the childrearing costs put on the family (Yang, 2019b). Such difficulty of predictable high expenditures is built upon a prevailing practice of refinements and improvements in childrearing in urban China (Ji *et al.*, 2017; Li, Tan and Huang, 2019; Wang, Ma and Li, 2019; Tian, Lu and Zhang, 2020). Young people look forward to raising children in a better way and thus commonly conceive a sense of responsibility for quality childrearing practices. This is in part due to the central government advocating "bear and rear better children" during early years of family planning programme (Chen and Hu, 2012; Wu, 2014; He *et al.*, 2018; Li, Tan and Huang, 2019) and people therefore share a higher standard for childrearing. The refinements and improvements in childrearing engender an increasing cost as many informants reported. Estimates indicate that the cost of raising the second child in cities

[16] Nurseries in China normally accept children from 1.5 to 3 years old.

like Guangzhou and Chongqing is more than ¥700,000 (RMB), which is approximately £80,000 (Wang and Liu, 2017). Tangible benefits are therefore in urgent need by people at childbearing age to lessen financial pressure. This is closely linked to the obstacles to considering more births presented in section 6.4. The current two-child policy is less appealing in the absence of strong supporting policies. In light of this, the two-child policy can hardly make a difference to most young people's fertility intentions.

6.2.2 Positive impact on individuals of certain occupations

The minimal effect of two-child policy is commonly endorsed by the majority since the abovementioned problems are ubiquitous to all. Built upon this consensus, a few informants claimed, however, that the enforcement of new state policy did succeed to some extent in encouraging their second births. This has been achieved in the means of having an opportunity to realise their family ideal, rather than directly increasing their original fertility intentions. The underlying reason is linked to their work attributes. These informants mainly work in state institutions and government sectors that rigorously prevent them from multiple births previously, as many of them put it,

> "Well the two-child policy actually does make a difference to me. I work in the "Jiguanshiye danwei" so this will influence my career. I may be fired if I violate the national policy. So, if the government now prohibits people from having more babies, I will not do that even if I desire more."
>
> **(Niu, female, 35, one son, contractor staff of a junior college, Taizhou)**

The term of "Jiguanshiye danwei" in China refers to government sectors and public institutions in general. Since public institutions are established by the government using state-owned property to benefit the society, they are in fact administrated by the government, including universities, municipal libraries, museums, etc. Some people are permanent staff (Bianzhi) while more are contract workers in such institutions. Regardless of their staff status, their conduct receives stricter scrutinisation under current regulations and policies, similar to civil servants. State-owned enterprises used to be among this type but they are no longer "Jiguanshiye danwei" now as they turn to completely commercial organisations. In terms of family planning practice, they are, however, under similarly heightened scrutiny by the government. Violation of fertility policies engenders severe penalties for employees of these organisations, compared to their counterparts working in other non-state organisations. In other words, in the one-child policy era, these employees would lose their jobs if they have more than one child. Either party of a couple working in "Jiguanshiye danwei" makes both parties prudent in this issue, as Niu did. The two-

child policy accordingly provides these people a chance to realise their fertility intentions if they desire a second birth. In this sense, the specific working population with a two-children family ideal are the beneficiary of the policy amendments to some extent, echoing an earlier finding that demonstrates a higher second-child desire among women working in "Jiguanshiye Danwei" (Long and Chen, 2017). Another explanation for this higher chance of second birth is related to the work intensity, as Chen (2020) found in her study about the characteristics of couples with two children: couples in which the women have a less intense job and those with better than average childcare resource were more likely to have two children. In light of this, informants who work in state institutions and government sectors indeed shared less intensive workload and relatively regular working hours in comparison to other informants who work in non-state companies, leaving the former group more time for childcare. In this sense, the two-child policy only removes the hurdle for those who were stringently scrutinised for multiple births before and they could have more choices when they desire a larger family now. Therefore, it may be more accurate to conclude that the reported "positive" impact of policy amendments in fact attributes to the nature of less intense workload on female informants rather than the state organisations they work for. Women's work appears more critical to boosting second birth, which is further reflected in the next chapter.

6.3 Fertility intentions of young people in Jiangsu

The term of fertility intentions could cover a number of dimensions related to childbearing (Wu, 2014). This study investigates three main aspects that could comprehensively describe an individual's fertility intention. The first aspect is ideal family size, indicating the personal reproductive goal; the following aspect is the timing of childbearing, from which we can detect people's opinions of reproductive career length and possibilities of realising their fertility ideals. The third part is to reveal their preference of sex at birth. Skewed sex ratio at birth is always an issue in the one-child policy era and whether this trend will continue or not after policy amendments merits exploration. Variances between certain groups are highlighted at the end.

6.3.1 Ideal family size and intended timing of childbearing

The ideal family size refers to the fertility ideals an individual could hold, which implies individual's fertility preferences and goals in the long term across their reproductive life course. Ideal family size is a key indicator of an individual's ultimate fertility goal and the maximum number of children an individual wishes to have in their reproductive career (Chen and Gu, 2014; Wu, 2014). The ideal family size can be regarded as lifetime fertility intentions in this research. The analysis shows that there are four types of answers to the question of informants' ideal family

size, namely zero, one, two, three or more. The qualitative fieldwork involved 56 participants and the ideal family size of the majority falls into one or two (n=51), with some exceptions of childless (n=1) and more than two children (n=4). In other words, a family with one child or two children has become the most popular choice among the young people, as expected. Specifically, nearly 60% of all informants prefer a family with two children, while around 34% desire a one-child family. The informants who prefer two children are nearly twice the number of those who desire one child only. This result is very much similar to quantitative results presented in Chapter 5, indicating that the general fertility goals remain nearly unchanged before and after the introduction of the universal two-child policy. From this perspective, the policy change is in accordance with the trend of young people's family ideals.

Two or more than two children: keeping each other company

The main reason underpinning this preference is reported as for the children keeping each other company. Most informants originally from a family with two children maintained that growing up with a sibling is better than growing up alone. A recurrent comment was that: the children could take care of each other, and have fun together; when they grow up they could have someone to consult in face of problems and support each other. Informants holding this view were convinced that two children could play a positive role in both lives, shaping their ideal family size of two. Such teenage life experience is what Lan once observed and admired. As she recollected,

> "I don't have a sibling but some of my classmates in my primary school do as they are from rural areas. They look really happy and close to each other... I always went to a friend's home at that time. In summer vacation there were only me, her and her sister at home. I was so happy at that time as we did everything together, such as doing homework and going swimming at night. This is what I couldn't do when I was alone at home."
>
> **(Lan, female, 34, married, two daughters, librarian, Wuxi)**

A number of informants like Lan who grew up as the only child shared similar pleasant imaginations of staying with a sibling from childhood, leading to their family ideal of two children. There are also cases that some informants desire to have more than two children and they all believed three would be enough. A female informant responded,

> "I think three children are good. I like large families. I don't have that much energy for more than three kids as people don't just give birth but also need to raise children in a better way financially."

(Yao, female, 26, married, no child, clerk of a state company, Wuxi)

The reason for her not desiring more children is based on consideration of childcare and costs to raise a child. These two points were frequently reported as critical concerns associated with unrealising fertility desires, which will be presented in section 6.4. This helps to explain a common scenario of child-loving informants' fertility intentions of no more than three children.

One child or childless: a complex of considerations

Preferences over one-child family ideal appeared natural for young people in China since they were immersed in an atmosphere of favouring small families from childhood. Many informants who were the singleton child of their parents stated that they never thought of more than one child, indicating that more than one child is not a conceivable option for them at all. Yet, a typical reason for desiring only one child is presented as follows.

> "You know at first, like when we didn't have a kid at all, I hadn't yet experienced the difficulty of looking after a kid. I thought it must be good when the two-child policy was announced. But after I had a child myself, I experienced all the 'tortures'. I lost almost all of my personal time! I am too exhausted to do any of the other things I used to enjoy."

(Yi, male, 31, married, one daughter, game designer of private start-up, Wuxi)

Some informants may admire life with siblings while the larger group feel the same way as Yi mentioned. Favouring one-child ideal is strongly tied up with the contradictions between childcare and their own wellbeing, particularly after having a child. Having experienced the difficulty of looking after a child may highly increase the chance of preferring one child only, albeit some of them were in favour of two-children previously. Young people pay more attention to their own wellbeing, with modernisation and urbanisation engendering individualism (Chen and Hu, 2014). In this sense, decreasing number of intended children is a by-product of modern civilisation and it cannot be reversed.

Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that one informant expressed her ideal of being childless. Yu is a graduate student in her mid-twenties. She explained that her choice is based on careful considerations.

> "After we finish postgraduate study, we are asked to return to the family rapidly because we've reached the age of 26. Childbearing, no matter [whether it's] one child or two children, will lead to a time loss of three to five years away from work. Basically, the five years' loss further hinders us in taking good advantage of the golden working age of

30-39. So, the education we take cannot be transformed to social production. I don't think it's worth it."

(Yu, female, 24, single, no child, postgraduate student, Wuxi)

Yu's account reflects a scenario that more young women received higher education and they were keen to realise their social value. Weighing up family and career, this group select career and more unexplored opportunities. It is rare but still a few informants voluntarily choose not to have any children throughout their reproductive career, in accordance with the survey results reported in 2010. Due to a marginal percentage of respondents answering "zero" for ideal family size, this group was eliminated in the quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, as implied from this interview, there is still a small percentage of people preferring being childless. Some earlier surveys (e.g. Feng, 2010; Ma, 2011; Feng, 2014; Sun, Hou and Ma, 2014) regarding fertility intentions have provided evidence as well. Feng (2010) did a sampling survey on 1216 married young people in five developed cities in China and found that 26 of them desired to be childless. Another earlier study conducted in 2006 in urban Beijing showed that 15.2% of young people had an ideal of no child (Ma, 2011). Similarly, a study targeting East urban district in Beijing in 2011 discovered that 10.4% of young males surveyed preferred no child while the figure for female respondents was 9% (Sun, Hou and Ma, 2014). These all clearly pointed out that being childless is an option that young people may take, which is more popular in developed cities in China. The population scale in China considered, we may safely conclude that the actual number of people volunteering to be childless could be sizable.

Intended timing of childbearing

Before identifying any trend in the timing of childbearing, one consensus which is still strong and firmly rooted in most informants' minds is that marriage is the dominant ritual preceding to having children in China (Santos and Harrell, 2017). Traditionally people take marriage for granted as a social norm and regard this as a major event in their life (Yang, 2017b). Childbearing is the second important event immediately after marriage (Yang, 2017b; 2019a). Therefore, for informants who are single, the narrative is straightforward—they will not think about having children until they get married. For those who already have two children, no further plan is common and expected since current population policy still stops at two children for most couples. Besides policy restrictions, more than two births may not be planned as the previous section has indicated the majority's family ideal of one or two children.

Most informants have come to a consensus on the timing of childbearing, using a notion of "the latest childbearing age". This is raised frequently in interviews and the age specification is around

35 years old. It is not fixed to 35 only, but also 36 and 38, with none of them older than 40. As a young mother explained:

> "If I don't have (a second) child before 35, I may just give up… the main consideration is my age. I would be too old for pregnancy. The child may not be as healthy as expected when I was younger. And the age gap between two kids would be too huge, so I suppose they probably cannot share common issues."
>
> **(Guo, female, 28, married, one son, clerk of a municipal library, Taizhou)**

The majority hold the similar view that women are not sufficiently healthy to give birth and are less energetic to take care of children after 40 years old. The above quote brings out two most important reasons for their age consideration. Women have concerns over infant's health once they reach an advanced reproductive age as they believe the risk of having an unhealthy baby accordingly increases.

Another vital element in the timing of childbearing is the age gap between children. For most informants who desire two children, they actually show a neutral and conservative attitude towards further fertility plans. They would set a "deadline" as Guo did but they cannot give out a clear timeframe. For instance, a female informant commented, "After several years, the older one goes to primary school (seven years old), and I can have another one". The deadline is formulated in terms of their intended age gap between two children and the reason for their ideal is rather subjective. The general ideal age gap falls between three and seven so both children could share childhood together.

Compared to those who already have a child, other informants seem more relaxed and casual when discussing pregnancy. Since pregnancy is a "natural" process after marriage, most couples do not purposely plan their first birth. Lu, for example, married and in her late twenties, noted that: "When it's about time we would have a baby. After all I am around 30." The word "natural" or "when it's about time" frequently appeared as most informants believe that getting pregnant is naturally following the marriage and they do not have to make plans in advance. They are likely to deliberately postpone it for having more couple-time at first or they will simply await it as a normal event. This indicates that most young people still accept and follow the several significant life course events, including first birth coming after marriage and this is a spontaneous behaviour without deliberation (Feng, 2010; Chen and Gu, 2014; Wu, 2014; Zheng, 2014).

6.3.2 Preference of sex at birth[17]

In face of the question about preference of the child(ren)'s sex at birth, a recurrent answer is no preference. Most informants stated that they have no control over the sex of the new-borns and all they hope for is a healthy baby. Yet, people still fantasise about an ideal gender balance. The most popular comment is the wish to have one boy and one girl, regardless of their initial fertility intentions as the quote below shows.

> "Well, one boy and one girl is the best. Two boys are fine… two girls, not a bad option. It's all acceptable but you know the better one is to have the "good", one girl and one boy. Anyway, I expect at least one boy."
>
> **(Yao, female, 26, married, no child, clerk of a state company, Wuxi)**

Previous research (e.g. Liu, 2005a; Guo, 2008; Yang, 2008) often took sex preference at birth equivalent to preference over boys, while young people's sex preference has been gradually various rather than single preference over sons (Shi and Jiang, 2011; Song and Tao, 2012). Young informants in this study also showed lessened preference over sons only. The ideal dream of one boy and one girl has been widespread as a consensus and consequently, it permeates informants' minds to have one child and look forward to a second child of the opposite sex. The word "good" here refers to the Chinese character "hao", composed of two parts: the left part represents "female/daughter" and the right part means "male/son" respectively (Chen and Hu, 2012). This pattern of sex preference is widely identified in other national and regional studies (Feng and Zhang, 2002; Wu, 2014), indicating a universal and longstanding desire of both son and daughter in China.

Yao's last words, however, presented her higher preference over sons. Notwithstanding that few informants claiming it directly, it is more likely for them to disclose their preference implicitly as Chao did.

> Chao: "We don't have any preference for the baby's sex."
>
> Interviewer: "Two girls or two boys are both fine for you?"

[17] China's sex ratio at birth are relatively higher for a long period (Yu, 2003; Chen, 2008; Chen and Hu, 2012) and this is a sensitive issue as most people in urban China acknowledge that preferring a certain gender (mostly preferring boys to girls) is not good. Here social desirability bias is likely to affect people's answers. During the fieldwork, the researcher tried different means to minimise this kind of bias, including changing the phrasing of questions and asking relevant questions at a different time to testify the consistency of answers to sex preference. This minor bias was therefore controlled to a minimum level.

> Chao: "Well if we have a boy first… we have to consider whether to have the second one. Um… there's not a particular reason… just too heavy burdens to have two boys… Children (regardless of gender) are definitely brought up in the same way when they are little, but burden (of preparing assets for sons) comes in the future."
>
> **(Male, 30, married, no child, engineer of a foreign company, Wuxi)**

Chao has provided an important reason for not desiring two sons: having two boys leads to heavy burdens in the future. An important tradition in China underlying this opinion is that parents are supposed to prepare housing for their son to get married, while normally daughters do not share the same benefits (Chen and Hu, 2012). This discrepancy helps to weaken the preference of sex at birth. In other words, raising a daughter is not as expensive as raising a son since preparing housing or assets for daughters is fairly voluntary. Together with Yao's comment above, they both initially proposed no preference over sex at birth. In spite of that, both of their words have sent a hidden massage that boys are still more favoured than girls as this ideal state implies that it is the premise to have a son while a daughter is welcomed in presence of a son. The preference over boys is practiced in a more subtle way (Yu and Cheng, 2020). Therefore, these accounts reflect that the sex preference of sons is still soundly rooted in some people's minds. Though China's urbanisation diminishes people's preference over children's number, it has not changed people's sex preference at the same rate (Chen and Hu, 2012). The transition in intended number of children goes first while the transition in preferred sex at birth falls behind and this makes the lag in fertility culture will persist within some time (Chen and Xu, 2009; Chen and Hu, 2012).

6.3.3 Variances between sub-groups

Following the presentation of an overall picture of fertility intentions, certain variances from different sub-groups merit exploration. First of all, there is a clear difference detected between young men and women. Among all female informants, 40% of them prefer one child while the rest are in favour of two or more than two children. On the contrary, male informants show a stronger interest in having two children as nearly 80% of them intend to have two children. The percentage desiring to have two children is much higher than that of women. Though some surveys included male respondents, they mainly focus on the general fertility intentions and gendered difference is not elaborated. The JFIBS adopted in Chapter 5 involves women only therefore gendered differences in fertility intentions across time cannot be identified. This result provides an initial and new idea of gendered gap in the number of children desired as previous qualitative studies in China rarely includes men's opinions.

Compared to the results reported in Chapter 5, the one-child generation's fertility desires fail to alter greatly with the newly-introduced fertility policy. The ideal family size falling between one and two as well as the similar proportion of each answer, supported the idea that people generally desire small families in China and the low-fertility trend prevails in young people. However, results did imply some gaps between two birth cohorts in this study—those who were born in the 1980s and the 1990s. Among the cohort of the 1980s, only 35% reveal their intention to have one child while 65% would like to have two or more children. In contrast, the 1990s cohort share a completely distinct view in that 42% of them endorse the two-child ideal. This is much lower than that of the 1980s cohort, demonstrating a clear discrepancy between their fertility ideals. This observation also tallies with results of JFIBS in 2010 from which the two-child ideal was 62.9% for the 1980s cohort; but a downward trend of the two-child family ideal is identified from the 1990s cohort as the figure was 56.4% in 2010. This possibly validates a limited, even negative influence of policy change on younger people. A strong explanation for this may be the close link to their status of having siblings and marriage. Illustrated from data, informants who have siblings themselves are more intended to have two children[18]. Yet this trend is more salient in the 1990s cohort. Similarly, regarding the marital status, informants who are married at the time of interview shared higher intention for two children, irrespective of cohorts[19]. In other words, distinctions revealed from two cohorts are possibly associated with whether they are the singleton child in their family and life course events they have experienced. This finding demonstrates that life course events have profound effects on fertility intention and its translation to actual behaviour (Schoen *et al.*, 1997). The element of cohort instead contributed little to their reproductive goals in this study.

Apart from the two comparisons above, city of residence is another dimension of interest. As pointed out in the methodology, the two selected cities are different in dialects, cultural traditions and economic level. In spite of that, minimal variances are found in fertility intentions. Around 35% of informants living in Wuxi prefer one child and the remaining 65% favour two children. This trend replicates for informants who live in Taizhou, in line with that of the whole interview sample. Same as the overall proportion in 2010, the recurrence reflects the stability of young people's fertility ideals, without regard to place of long-term residence. The stringent implementation of family planning in Jiangsu province may account for the invariance to some extent since it engenders people thinking alike in childbearing beliefs. The universally convergent

[18] For those who were born in the 1980s, 15 out of 17 informants with siblings desire two children; 15 out of 27 informants who are the singleton child desire two children. For the 1990s cohort, the figure is four out of six and one out of six respectively.

[19] For those who were born in the 1980s, 27 out of 41 married informants desire two children; the figure for the 1990s cohort is three out of five.

childbearing intentions have also been revealed from other studies (e.g. Feng, 2010; Ma, 2011; Feng, 2017) and young people in urban China share infinitely similar reproductive perceptions. Furthermore, several studies (e.g. Nie and Wyman, 2005; Hou, 2015; Whyte, Feng and Cai, 2015) and highlighted findings from Chapter 5 all pointed out the dominant influence of socioeconomic factors on reproductive decisions, situated in the wider social and economic development. The level of urbanisation of Wuxi and Taizhou in 2018 both reached over 65%, above the national average level of 59.58% (JBS, 2019). In light of this, the rapid progress of urbanisation and modernisation rationalises the marginal gap in people's family ideals in the two cities.

6.4 Obstacles to the transition to second birth

In contemporary society, deciding to have or not have children always involves more than one reason. Other than the broad social context, people pay more attention to the micro factors as these are more relevant to their personal life. As most participants revealed, they were hesitant in consideration of practicalities and this has to be a cautious decision, even though they may have the wish to have a second child. Following the presentation of fertility intentions and some preliminary reasons for their choices, this section comes with specific obstacles that lie in the process and negotiations when young people form their childbearing decisions.

In-depth interviews tried to explore top concerns over having more than one child. A diversity of obstacles were detected from the accounts, such as policy regulations, cost of childbearing and health issues. Apart from the policy context discussed previously, two obstacles are identified as the most pressing concerns that could hinder informants' intentions of multiple births—household economic status and childcare workload. These two concerns are closely related to the refinements and improvements in childrearing, since both higher money and time investment into a child are required under this childrearing pattern. They conspicuously navigate informants' paths to the second childbearing. First and foremost, concerns over household economic status are common and around a quarter of the informants put these as the number one obstacle. The overarching logic behind this is that most couples acknowledged the cost of childrearing as the greatest commitment in all expenditure while they cannot afford such potential high expenses to their knowledge. Secondly, over one third put first the potential childcare workload. Albeit childcare is expected to be assumed by the couple, research data uncover that the one-child generation couples are always in need of substantial assistance. "Individual's own responsibility" and "other's assistance in childcare" are firmly attached in participants' replies and in practice the considerable care work has been undertaken by women in most families. Compared to the universal concern of financial issues as proposed, the priority of childcare is more narrowed down

to a certain group of informants who strongly desire two children, for presumably massive caregiving is of special consideration when it comes to the second birth.

6.4.1 Household economic status

Recognised as the most critical concern of multiple births, household economic status was frequently pointed out by informants since a great number of them assumed that their income was inadequate to raise two children. Except for a few informants being students with no income, for other informants in Wuxi, their after-tax family incomes mainly varied from ¥180,000 (£20,464) to ¥250,000 (£28,422) while the average after-tax family income for informants in Taizhou was ¥120,000[20] (£13,642) in 2018. The average household disposable income in Wuxi and Taizhou was ¥168,118 (£19,113) and ¥140,350 (£15,956) respectively in 2018 (JBS, 2019). In this sense, many families involved would be considered middle class to upper class by local standards. Nevertheless, sharing a universal perception of high expenditure in childrearing, they were less motivated to welcome more children. The dominant expense that hinders potential childbearing points to children's education. As a one-child mother who preferred to have two children, Wei has already been overwhelmed by investment on her son's education.

> "We cannot just easily set a lowest limit of income to childrearing… perhaps every family can afford that somehow. But for the education part, we at least have to spend ¥30,000 (£3,426) on it. Although attending primary school is free of charge, before that you have to pay the fees for kindergarten. And now all the classes he takes outside school, all the 'interest classes' cost a lot!"
>
> **(Wei, female, 36, married, one son, worker of a municipal library, Taizhou)**

The child's education matters significantly to Chinese parents since ancient times (Chen and Hu, 2012), and this has been more prevalent in urban China with the refinements and improvement in childrearing norms. Although children are exempt from tuition fees of the nine-year compulsory education (primary school for age 7-12 and junior high school for age 13-15), parents still have to pay for the nursery school, senior high school and higher education. Extracurricular classes[21]

[20] After-tax annual family incomes of informants in Taizhou tend to be convergent to the average amount provided, while the figures for informants from Wuxi vary. Therefore, figures for two cities are described in different forms. The figures are not accurate results as a few informants refused to disclose their family income. Instead, some preferred to tell if it is sufficient for expenditure.

[21] Extracurricular education includes 'interest class' and 'tutorial class'. The former is related to children's interests and hobbies such as playing an instrument, drawing or dancing. This class aims to develop a skill outside of school subjects that many parents believe fulfils a child's life and further development. The 'tutorial class' is designed for children who may have difficulties in school subjects and exams.

constitute another key component of high expenditure, for either better exam scores or leisure interests. For families involved in this study, children over three years old all took certain extracurricular class. The report on Chinese educational finance stated that the participation rate of tutorial classes of children in primary or secondary education stage was 44.8% in urban China, the figure for interest classes being 29% (Wei, 2018). The percentage in Eastern China, where Jiangsu Province is located, was 38.1% for tutorial classes and it greatly expanded to nearly 50% when children entered senior high school (Wei, 2018). A famous proverb in China quoted by informants goes as "not to let your child lose at the starting line", implying the necessity of children's early involvement in education. Notwithstanding some informants' disagreement on children taking various afterschool classes, they admitted that they could hardly maintain their practices in such social atmosphere, especially when their children fall behind in school and children themselves could also feel frustrated. This also helps to explain education's dominance among various types of costs since children step into these extracurricular classes at a very young age and it is highly possible that children will take these classes all along before they enter college. As early as in 2004, a study in Shanghai revealed that based on children at different schooling stages, the share of childrearing costs ranged from 39% to 52% in the total household expenditure and the sum could be as high as ¥480,000 (£54,818) if higher education was included and only direct cash costs were considered (Xu, 2004). The educational costs comprised 22%-41% accordingly in total childrearing costs (Xu, 2004). The proportion of educational costs in childrearing costs rose sharply to 76.1% in 2015 (Wang and Liu, 2017). In addition, the tradition of preparing housing for sons in China as mentioned in 6.3.2, as well as more urban families assisting their singleton daughter with purchasing flats, both account for latent considerable childrearing expenditure. These foreseeable costs markedly hamper informants' entering parenthood again.

The relative importance of household economic level could also be partially verified by certain narratives from informants who did not take it as an obstacle for having one more child. A male informant, with a household disposable income of ¥300,000 (£34,261) in Wuxi, admitted: "If I didn't earn that much, this concern (on financial issues) should be put higher (on the list)." (male, 34, married, two daughters, engineer of a state company, Wuxi).

This statement reveals that some people who care little about household economic level are generally in a better financial situation that could afford having two children. Overall, the decisive influence of better economic status is substantially presented by data and the significance of education for children in Chinese families have made people foresee the high expenditure of raising two children in the long run, which lifts up the position of financial concerns during transition to the second birth. The growing rate of family income has been evidently slower than that of children's education expenditure (Zhao, 2019). Young people's

awareness of expanded childrearing costs greatly affects their childbearing planning (Chen and Gu, 2014; Zheng, 2014; Song and Zhou, 2016; Wang and Liu, 2017).

6.4.2 Anticipated heavy load of childcare for women

Aside from financial issues, another urgent concern in place is childcare delivery. On the one hand, this matters to all informants to some extent, regardless of their intended number of children. Childcare demand is peculiarly substantial when the child is at pre-school stage (younger than seven years old) since the younger child has to be attended to intensively. Unfortunately, the situation is not expected to take a favourable turn after the child attend schools as schooling signals the arrival of new childcare tasks. There are heated discussions online recently, for example, in schoolteachers' everyday reminders to children's parents, including what the assignments are, what to recite today and which parts parents should check and sign on, etc. These tasks have consumed much time and energy of parents and accounted for new caregiving essentials. However, the majority of informants and their spouses were both in full-time employment, disabling them from taking comprehensive care of children by themselves. This whole process will be replicated inevitably when they have a second child. The massiveness of childcare work has been predicted and posed considerable challenges to progression to the second birth. On the other hand, female informants generally assumed larger share of childcare provision and this remained women's commitments based on their narratives. As Li described her busy life around her son:

> "My primary concern (about having a second child) is that I cannot take on more childcare. I have only one son now but the whole family has already centred around him all day. I still have to check his homework in the evening. Then at weekends, all my time is devoted to him. I can't even have a lie-in. This is the current situation."
>
> **(Li, female, 36, married, one son, community worker, Taizhou)**

Li's statement implied women's more participation into caregiving than men did and this is the traditional practice in many Asian countries (Bauer *et al.*, 1992), especially in the era when women were only active in family domain. Nevertheless, more women were incorporated into the labour force, following the socialist development agenda after 1949 (Zhou, 2019) and the percentage of working women in urban China was once over 90% in 1970s (Zheng, 2020b). Initially with the "Danwei" system, urban women were able to raise more than two children and do paid work simultaneously, as this system offered life employment, comprehensive care and children's educational services for urban workers (Cook and Dong, 2011). During the transition to marketisation, "Danwei" collapsed and the affiliated care and reproductive services were

gradually privatised (Yang, 2017c; Zhou, 2019; Ji *et al.*, 2020) and institutional support on childcare is in great shortage. This means individual families have to choose from carrying the burden themselves or purchasing services from the market, invisibly adding to burdens on women (Ji *et al.*, 2020). Solutions to this difficulty include either female informants temporarily resigning for caregiving or seeking for external help on childcare. The former one aggravates women's competitiveness in future labour market; the latter one becomes more prevalent among the informants. There should be several ways of external care provision while the most welcomed source is from the grandparents[22]. Juan told an interesting episode occurred in her discussion with her mother about second childbearing.

> "I was once really hesitant (about the idea of having only one child) when my mum joked that if I gave birth again, she would stay with me in this city for a long time to help with childcare. So, I was a bit swayed…but I know she was joking… then I totally obliterated this thought (of more childbearing)."
>
> **(Juan, female, 37, married, one daughter, clerk of a foreign company, Wuxi)**

In Juan's case, she was not able to guarantee any external help on childcare and therefore abandoned her chance of second birth. Likewise, the availability of intergenerational support has already become a prerequisite for some informants to proceed to the second birth. Other than grandparental help, hiring a nanny is an alternative but not the first choice of my informants and they took it as a temporary means to assist the grandparents. Many informants claimed that granted that a nanny was hired, the grandparents had to be there at home too. The main reason behind this is their concerns over whether the nanny will work responsibly. As a result, generational support is still greatly preferred and is widely applied by many one-child generation couples (Ji *et al.*, 2017; Song, Wang and Qin, 2018).

In this sense, women informants are more likely to confront career-work conflicts due to the longstanding gender division in family. In terms of second birth, some women informants decided on temporarily resigning for caregiving, and finally it took them longer to get back to work than they predicted. The double burdens placed on women may give an explanation for the "double decline" in women's participation into paid work and total fertility rate in recent years (Yang, 2019). The intertwined relations of family, career, intergenerational support will be further explored in Chapter 7.

[22] "Grandparents" used here refer to the parents of the informants and this will be applied throughout the thesis.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter aims to present the perceptions and intentions on childbearing of urban young people in Jiangsu Province after the one-child policy was replaced by the two-child policy. It explored the influence of the policy change and analysed the general fertility intentions that cover ideal family size, intended timing of childbearing and preference of sex at birth, followed by main obstacles to having more children for these young people.

As the universal context of childbearing in China, influences of the two-child policy on changing people's fertility intentions are investigated. In the first place, the presence of the new policy provided a chance of considering second birth for informants who work for state institutions and government sectors since these people were previously under extreme inspection on the number of children to have. Except for this "loosening tie", the two-child policy itself has so far turned out meaningless for one-child generation individuals, for the shortage of complementary support. It is not only a bigger family size, but also unpredictable changes would take place, including lifestyle change, increasing risk of financial incapability and so forth. The refinements and improvements in childrearing over past decades have set higher standards and requirements for one-child generation couples' upbringing practices, resulting in demanding more institutional support that is exactly missing in current policy design. In the second place, the nearly unchanged trend in reproductive ideals that are identical to JFIBS results given in Chapter 5 verifies the irreversibility of low fertility. As the by-product of urbanisation and modernisation, shrinking fertility desires would remain stable for a long period (Yang, 2011; 2019b), which can never be effortlessly overturned. Taken together, without the initiative of responding to actual adverse changes that two births could have on young couples, the two-child policy failed to exert a visible influence on the stubborn low fertility desires.

Secondly, this chapter elucidates current young people's fertility intentions in three perspectives: ideal family size, intended timing of childbearing and preference of sex at birth. The overwhelming ideal family image is a family of no more than two children. The majority are in favour of two children and the rest support a one-child family. It is rare but still extant to be voluntarily childless. These young people normally set the latest timing of childbearing at the age of 40 years old while considerations of age mainly applied to women. With regard to preference of sex at birth, it suggests a relatively balanced composition in most cases. Other than the dominance of one son and one daughter together, certain insistence on having a son is still established. Stronger preference over certain sex in fact increased fertility rate as couples would attempt to fulfil their preferences while no preference signalled least likelihood to realise fertility intentions (Song and Tao, 2012). In this sense, desires to have two children and at least one son

may be helpful in boosting fertility. Apart from general observations, some variances also emerged from data across groups. Women and men hold different views on the family ideal as male informants show a stronger attitude towards a two-child family. Similarly, this attitude replicates for the informants of the 1980s cohort, which is possibly accredited to their higher marriage rate and siblings state in comparison to their 1990s counterparts. City of residence does not make much difference to the general fertility intentions, indicating a convergence in childbearing beliefs in rather developed areas.

Finally, people deliberate their reproductive decisions in contemporary society (Chen and Gu, 2014; Wu, 2014; Yang, 2019b). It is without exception for the young people in Jiangsu Province. Under the current climate of encouraging two children in China, informants in the research raised multiple concerns over having more children. Findings highlighted two biggest barriers to second childbearing, household economic status and anticipated heavy work on delivering childcare by women. Perceived high expenditure of children's education leads to informants' worries on the affordability of household income; and the overwhelming childcare workload generated by more births also prevents them from translating their fertility ideal to actions. These two obstacles are not absolutely exclusive yet are intertwined to some extent as either burden could be alleviated when the other is eased. In other words, the stress is likely to double if the two obstacles come together. The priority of these two elements is in coincidence with young people's complaints on the absence of supporting measures discussed earlier. In other words, the current policy is unable to accommodate young couples' needs and makes progression to more births less possible. Worse still, women are taken for granted as the main caregiver while in current society they are also full-time employees. Gendered division in family increasingly pose challenges to more births. Yet, less intense job a woman has entails higher probability for this couple having two children (Chen, 2020). The interplay of work and family is still an unsolved barrier to couples desiring second birth. The next chapter will disentangle these complex relationships.

Chapter 7 Family and career through a gendered lens

Abstract

Context: "Motherhood penalty" has been a prevalent issue all over the globe. Motherhood for women of the one-child generation becomes difficult for them due to the incompatible career development and family responsibilities (Yang, 2019a; 2020a). Although women were encouraged to work at early stage of new China, the current fertility policy appears to drag them back to family realm (Yang, 2020b).

Aim: To explore the family pattern of one-child generation couples with children, and interactions of gender, childbearing and wage work under the two-child policy context.

Methods: Thematic analysis using data from 47 in-depth interviews of married participants (one of them is divorced) and four focus group discussions; 26 from Wuxi, 20 from Taizhou and one from Nantong; 36 women and 11 men of age 26-38.

Results: The one-child generation couple who have young child(ren) have received much intergenerational support on childcare to maintain their family operation. There is a clear gendered difference in perceptions and experiences in work-family compatibility. Women were double burdened with wage work and household responsibilities while men rarely had the conundrum of balancing work and family, since men are not socially expected to assume much childcare responsibility.

Conclusion: Women received undifferentiated discrimination in the labour market due to their potential identity of mother. The clear-cut gendered division in wage work and family commitments will possibly hold back women's childbearing desire, in spite of the presence of intergenerational support.

7.1 Introduction

The last two chapters have shown the trajectories and variations of the one-child generation's fertility intentions and perceptions of family formation. Family planning programme and socioeconomic development together have shaped young people's distinct fertility plans. As aforementioned, prior to the introduction of the two-child policy, the one-child generation prefer small family, with one child or two children. The level of education has little influence, while

socioeconomic factors made a difference. Two years after the two-child policy was enacted, the preference over small family still permeates among these young people, not only based on their own life experience but also a result of their perceptions and rational choices. The one-child generation, as a whole, has conveyed a steady and declining desire in childbearing albeit variations exist among different individuals. The two-child policy has exerted a marginal influence on changing their fertility intentions as predicted. The influence of the policy, compared to other factors and practicalities including household financial burden and massive potential childcare, seems less relevant. The childbearing commitments or decisions appear to be incompatible with young people's career pursuit in urban China now (Chen and Jin, 2011; Zheng, 2015; Yang, 2018a). One of the dilemmas and challenge that frequently hold back their childbearing desire is the fear of failure to balance work and family, especially when gendered inequality is still in place in social norms and expectations.

Population data show that 62.1% of women participated into paid work in China in 2016 (World Bank, 2019). Though the proportion is declining over time since 1990, it has always maintained around 60% in recent five years (World Bank, 2019). With the majority of Chinese women stepping out of the field of family, gender inequality still widely persists in China. Traditional socialisation is highly gendered in any realm, either within or outside the family. The most important cultural conventions of Confucian norms support and reflect a strong patrilineal hierarchy (Bauer *et al.*, 1992). The communist government has challenged this hierarchy since 1949 by a series of measures including implementing marriage laws, advocating women's participation in socialism production, etc. In spite of these efforts, females remain behind in terms of their positions in the household and community, further reflected in the lack of representation of women in political affairs (Leung, 2003), in women's double burden of full-time paid work and major responsibilities for family and child work (Bian, 1987; Bauer *et al.*, 1992; Zuo and Bian, 2001; Cook and Dong, 2011), and in perceptions about how a good husband and a good wife should behave (Bauer *et al.*, 1992; Pimentel, 2006). The birth of a child to a couple is deemed to further intensify specialisation (Killewald and Gough, 2013). Maushart (2002) described it vividly, "The birth of a child will affect a woman's internal landscape like an earthquake, followed by a flood, followed by a volcanic eruption. For a man it will be more along the lines of a heavy shower". The gendered nature of household specialisation can result from gendered expectations of motherhood and fatherhood (Killewald and Gough, 2013). It is certainly a representation of gender inequality in the costs of parenthood.

This chapter aims to disentangle the stories of family, gender and employment in urban Jiangsu. In particular, it looks at how the family of one-child generation couple with young child(ren)

function in urban Jiangsu. Also, it examines how men and women perceive the relations between childbearing/family and work and how do they deal with the dilemmas.

The chapter begins with elaborating the current living pattern of family with children, which reveals the significance of generational support for one-child generation couples. The following section explores the gendered differences in conundrums between career and childbearing by delivering three themes emerged from qualitative data. Data derived from both in-depth interviews and focus groups were used in this analysis, with interview data as the main source and focus group discussions as a complement (quotations from focus group are indicated clearly otherwise they are from interviews). The three main themes are generated to reflect the struggles and difficulties for work-family balance. The third section presents the researcher's critical reflections throughout the three analyses, centring around the intertwined relations of policy, fertility and young women in contemporary China.

Married individuals with children are the main group in discussion in this chapter and they were all born in the 1980s. According to the analysis, regardless of different cities of residence, informants shared highly similar experiences of confronting and addressing the work-family conflicts. In brief, the perspective of resident city and cohort will not be involved in this chapter. This chapter will discuss a wider perspective of career-family deadlocks in urban China via the lens of gender.

7.2 Pattern of family life with children: generational support as the main reliable source for childcare

Division of domestic work and childcare is a longstanding issue connected to childbearing and family life. As indicated in the previous chapter, this is a critical problem to think beforehand for informants desiring children. The high burden of domestic work and childcare could be extremely exhausting, which can impair young people's motivation to have more children (Yang, 2009; 2018a; 2019a; Ji *et al.*, 2020). The divisions of domestic work and childcare is another area that need attention, other than gendered responses to career development upon parenthood (Ji *et al.*, 2017; Ji *et al.*, 2020). It is likely to observe different patterns of housework distribution but the most popular one among my informants is based on receiving external help, mainly from the couple's parents. Over 60% of old people in China (between 60 and 79 years, having grandchildren below 18 years old) undertake the responsibility to provide care for their grandchildren (Song, Wang and Qin, 2018). Therefore, before reporting the themes of gendered

decisions between career and family, the role of grandparents[23] should be elaborated first. This section will focus on the dominant pattern of family life with young children in Jiangsu—generational support on childcare—as other forms of help are hardly used by the participants in this study and this has become key to an urban young family functioning well.

In this analysis, 39 out of 56 informants are married and have children[24]. Among all the 32 informants who have one child only, over 75% have received help from grandparents (from either sides); for the family with two children, all have been receiving grandparents' help. Based on their accounts, for the family with one child, grandparent(s) either live with the couple or live closely to the couple's place hence they could easily come over to help; for the family with two children, grandparents all live with the couple. The help offered by grandparents could cover all kinds of house chores, including cleaning, cooking, laundry, childcare, etc. The common pattern is illustrated by the quotes below.

> "My mum came to my home after my daughter was born. She helped to look after my daughter from she was very little. My mum still lives with us and she mainly picks up the kid for us now."
>
> **(Male, 37, married, one daughter, civil servant, Taizhou)**

> "For my first kid, my parents-in-law… they were quite healthy, so they mainly took care of my child. Now I have the second kid and she stayed at my mom's place for some time. But my mom got some health issues so the younger one came back with us. Two children are together now and my parents-in-law took up the childcare. We also hired a nanny (for doing the chores)."
>
> **(Female, 32, married, two daughters, contractor staff of a university, Wuxi)**

A typical picture is illustrated above: grandparents assist with most housework as well as childcare when young couples are at work; young people take over the job of childcare when they are off duty. During the weekends and holidays, the couple are responsible for the housework and childcare themselves. Only two out of 33 families involved have recruited a nanny temporarily for some extra assistance, who mainly helped with house chores instead of childcare. In other words, the availability of external help plays a critical role in young couple's family life as this can help to

[23] To clarify the use of term "grandparent", it refers to the parents of the informants or their spouses throughout this chapter.

[24] Only one female informant has two children but was divorced at the time of interview. All other 38 informants are married and have children at the time of interview. As several couples were both interviewed, there are 33 families in total.

relieve burdens on them to a great extent. Albeit reasons beneath this could be complex, the provision of support on childcare in fact becomes a precondition for young individuals maintaining a "normal" life while having children (Tian, Lu and Zhang, 2020). As was pointed out in the previous chapter, such difficulty comes from the dominant childrearing practice that are refined and improved, dating back to early years of family planning in China (Chen and Hu, 2012; Wu, 2014; He *et al.*, 2018; Li, Tan and Huang, 2019). The norm of "to bear and rear better children" *("yousheng youyu"*) was profoundly promoted to transform people's preference over more children into fewer but better-cultivated children. Passed on across several decades, the higher standards of childrearing have progressively exhausted couples' spare time and available income. On the other hand, less tied to traditional ideology (Chen and Hu, 2012), young people are reluctant to sacrifice personal well-being for a presumably busy life with children. The prevalent difficulties for these urban young couples in having a "normal" life as before are consequently engendered.

Since grandparents provided help, couples normally have been relieved greatly of housework duties as reported by many of the study participants. As a mother of a four-year-old girl, Huan said she was grateful for what the grandparents have done for the family:

> "I am thankful to the grandparents as they have done most of the housework. And this is why I could have so much time to look after my daughter. I take up little housework. They don't need me to do it and they just ask me to take care of the kid. This is how we make it."
>
> **(Huan, female, 31, married, one daughter, librarian, Wuxi)**

Similarly, Juan had her father at home to offer some help despite the fact that her father could only help a little. "Although my father moved far away to my city just for helping to pick up my kid, this still helps me a lot!" (Female, 37, married, one daughter, clerk of a foreign company, Wuxi). Further to the two main obstacles reported in Chapter 6, the assistance from grandparents is necessary for a couple with young children because it implies substantial help in managing family affairs, with no cost implications. In this way, the strain posed by more births has been eased not only physically, but also financially. In other words, intergenerational support turns out a compromising means of overcoming the obstacles to transition to second birth.

Despite the fact that intergenerational support for childcare is common and desired by young parents, grandparents are trying to escape from overwork. A number of interviewees mentioned that their parents were not willing to take care of more children anymore, especially in terms of looking after the second child.

> "Well in China the childcare is (an issue) …Currently my parents help and they have had enough with one child. For the second child my wife's parents have to help otherwise we cannot make it. For now, I think my mother cannot do it alone. I can usually find her not herself on Thursdays and Fridays. She didn't even want to speak to us at all. [But] when I take my daughter to her place on Monday, my mum looks happy."
>
> **(Male, 31, married, one daughter, game designer of a private start-up, Wuxi)**
>
> "For the first kid, my parents-in-law helped me with childcare. For the second, they won't help. My parents neither. Although my parents want us to give birth again, they don't want to help with childcare. So you see… (I don't think I will have a second birth). For me, it is really important if my parents or parents-in-law can help."
>
> **(Female, 26, married, one son, librarian, Taizhou)**

The two representative quotes depict this interesting phenomenon. This mainly occurs in Wuxi while similar cases in Taizhou are much fewer. It seems that people from Taizhou more tend to follow the traditional family practices compared to residents in Wuxi. This is evidenced by not only grandparents' attitudes towards intensified childcare, but also informants' views on this issue. While more grandparents in Wuxi refused to take care of the second grandchild, many informants expressed their support and understanding and commented that they could not completely impose it on the grandparents. Conversely some informants from Taizhou showed disagreement and they took it for granted that grandparents should help. In light of this, traditional family practices prevail in Taizhou over that in Wuxi. It is not rare now that grandparents are becoming increasingly reluctant to assist in childcare in China and this is better received in big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai (Xie and Wang, 2019). Similar to young couples, older people become exhausted after attending to their grandchild carefully and become fed up with more caregiving commitments. This is also reflected from other survey data, for example, among those grandparents who help on grandchildren's caregiving tasks, 26.64% are classified as intensive caregiver as they spend over nine hours on average per day to look after their grandchildren (Song, Wang and Qin, 2018). Older people also have other demands and interests such as social participation and leisure entertainment (Xie and Wang, 2019). In spite of their love and sense of obligation for their children and grandchildren, grandparents begin to say "No" to more childcare work, which highly influences the one-child generation's fertility plans (Song, Wang and Qin, 2018).

In summary, it is confirmed that the pattern of generational support is the main reliable source of childcare and the couple has a smaller part of household duties to share with assistance from

grandparents. In spite of grandparents' reluctance somehow, the availability of grandparental help turns out to be a prerequisite for urban couples to proceed to the second birth.

7.3 The interplay between career and family upon parenthood: gendered perceptions and choices

Following the depiction of a typical image of a contemporary urban Chinese family, the discussion shall turn back to the young couples in Jiangsu. All 47 married informants are in employment: one mother is a shopkeeper working for flexible hours and another mother is a part-time PhD so they can be regarded as working part-time; the others are in full-time paid work. All their partners are in employment as well. In other words, 40 families involved in this analysis, 33 with child(ren) and 7 with no child, are all double-income families. Faced with childbearing responsibilities, these couples may encounter a complex situation due to their employment status. Three themes emerge, reflecting the highly gendered dissimilarities throughout the process, and are presented below under three separate headings in this section.

7.3.1 Young and well-educated women's conundrum: squeezed career paths for all phases

In spite of the downward trend in the last two decades, China has one of the highest labour force participation rate within the Asia Pacific region (World Bank, 2019). Around 45.39% of women aged over 15 and 59.15% of men aged over 15 are in employment in Jiangsu in 2019 (JBS, 2020). However, young women share a higher working rate compared to their men counterparts as 41.29% of women between 20 and 39 years old are wage earners in 2019 while the figure for men is 38.44% (JBS, 2020). Employment has been a taken-for-granted choice for young women living in urban China (Lim, 2018; Zhou, 2020) and becomes a strong norm especially observed by highly educated women (Zhou, 2019). This is the same case for female informants in this research. The 36 married female informants work in a variety of sectors, including manufacturing, financial services, education, etc. and 35 of them received tertiary education[25]. They chose to work spontaneously and generally deemed necessary to work to keep up with social development. Entering parenthood post marriage is a natural choice to take for most of them but this means a compromise or adjustment with their (future) career aspirations. It could be interpreted as a squeezed career path the moment they decide to become a mother.

[25] 8 out of 36 married female informants received a junior college diploma; 5 received a bachelor's degree; 22 have a postgraduate degree; one has the high school diploma.

> "There is a big difference in my future path (after I have children), and actually my career planning changed the moment I decided to have a child. Previously I picked up a position with more opportunities for promotion but I was quite busy. When my husband began to work, we decided to adjust the focus of our life as his work brings higher pay. Even if I got promoted there would not be a considerable increase in my pay. Meanwhile this (adjustment) is based on my perceptions of childrearing. I think a mother has more influence (on children). That is why I changed my career planning. I chose to be relocated to a stable position with few opportunities for promotion."
>
> **(Shen, female, 35, married, twin daughters, administrative staff of a university, Wuxi)**
>
> "Absolutely there's a huge impact on women's career. For my first kid, the pregnancy and maternity leave in total took about a year and half. I was so shocked when I got back to work after my maternity leave ended. People around me were preparing for Intermediate Qualification Certificate (in our field) and there were so many exams, including language test, computer test, etc. They got all done but I haven't taken any of them yet. I was so left behind after childbearing."
>
> **(An, female, 35, married, one son, contractor teacher of a junior college, Taizhou)**

Shen's narrative tells a common process of women's career planning before and after childbearing: they are aspired to perform well and achieve more in their career initially; they plan to have children and then they adjust their career expectations. Respondent An pointed out the time loss in work due to childbearing and she was lagged far behind by her colleagues. Whether only personal considerations or gaps found in work progress after maternity leave, a narrower work path unfolds in front of both Shen and An. Such result appears to be natural and fair given that childbearing itself consumes a long period of time that used to be for women doing paid work. Other than that, however, ubiquitous structural discriminations from employers on working mothers have left no better options for young women (Zheng, 2015; Yang, 2019a; Liu, 2020). For several informants who discontinued their previous job before pregnancy, they found it rather difficult to find a new job after childbearing. On the one hand, employers' reluctance on recruiting mothers with preschool children largely decreases their employment opportunities, posing an unfriendly environment for young mothers returning back to job market. A higher threshold is therefore set for mothers who intend to enter/return to the work arena, incurring a longer suspension in their career (Yang, 2019a).

On the other hand, for women who go back to their original job position when maternity leave ends, they possibly find their superiors neglect them and consequently their original career goals

can be hardly achieved. As one informant commented, she had been a key member in the group but found herself marginalised after giving birth. Her superior no longer assigned her important tasks as before. A young mother also argued that: "No superior wants the employee to give birth. They don't complain (about certain employee on maternity leave) but I can feel it." (Female, 31, married, one daughter, administrative staff of a university, Wuxi). This form of tacit discrimination engenders the disadvantaged position of mothers in the labour force market (Budig and England, 2001; Andersson, Duvander and Hank, 2004; Correll, Benard and Paik, 2007; Yang, 2019a), and further decreases women's childbearing enthusiasm. In addition, income[26] could also be negatively affected, known as "motherhood penalty" (Budig and England, 2001). Yu and Xie (2014) claimed that in China the penalty effect is as large as a 7% decrease in working mothers' income level. More specifically, reported in a recent study, six to seven years of working time are lost if an urban woman gives birth to one child and this amounts to an income loss of ¥300,000 (£33,930). The loss rises to nearly double if this woman lives in first-tier cities like Beijing or Shanghai (Liu, 2020).

Compared to women with children, does the career of their childfree counterparts proceed without interference? This is not the case. The complementary results from focus group discussions provide evidence that regardless of women's childbearing status, nuances lie merely in the level of influence on career, as the quote from a focus group participant demonstrates:

> "The company may not point it out directly but the HR definitely takes childbearing into consideration. Two groups, married but not having a child yet, and those who have one child, are paid special attention during the recruitment… even when I was interviewed for my PhD application, my supervisor asked if I was married, having children or not, and how many kids I have. I have one and then I was asked if I considered more births."
>
> **(FG4: Zhou, female, 36, married, one son, part-time PhD, Wuxi)**

Collective agreement is given by all focus group participants on the definite and negative influences of childbearing on women's career. Zhou's narrative further reveals the influences on married women at different phases. Under current fertility policy context, potential employers care for women's childbearing decisions, especially in terms of the transition to second childbirth. In the one-child policy era, employers may only pay attention to married women with no child concerning their childbearing plans and hence maternity leave. A wider range of their women employees, however, have to be "watched" since two children are legally allowed. From the

[26] The variation of informants' individual income was little involved in data collection and this will be elaborated and reflected in section 7.4.2.

employers' perspective, the implementation of the two-child policy increases their labour cost, financial burden and strain of labour shortage in a short run (Song and Zhou, 2016). In fact, a company with a large share of female workers could possibly face a heavier punch, impelling it to recruit male employees (Song and Zhou, 2016). Data show that 13% and 19% of national civil service job posts in 2017 and 2018 respectively specified "men only", "men preferred", or "suitable for men", while none specified a preference for women in 2017 and one for "women preferred" in 2018 (HRW, 2018). Albeit that women are not absolutely excluded, some job advertisements require female applicants to be married with children (HRW, 2018). In light of this, employers are highly likely to select a female employee with the least chance to give births during employment or a male employee instead. Such job posts reflect deeply discriminatory views: that women are less capable in profession than men; that women are primary caregiver and thus unable to be fully committed to wage work; and that accommodating maternity benefits is undesirable and inconvenient for the company. This phenomenon is also noted by some focus group participants.

> "This (influence on women's work) is for sure, otherwise why do some companies prefer female employees with children? They would suspend a female employee from her duties after she gives birth."
>
> **(Focus group 1, Taizhou)**

This statement appears to be contradictory to earlier discussions on a young mother's difficulty in returning to paid work. The seemingly irreconcilable scenarios, however, shows the complexity of childbearing's influence on a Chinese young woman's career life. It poses threats and challenges in many ways and at different stages: single women, married and childless women, married women with one child, are all latently "inferior" employees as they still have chance to give birth (Yang and Sun, 2019); working mothers, in the other way round, are not capable workers any longer due to their family commitments. The promotion of two-children family nationwide has exacerbated urban women's adverse position in labour force market to a greater extent. Discriminations on these young women and barriers to their career development pervade throughout the whole life course (Li, 2016a; Yang, 2019a).

7.3.2 Dual burdens on women versus men's absence in childcare

Unlike female respondents, male respondents appeared more flexible and relaxed when talking about career paths upon fatherhood. In face of the same question of alterations in future career planning, male informants seldom mentioned the effect of family, childbearing or childrearing. Most answers to this question are simple and alike as Xin, a 37-years-old father of a 13-years-old

daughter, responds, “Basically none. Maybe I will be reluctant if I am asked to travel for business. In most scenarios I don’t feel any inconvenience.” (Male, 37, married, one daughter, civil servant, Taizhou). This has shown a distinct difference with female informants’ attitudes towards relations between career and family. Women were more aware and started to prepare for upcoming conflicts between childcare responsibility and career development, while men rarely drew a link between fatherhood and career development and hardly identified any harm in their career after being a father. What engenders men’s unconsciousness of adverse impact of childbearing on their career—their absence in childcare underlies this phenomenon. Liu’s narrative below directly discloses this issue.

> Liu: “Now my mother stays at home to take care of my son. When I have time, I will take care of him, and my wife looks after him at night.”
>
> Interviewer: “How about weekends?”
>
> Liu: “Um… there is not a fixed pattern. Well normally my wife stays with the kid.
>
> Interviewer: So you mean even if you have time at the weekend, you will stay at home rather than go out with your wife and kid?”
>
> Liu: “Indeed. Mainly my wife takes our son out.”
>
> **(Liu, male, 30, married, one son, worker of a private company, Wuxi)**

This kind of childcare pattern is not rare in other informants’ families and this appears to be a “common sense” for men to hold. Though male informants claimed their commitments to household activities, the majority admitted that they are less involved in childcare than their partners. Similarly, according to a national survey in 2018 on people’s time consumption mode (NBS, 2020), women spent a greater share of time on unpaid labour covering chores, childcare, eldercare, etc. and the first two account for the dominant part. Statistics show that women spent 228 minutes per day on unpaid labour while men spent only 92 minutes. Other data source proposes a larger discrepancy that women in China spend three times that of men on unpaid household activities (Bloomberg, 2019). Specifically, the average time spent on childcare by women and men is 65 minutes and 23 minutes (NBS, 2020), with women doubling the amount of time that men took. There is a much smaller gendered gap in paid work, however, for which men used 47 more minutes per day than women did (NBS, 2020). Taken together, in comparison to men’s average time usage, women spent relatively equal time on paid work every day and yet much longer time on unpaid work, making women more likely to be time poor (Connelly *et al.*, 2018). This divergence indicates fairly different burdens placed on women and men: women

undertake dual burdens while men only have to focus on their work. Men's marginal participation in childcare is able to explain the male informants' typical responses that their main concern on career after being a father is around income level, as perfectly evidenced by the following statement: "If I cannot earn enough money, I will do a job-hopping; but if the pay is fine, life just goes on as usual". In other words, male informants purely regard themselves as breadwinners instead of caregivers and believe their sole duty is to financially support the family. Women, on the contrary, are in face of higher expectation. As a mother of two young daughters complained,

> "Men always think it is women's duty to do housework or do the childcare. He (my ex-husband) would say, 'Aren't you her mother? Isn't this what a mother should do?' But he, as a father, would defend himself like, 'That's all I can do. I'm doing quite well already. I not only go to work but also spend some time with kids. You could ask around if there is any father like me looking after kid after work.' He just told me like that."
>
> **(Ju, female, 38, divorced, two daughters, clerk of a private company, Wuxi)**

This quote vividly presents the completely different expectations a father and a mother come across. Women will be blamed on not being a qualified mother if she does not prioritise her family, while men do not have to face the same criticism if they spare little time with children. Men should even receive compliments if he did more than their role of breadwinner required. In a sense, being a good father is much easier than being a good mother (Arendell, 2000; Guendouzi, 2006). Albeit their identities turn into a father, men rarely complete the transformation of identity by investing more time into the family and the child (Arendell, 2000; Pedersen, 2012) and they are still depicted as helpers. Some women informants made complaints on this issue as they were placed with unreasonable expectations that they cannot take at all, as noted by them: "He wants me to not only take up all childcare, but also be a 'superwoman'."

The deep-rooted mindset that childcare is a woman's natural duty (Connelly *et al.*, 2018) and the lack of institutional care support (Connelly *et al.*, 2018; Zhou, 2019; Ji *et al.*, 2020) give rise to a resurgence of traditional gender roles in recent years (Yang, 2019a; 2020b) and obstacles to the within-family redistribution of unpaid care work from women to men (Connelly *et al.*, 2018). This could reinforce the gender inequalities of intra-household labour division and of a wider range, as well as the pressure on women in post-reform China (Kan and Hertog, 2017). In light of this, work-family incompatibility is a non-existent and meaningless topic for men, in a sharp contrast to women's situation: 85% of respondents surveyed said juggling jobs with families was difficult for women they observed (China Daily, 2019). Multiple roles are required for a working mother while

a father's absence in childcare is tolerable. Coupled with adverse effects on women's career, heavy family responsibilities imposed constitute the dual burdens on Chinese women.

7.3.3 Exacerbated gender division within family—adverse impact of intergenerational support

As emphasised in section 7.2, generational support is essential and crucial for the one-child generation couple with child(ren), especially when a family has more than one child. This has turned out an efficient way to address incompatibility of work and childbearing in double-income families. Notwithstanding such being the case, the gender division in household activities or childcare appears to be exacerbated, rather than being alleviated. All the families who have two children in this study have at least one grandparent regularly helping the young couples, while the helping hand normally comes from the grandma. The following quote demonstrates grandma's part clearly.

> "Now my mother stays at home to take care of my son… and my wife looks after him at night. My wife quit her job and took a break of two years after parturition to look after the kid. Then my mom took it over and my wife and I both go to work."
>
> **(Liu, male, 30, married, one son, worker of a private company, Wuxi)**

There is a high frequency of words like "my mother came" and "my mother-in-law helped" while informants talking about their parents providing childcare. Albeit both grandpa and grandma are involved in delivering childcare and doing housework, the grandma of either side generally undertakes the main part. The difference between having a male senior and female senior at home is that female seniors assume housework more (Yu, 2014). Built upon grandma's contributions to household activities, working mothers take the remaining share when they get off duty. This is consistent with work of Ji and her colleagues (2020), suggesting a gendered intergenerational collaboration—"There is always a full-time stay-at-home grandma standing behind a full-time working mother" (Ji *et al.*, 2020: 127). In this way, housework and childcare are ironically shared among grandparents and the wife, in most cases the grandmother and the young mother, rather than a fair distribution between the young couple. The Chinese way of familial childcare is somehow a relay race of care provision between different generations of women (Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Xiao, 2014; Ji *et al.*, 2020). The adverse impact on women's employment could be mediated only when female seniors/grandma are living with the young couple (Yu and Cheng, 2020).

On the one hand, the fact that grandparents offer a hand has primarily relieved young couples of some intensive chores and saves their time for other family commitments. The path to gender equity within a family, however, seems not generated accordingly. Granted that the conflicts between the husband and wife could possibly be delayed or attenuated, the gendered division of household duties between the couple actually is perpetuated alongside. Gendered segregation in family and work field may be fortified since it is usually grandmother taking up the house chores and childcare (Xiao, 2014; Song, Wang and Qin, 2018; Ji *et al.*, 2020). This could be a vicious cycle circulating the gender inequality in family and dogmatic gender roles are consequently reshaped, reinforced and passed through generations.

On the other hand, this bilateral mechanism underlying an urban family's operation could be too fragile to sustain. A case observed by a single male informant evidenced the unsustainability due to the brittleness of such mode.

> "The director of my department was once diagnosed as appendicitis and stayed in hospital for two weeks. She had to ask her own parents to come over from Yunnan province (over 1,442 miles away from Wuxi) to help look after her two children. How troublesome it is! Her mother-in-law used to help but she had limited mobility at that time due to her recovering from a surgery."
>
> **(Male, 35, single, counsellor of a private company, Wuxi)**

This system can easily collapse if either side of woman fails, for example, the grandma falls ill. This also relies on the likelihood that a family encounters risks, moderately (e.g. the child falls ill) or immensely (e.g. the key member is put out of work). Without enough strong support from either family level or societal level, it is contentious that such a bilateral system could maintain and operate normally .

7.4 "It all derives from policies": critical reflections on the trajectory of fertility policies in urban China

By reviewing literatures and analysing data, the variations in fertility and family dynamics, from people's low fertility desire to predicaments confronted by working mothers, are closely related to social policies and are all traceable in the process of policy development in China. Retrospectively, a few critical social issues are derived from certain social policies, in spite of these policies' initial contributions. Based on the data and findings of this research, this section attempts to critically observe and review the trajectory of relevant social policies and their relationship with fertility and family complex in urban China.

7.4.1 Policy, one-child generation and values of having children

Family Planning Programme in China and the further one-child policy starting from 1979 created the unique one-child generation. This young generation grew up in a rapidly-transforming era. They have experienced the strictest birth control programme, opening-up policy and then economic reform, implementation of nine-year compulsory education, expansion in higher education and so forth. All these events have shaped their experiences and perceptions distinct from their earlier cohorts. Regarding childbearing practices, a significant change lies in the diminishing belief in large family and more children (Chen and Hu, 2012). When discussing their views on the saying that "When having one more child a family has one more worker", most focus group participants shared their disagreement on this statement.

> Hao: "I don't think he is the potential worker. I am his worker when he is little (laughter)… well at least not a 'worker' before he matures."
>
> Bo: "After he grows up… well whether he is a "worker" or not doesn't matter to me at all. He definitely leaves our home and contributes to his future family… I think this (statement) only works previously when rural areas require more children for things like farming."
>
> Ming: "True. Lifestyles nowadays are totally different."
>
> **(Focus group 2, Taizhou)**

As their discussion revealed, the longstanding preference for large families is concerned with both traditional culture and the mode of social production in the past. The dominant production of agriculture in early times requires sufficient manpower, and the distribution of resources and means of production in planned economy used to be based on the core unit of family, indicating a salient advantage of a large family. The industrialisation and urbanisation, however, have greatly altered the means of production and distribution and therefore family size is no longer among the most significant drivers. The values of having children changed, gradually and naturally.

In addition, Chinese believed that the eldercare should be assumed within the family and the younger generation have to provide for the older generation (Bauer *et al.*, 1992; Cook and Dong, 2011; Peng, 2020). This was an essential function of family in China and a key reason to have children. In contrast, the one-child generation hardly endorse this belief for having a child for such reason. For instance, in the focus group discussions, one statement was raised for participants to express their attitudes: "Only children could take care of us when we age." All participants collectively disagreed with this view. They proposed that they did not expect their children to do

this, albeit some older people like their parent-generation still share this opinion nowadays. Ming's contribution is typical:

> "Not at all. I've thought about this long since. I cannot even guarantee this (accompanying and taking care of my parents) myself. So I won't 'kidnap' my child for this. Perhaps some old people from rural regions still wish to be supported by their children, but I don't think us this generation still hold this view… well we dare not have this kind of thought (laughter)."
>
> **(FG2: Ming, female, 36, married, one daughter, teacher of a college, Taizhou)**

It is clear to confirm young people's different attitudes towards the values on having children. Except for this functional need, it becomes more of a personal and emotional demand to have children. As addressed previously (Section 6.3.1), most respondents reported "to keep company for each other" as a reason for desiring for more than one child. Conversely, informants who prefer one child or childless demanded complex considerations. In other words, this young generation have internalised the one-child norm when they grow up (Nie and Wyman, 2005) and they fail to detect the necessity of having more children. Additionally, emerging modern lifestyles have introduced diverse ways to live and entertain, producing enriched and varied life options for young people (Feng, 2018; Deng and Chen, 2020). It is likely that they are unable to obtain a sense of achievement as high as their parents did in raising a child. Moreover, overall enhanced financial capabilities have led to China's emerging middle class (Li, 2010) and they are not prompted to give birth with incentives.

7.4.2 Policy and women in China

Gender inequality has been a persistent issue worldwide. Women in China have experienced dramatic changes in life and social status with the evolving policies. As reviewed earlier, the implementation of the one-child policy in essence increases surviving young women's status. The universal improvements in young women's education level alter their perceived value on women: young women hardly believe they belong to the realm of family only, and instead they desire to fulfil their social value by having a full-time paid job (Yang, 2019a; Yang and Sun, 2019; Yang, 2020a; Zheng, 2020b). Nonetheless, the labour market fails to present a gender-equality outcome: distinct gender discrepancies are reflected in job search, income level and promotion opportunities for young men and women with the same educational background (Jin, 2006; Yang, 2020a). The introduction of two-child policy further worsens young women's situation in labour market. With the traditional gender role still in predominance, young women are impelled to bear

dual burdens without much support from the public sphere and public discourse. As Jin complained,

> "I don't really think men are the most tired ones, women are! Women now are not like how they were in the past. Women were taking care of home and that was all! However, women now hold up half the sky—we work and take care of family and child. It seems that men only need to care about their work and nothing else is their duty. It is quite common in the society."
>
> **(Jin, female, 34, married, one daughter and one son, parttime shopkeeper, Wuxi)**

As Zhou (2019: 383) elaborated, "The obstacle to second-birth transition is driven by the paradoxical gender equity context within the public sphere—a paradox that is largely by design given the state policies". That is to say, women have greatly participated into paid work while the current state policies reinforce women's roles as mothers and caregivers. This kind of contradiction will pose more challenges for second-birth transition, depriving women of opportunities to enjoy a balanced life between work and family.

Regarding women's employment, individual income-related problems are not involved in-depth in the analysis for two chief reasons. First of all, most informants are reluctant to give the figure directly while interviewed. Specific numbers were normally replaced by their perceived degree of affordability, for example, whether their total incomes were sufficient for household expenses. The second reason emerges itself in the process of data collection. Notwithstanding the common recognition of negative influences of childbearing on women's career, nearly no female informant mentioned that on their income. Their responses concentrate on promotion channels, inadaptability after returning to their job position and long-term career plan, etc. This point reflects that in China, decreased income or adverse impact on income due to childbearing may not be a constraining factor for women to have more children, in partial coincidence with a recent study illustrating that increasing income does not cause corresponding increase in fertility desire (Deng and Chen, 2020).

The significance of doing paid work appears far beyond a simple financial issue for young women. Some informants noted their own initiative to do paid work regardless of pay level, and explained it as "just not to be dumped by the society". Landy, with two pre-school age daughters, encountered a similar scenario and explained her reason to go to work.

> "My husband once questioned that my salary was unable to cover the fees of recruiting a nanny and then he proposed that I should quit my job to take care of children instead… but I insisted on working full-time. The matter is my time devoted to

> housework and childcare is not respected. He (her husband) did not recognise my contribution and value to the family at all."
>
> **(Landy, female, 32, married, two daughters, contractor staff of a university, Wuxi)**

From this perspective, we should acknowledge the diversity and complexity of childbearing's influence exerted on young women and their career: the decrease in income undeniably affects household earnings, while whether to participate in paid work outweighs the pay level for women. This fact also verifies young and well-educated women's spontaneous choice of entering labour market. On one hand, the higher education they received cannot content themselves with intrahousehold activities. On the other hand, unpaid housework caregiving work fails to be widely recognised as valuable contributions to a family and consequently, young women have to earn their say within the family by doing wage work. In light of this, the demand to alleviate work-family incompatibility is more pressing for young women in urban China nowadays.

7.4.3 Policy and fertility intentions

Since the 1970s, China has imposed the one-child norm on the public and attempted to lower the birth rate and control the population size in a tough way. This strategy succeeded under previous cultural and social contexts, as Bo argued:

> "To be honest, the habit (of having only one birth) people had for several decades could not be altered effortlessly. Many people are used to giving only one birth. Think about the time when the nation banned multiple births: they had administrative means (to control births), beyond the policy itself. How about now? They have a policy again but cannot give administrative commands (to stimulate births)."
>
> **(FG2: Bo, male, 34, married, one daughter, administrative staff of a college, Taizhou)**

The inconsistent fertility policies after 2016, nevertheless, brought people confusion. Some informants like Yin expressed their awkward feelings on the paradoxical policy amendments, notwithstanding they were aware of the challenging demographic situations in China.

> "I think our country is contradicting itself (by releasing the two-child policy). Previously we have the one-child policy. Do you remember that slogan? "It is good to have one child only, and the country will provide for you when you age." We did have cases just from my relatives that the child got disabled due to (certain harsh implementation of) family planning. It is really hard to comment on such matter… so many (bad) incidents

occurred at that time but now the nation encourages a second birth… it makes me feel absurd."

(Yin, male, 32, married, one daughter, engineer of a state-owned company, Wuxi)

The habitual behaviour of having only one child has been developed and strengthened through the process of pushing forward family planning in China. Apart from individually habitual childbearing practices, the two-child policy has revealed limited effect so far, well verified by recent fertility data. The commence year—2016 witnessed 17.86 million births, higher than that of 2015; nevertheless the next two years of 2017 and 2018 both saw declines in the number of new-borns, with the figure of 17.23 million and 15.23 million respectively (NHC, 2017; 2018; 2019). The number of newborn babies has kept falling in the year 2019 and the total births is 14.65 million (NHC, 2020). News has come out about the potential promotion of third child in a foreseeable future and it is likely that the family planning programme will be terminated. It is safe to conclude, however, that the fertility policy itself can hardly make a difference in contemporary China.

In spite of the policy effect, several studies have testified that since the 1990s the one-child policy started to have little impact on people's childbearing behaviour, instead the socioeconomic environment contributed more to fertility decline (Nie and Wyman, 2005; Hou, 2015; Whyte, Feng and Cai, 2015; Zhang, 2017). The decline in fertility intentions and fertility rate is a by-product of modernisation and urbanisation and the implementation of family planning programme accelerates its rate. We cannot rely on policies to uplift fertility rate as lessons learnt from European societies elucidate the minimal impact pro-natal policies could make. The government has to foremost accept and acknowledge this inevitable outcome of social development. The devastating impact on worldwide economy and people's everyday life produced by coronavirus outbreak in 2020 may further cause the fertility rate to plummet. In this sense, it is senseless to defy this trend but rather to maintain the current fertility rate may be more reasonable and urgent before it falls to the lowest-low level as neighbouring countries including Japan and South Korea.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter concentrated on the dynamics of how one-child generation couples with children sustain well-functioned family life and how young Chinese men and women perceive the incompatibility between family life and career development upon parenthood, revealing gendered choices and decisions with regard to childbearing. Fundamentally, intergenerational support is common and popular among these one-child generation couples. All other types of

external help such as hiring a nanny are not as welcomed as intergenerational support that is the most reliable way for childcare provision. Based on this pattern, conundrums between career and family are highly gendered according to the informants' experiences. Primarily, childbearing causes more obstacles to a woman's career path and highly impedes a woman's career development. Childbearing has become the most critical turning point of a woman's career, in an excessively adverse way. Put into the wider society, childbearing has caused adverse effects to not only the individual women, but also the whole group. Women's situation in the labour force market is worsened as they receive discriminations for both having and not having children: women without children are regarded as giving birth in the future which will affect the company's human resource cost; women with children are marginalised after returning to work. Becoming a mother, either before or after it, points to a similar result of a squeezed career path. This is mainly due to the strong caregiver expectation assigned to women while young and well-educated women opt for paid employment simultaneously. In contrast, men normally continue to work with more motivation and pursue higher pay to support his family, putting aside childcare. The neglect of men's caregiving responsibility is reflected multifacetedly at the policy level and the societal level, for example, discrepancies of lengths of paternal and maternal leave (Zhou, 2019).

Previous research has captured the role of grandparents' involvement in the couple's family life, providing help on housework and childcare (Goh, 2009; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Luo and Mao, 2014; Hilevych, 2016). However, they rarely point out the downside, aggravating gendered inequality in family, behind this common phenomenon. Grandmother on either side collaborates with the working mother at different times of the day and a familial relay race of caregiving ultimately alleviates young women's work-family conflicts (Ji *et al.*, 2020). With more caregiving work completed by the mother and the grandmother, family responsibility, and accordingly constructed definition of "good mother" is inherited (Johnston and Swanson, 2006; Pedersen, 2012; Ji *et al.*, 2020). Gender inequality is factually passed on across generations, leading to the recurrence of the traditional gender script (Chapman, 2004).

Built upon the three analyses in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, the complex relationships between fertility policy and the one-child generation, women, and fertility trend are critically reflected. The one-child policy era and a series of policies implemented in China have had impact on the one-child generation in terms of novel life experiences as well as expectations. Having a child remains an expected individual desire or social norm, while having two and more children are no longer shortlisted by the one-child generation. In possession of different values on self-wellbeing, children and childrearing, the one-child generation's progression to multiple births takes more contemplated steps. Women of this generation, as an important role played in social production and family field, have taken up multiple responsibilities with China's advancement. The

paradoxical concurrence of encouraging work participation and family commitments in the public sphere disables women's opportunity to realise personal social value and embrace family life at the same time. Finally, fertility decline is a certain and irreversible outcome of modernisation and advanced social development, and childbearing is an individual decision that has to be respected and accepted by the government. Policy targeting stimulating fertility can only be designed upon this acknowledgment.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

Using a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative and qualitative data from urban Jiangsu, this research contributed to a better understanding of the factors and mechanisms underlying fertility intentions amongst the one-child generation, before and after the recent introduction of two-child policy.

Although there is a wealth of research regarding family planning and fertility intentions in China, less is known about perceptions and practices of family and childbearing of the one-child generation who has already started their reproductive career. The changing context of population policy and increasing modernity have placed more complexity to these young people's life and experiences, which helps to shape their perceptions of family and childbearing. While the use of large datasets are popular in tracking fertility intentions, they often fail to encapsulate an in-depth understanding of young people's perceptions and experiences of family life and childbearing in urban China.

Jiangsu province presents a relatively understudied region, in terms of the one-child generation's reproductive decisions after the introduction of the two-child policy. It is an interesting case to probe as this province is one of the most affluent areas in China with a history of rigorous implementation of one-child family planning policy. A better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of younger cohorts' family life and childbearing can offer meaningful insights for policy and programme development, especially as China, despite introducing a second-child family planning policy, struggles to revive fertility rates for sustaining population stability and socioeconomic development. This research first aimed to have an overview of the one-child generation's fertility intentions in Jiangsu province when the one-child policy was still in place. This retrospective analysis served as a background and "reference group" for further exploration into potential variations in perceptions and experiences after policy amendments. The subsequent analysis presented in this thesis sought to shed light on the one-child generation's reproductive desires and plans and certain decisive factors behind their desire, in the hope that it may highlight the potential impact of the two-child policy, and the practical obstacles or barriers to couple opting for a second birth. The final analysis attempted to uncover the intertwined relations of family, gender and work, and how they shaped the one-child generation's childbearing experience. It presents a particular focus on intergenerational support and gendered differences in disentangling the difficulties, followed by critical reflections on the relationship of fertility policy and the one-child generation, women and fertility trend.

This concluding chapter first seeks to present a summative overview of the main findings in relation to the original research objectives and research questions, followed by a critical discussion of the main findings and policy implications (Section 8.2). The contributions and limitations of the study are outlined in Section 8.3 and 8.4 respectively, and the recommendations for further research are suggested in Section 8.5.

8.1 Summary of empirical findings

This thesis addressed the following three research objectives and aimed to contribute to understanding of the perceptions and practices of family and childbearing among the one-child generation in urban Jiangsu, as China experiences a significant shift towards pronatalist population strategies.

Prior to the introduction of the two-child policy

Research objective 1: To examine the fertility intentions of the one-child generation prior to the introduction of the two-child policy.

Key findings

- The one-child generations are more in favour of the one-child family than earlier cohorts while a certain gap emerges in the intentions between the 1980s and 1990s cohorts. In general, 1990s cohorts are more likely to share one-child family ideal and intention than 1980s cohort.
- Residential place, family income and marital status explain more on both ideal family size and fertility intentions of the one-child generation while level of education have less influence on individual fertility intentions.

Post universal two-child policy (2016)

Research objective 2: To investigate the variations in fertility intentions of the one-child generation with the introduction of the two-child policy (2016) and the mechanisms underlying their reproductive choices.

Key findings

- Similar to that in one-child policy era, ideal family size for the one-child generation remains much unchanged after the introduction of two-child policy. The majority of female informants claim to complete childbearing by the age of 40 while male informants

have no age concerns. The composition of one boy and one girl is ideally desired, with an observed preference over one boy for some people.

- People working in state institutes and government sectors are given a choice to consider a second birth compared to the higher restrictions they used to face during the one-child policy era. However, the two-child policy has overall played a very limited role so far in increasing most young people's fertility decisions as minimal variation was observed in reported fertility intentions. The amended policy fails to effectively respond to young people's expectations, as they confront practical difficulties in childbearing and childrearing.
- Household economic status and the anticipated heavy load of childcare have emerged as the top concerns hindering the progression to the second birth. High costs to children's education along with high demand for childcare imposed on women are significant constraints that deter the one-child generation couples from having a second birth.

Research objective 3: To explore the family pattern of one-child generation couples, and interactions of gender, childbearing and wage work under the two-child policy context.

Key findings

- The most popular pattern of a family with young child(ren) in urban Jiangsu is that grandparents offering housework/childcare assistance. With most one-child generation couples both employed, their family could function normally only when grandparents act as the main source of support.
- Women and men have significantly different perceptions and experiences in balancing work and family commitments. Women are subject to discriminations in labour market due to their (potential) motherhood identity, regardless of which life stage they are at. They normally make more sacrifices for the family by giving up on opportunities such as career progressions, while men hardly encounter difficulties in securing work and family at the same time. Though young women participate in paid work as men do, women are inflicted on dual burdens of work and caregiving. Men, however, have been found constantly absent from childcare and this gendered gap has been reinforced due to the fact that household responsibilities are mainly shared between the grandparent (grandmother) and the young wife.

8.2 Discussion and policy implications

Following the conceptual framework, the thesis argues that the first birth for Chinese women is an unplanned yet highly possible behaviour, while the second birth is a planned and cautious decision. This corresponds to the principle of Theory of Planned Behaviour as well: childbearing behaviour is reasoned action. Transition from one birth to two births is closely linked to the interplay of three elements as the conceptual framework demonstrates. Policy environment is the threshold set in China and guides people's reproductive behaviour. The findings indicated that the family planning policy accelerated the prevalence of small-family ideal and Chinese people have internalised it, and now the two-child policy attempts to reverse the one-child norm established for the last three decades. Individuals also have their own attitudes towards having the second child. For the one-child generation, they share different perceptions on the values of having children, compared to their parent generation. With the modernised and diversified life options they could have, young people could develop very divergent attitudes toward childbearing. Apart from the policy context and individual perceptions, the composite of perceived obstacles to a second birth, gender inequality and intergenerational support forms the final step of consideration. Verified by the findings, these three factors influence each other and their interplay determines individual's/couple's capability against external risks once they have two children. Finally, all the elements taken together, the intention to have or not have a second child is developed. This is a complex process as the findings indicate. The subsections below will provide an overall discussion on the main empirical findings.

8.2.1 Fertility intentions of the one-child generation in urban Jiangsu

A consistency in young people's fertility intentions over time has been highlighted, given that their childbearing beliefs sustains stably and nearly remain unchanged in spite of policy shifts. Though the results are from different kinds of data, we can still draw a comparison between them to some extent and it conveys a certain trend of fertility intentions of young people. In comparison to earlier studies (e.g. Feng and Zhang, 2002; Yao, Wu and Li, 2010; Wu, 2014), it can be seen that the ideal family size has been convergent throughout the family planning programme: family of two children is the most preferred pattern and the average ideal number of children is between one and two. Such consistency and convergence in quantity may well be associated with sex preference at birth as "one son and one daughter" maintains its dominance in Chinese people's childbearing culture (Chen and Hu, 2012; Song and Tao, 2012). Sex preference at birth of young people in Jiangsu also follows the common choice as most Chinese people do.

The composition of a son and a daughter is vastly favoured yet the analysis still implies a stronger preference of sons based on respondents' expectations of their second child's birth. This observation aligns with the longstanding son preference in China and other East Asian countries (Tilt, Li and Schmitt, 2019). Although the preference over two daughters was found occasionally in the present analysis as well, it is not a dominant feature, and therefore it is impossible to conclude that the son-preference has been reversed even after the introduction of two-child policy. Son-preference is deeply rooted in oriental culture, regardless of the rapid development of the society. Further to this preference, it could be reflected in fertility behaviour as Tan (2005) stated that the modernisation of fertility notions may lead to urban young people emotionally preferring a certain sex of their child, instead of a stiff resolution. Preference over daughters may be more attributed to the emotional side, suggesting little likelihood of realising this preference (Tan, 2005; Song and Tao, 2012). As Song and Tao (2012) concluded, young people with "dual preferences of number and sex" for their fertility intentions are more likely to have two children. This could be partly verified in the present analysis as some of the respondents explicitly stated their desire for a second child to have the opposite sex to the first child. In light of this, the implicitly persistent son-preference may result in more births of selective to the study respondents.

Extended to a wider society, Jiangsu's young people's fertility intentions supported the results from other cities and areas (e.g. Bao, 2017; Feng, 2017; Liu, 2017). For example, as Bao (2017) reported, young people in Shanghai are less likely to endorse more than two children. Despite the level of affluence and similar locations Shanghai and Jiangsu share, this trend of family ideal should not be favoured by young people living in these two areas only.

Taken together with evidence from studies in other places, young people in urban China may well acknowledge a two-child family ideal at most. This is not a surprising result as low fertility intention is widespread in East Asia and this trend is irreversible to a large extent. As the present results show, the reason for desiring two and more children is as simple as each other's company while opting for one child or childless involves various considerations. In other words, having more children is not intrinsically appealing to young people. Unlike ideal family size, intended timing of childbearing is less confirmable. This is explainable since a woman's reproductive career usually does not end before 49 years old; as the result reveals nevertheless, fewer young women are willing to give birth after 40 years old. It is in accordance with Li's work (2014) of people's reluctant attitudes towards more fertility plans and it is possible that the fertility plan will never be realised as they age.

8.2.2 Perceived obstacles, gender relations and intergenerational support

Other than young people's attitudes towards having children, perceived obstacles, gender inequality and intergenerational support compositely impact on childbearing decisions. The findings encapsulate that having one child is natural and normal while transition to two children takes young people more steps to think in advance. Regarding the barriers to the second birth, two mainstream barriers have come to light, household economic status and anticipated heavy workload for childcare. The findings of the present study is similar to results reported in previous studies. Financial factors and allocation of time and energy for childcare have remained the highest priority in the consideration of a second birth (Bao, 2017; Liu, 2017; Zhou, 2019; Ji *et al.*, 2020; Tian, Lu and Zhang, 2020). That is to say, the practicality of having more than one child is still questionable in most young people's mind. Financial concern may be a worldwide issue, due to high costs in raising a child, while it is common that parents are relatively young when they have their first child. Along with the prevailing "expensive, modern child raising model" (Ji *et al.*, 2020: 114), the cost of childrearing could be doubled and escalate over years. It is rare that a household's total income could increase at the same rate. Consequently, transition to second childbearing is a hard decision to make. Caregiving, on the other hand, is posing tremendous challenges to working mothers (Bao, 2017; Ji *et al.*, 2017; Yang, 2018a; Zhou, 2019; Ji *et al.*, 2020; Tian, Lu and Zhang, 2020). As the results show, the majority of young women in urban Jiangsu participate in paid work, signalling the difficulty of compatibility in work-family duty.

A picture of intertwined puzzles of career-family compatibility has been displayed from the findings, revealing gendered perceptions and decisions in terms of this significant life course event of childbearing. It is acknowledged that childbearing brings more obstacles to a woman's career path and highly impedes a woman's long-term career development. Women rarely had the opportunity or choice of pursuing their original career plan and to switch their job could be depressing during parenthood. In contrast, men normally continue to work with more motivation and pursue higher pay to support their families. This finding is consistent with previous studies on career and gender in China and other societies (Zuo and Bian, 2001; Zuo, 2003; Miller, 2014) that husbands are found to be more devoted to work regardless of the existence of children. This also implies that cohorts and nationalities do not matter in this issue. The one-child generation in China are in the same position as their earlier counterparts used to be. Echoing the terms of "motherhood penalty" and "fatherhood premium" (Budig and England, 2001; Glauber, 2008; Killewald and Gough, 2013; Mu and Xie, 2016), gendered differences in accumulation of marketable human capital and in a choice of demanding jobs signal to the labour market that mothers tend to be less productive employees than either fathers or women with no childrearing responsibilities. Employers are possibly (latently) discriminating against mothers, and this further

decreases the women's financial capability (Budig and England, 2001; Budig, 2014). This could be devastating to the already gender segregation in the labour market. Furthermore, the exclusive characteristic of fertility that should be a privilege granted to women in terms of species reproduction has now turned out a complete disadvantage in modern society, as industrialisation and market economy require an ideally "robotic" worker that never stops working. The yet high likelihood of marriage and childbearing in current China makes women and men finally fathers and mothers, thus single females have been unconsciously imposed on "motherhood tax" in advance (Yang and Sun, 2019). In this sense, "gender tax" included prepaid potential "motherhood tax".

It is unlikely to evade intergenerational relations when it comes to childbearing in urban China. The intergenerational support as a necessity is highly valued and accepted in contemporary families across China, especially by the one-child generation. This is consistent with previous research on grandparent's great involvement in childcare for their grandchildren (Silverstein, Cong and Li, 2007; Goh, 2009; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Mu and Xie, 2016). Although many young families in urban China are predominantly nuclear, they are not in that form permanently as grandparents can be easily involved and included in the young couple's family life when the grandchild is born. This social norm may be widely acknowledged for a longer period and this tendency of living with grandparents for at least several years will be a common lifestyle for the one-child generation with children. The dynamics of such family pattern have entailed a diversity of social phenomena that requires further investigation, including migration, elderly care, different parenting styles and intergenerational reciprocity.

Furthermore, with regard to gender divisions in the family, this research points out a rarely discussed effect of intergenerational support: enlarging the gender inequality in the long run. With the convenience brought by grandparents, their help in fact deepens the gendered gap in sharing the household responsibilities in that grandmother is the main party involved all the time (Ji *et al.*, 2020). The composition of a grandmother and a wife appears efficient yet unstainable system for a family to operate well, and this will further aggravate gendered divisions in families via passing the norm across generations. It is hard to predict whether this will extend to the public sphere as the exacerbated gendered division places dual pressures on young women in China. In this sense, further to Zhou's discussion on insufficient gender equity in labour market (2019), it is more urgent to enhance gender equity in China's public sphere to create a more women-friendly family environment. This may be the best alternative to boosting fertility in the long run as it offers women a sense of security with their choices of either work or family.

8.2.3 Influences and effectiveness of population and family policy

Findings from the analysis highlighted that the two-child policy has failed to exert a visible and positive influence in general on changing the one-child generation's fertility intentions. This result validates Zeng and Hesketh's argument (2016) on the suspicious and limited impact the policy could have. On the one hand, population and family policy has been found less influential on changing people's childbearing desires. As reported in previous studies, unlike the common perception of the causal relationship between the one-child policy and low fertility in China, low fertility is more attributed to socioeconomic development rather than a result of fertility policy (e.g. Nie and Wyman, 2005; Hou, 2015; Whyte, Feng and Cai, 2015; Zhang, 2017). In other words, influences of population policy may be insignificant compared to socioeconomic advancements. The consistency of fertility intentions of the one-child generation in Jiangsu validates this argument as young people's fertility intentions remain the same regardless of policy shifts. It is the social and economic transitions that internalise their decreasing childbearing desire, echoing findings from multiple societies. It could be inferred that population policy would exert a decreasing influence on young people's fertility decision-making process.

On the other hand, compared to family policies implemented by other European countries such as Germany and Switzerland, the two-child policy is far more than insufficient. Experience and results of pronatal policies adopted in industrialised countries (e.g. Gauthier and Hatzius, 1997; Sleebos, 2003; Grant *et al.*, 2004; Kohler, Billari and Ortega, 2006; Lee, 2009b; Luci and Thevenon, 2011; Billingsley and Ferrarini, 2014) proved that boosting fertility in contemporary society is rather difficult and generous measures they used are not able to continuously lift fertility rates in a large scale. Looking back on China's case, some measures were provided such as prolonged maternity leave, nevertheless it is inadequate to compensate for the possible risks imposed on individual wellbeing. The supporting measures have been gradually announced and taken, whereas the level of implementation is questionable (Yang, 2019b). The only visible and enforced policy in Jiangsu is the 30 more days of maternity leave added on the regular leave, which has been heavily criticised by women. Prolonged maternity leave alone cannot relieve the burdens of young women and ironically the widened gap in parental leave put female employees at a greater disadvantaged position in labour market (Zhou, 2019).

From another perspective, due to the absence of follow-up supporting measures, it is hard to say that the two-child policy will ever increase fertility rate other than simply depicting a two-children family picture for the public. This may be attributed to previous wrong perceptions on suppressed fertility needs, which is true for early cohorts who were born in the 1960s and 1970s. Released fertility was observed once after the new policy was enacted and the data of new-borns in 2016

and 2017 have identified a certain increase in births. However, the temporary fertility increase is not sustainable, as can be noted from the decreasing trends in births in 2019 (He, 2020). Discussions on the third-child relaxation have been in the air recently, signalling the adverse implications of exceptional low-fertility level in China (Ren, Xiong and Zhou, 2020). Certain argument was proposed that the fertility policy accounted for the persistent low fertility, and thus release three births would be a better alternative than two-child policy. The habitual small family, nevertheless, has been a common sense for the one-child generation couples—the dominant group who are currently in their reproductive ages. Furthermore, the society is not well prepared for accommodating the needs of families with three children, as both this thesis and other studies show that the two-child families encounter a myriad of practical difficulties that are not yet addressed by social and public institutions. The essence of stimulating fertility is to create a fertility-friendly environment, rather than merely relying on the number of children to be regulated. In light of this, it may be too hasty to jump into policy amendment again without appropriate and realistic "pillars of support" in place.

8.2.4 Policy implications

As discussed and reflected earlier, fertility issue for China in the future is challenging and low fertility trap is hardly to be overcome based on numerous cases. Policy implications could be discussed from two perspectives: fertility and family policy, wider public and societal implications. In terms of fertility and family policy, the findings implied the need for an assortment of supporting policies, including provision of nurseries for children younger than three years old and cash benefits to relieve people's financial burdens, in response to the direct barriers reported. In the first place, relieving financial burdens is urgent. Incentives alone cannot be appealing to the vast one-child generation as they are rational enough to foresee the potential high costs of childrearing. Tangible benefits in childrearing or decrease in childrearing cost should be provided throughout a child's upbringing, including reducing the cost from pre-parturition to post-parturition, controlling education fees and providing affordable and sufficient schooling choices. In the second place, as learnt from other countries' experience, compatibility of family-work is mostly likely to increase fertility as this is most treasured by young and educated women in cities. Without actions guaranteeing women's rights and flexibility, any fertility policy amendment is unlikely to yield the expected results.

With regard to employment, it is better to guarantee women's equal right to men's in workplace, from job hunting to promotion channels, leaving employers less space to practice gendered discrimination. Moreover, incorporating various working choices for women is another option. In this way, women could either select part-time for more time on family or undertake more work

commitments if they prefer. To alleviate family commitments, one solution is to increase the service of trustworthy and affordable childcare provision, which physically lessens childcare pressure.

This may suggest, however, reinforcing the caregiving role of women and possibly intensifying the female disadvantaged conundrum in the labour market (Yang, 2020b). A better recommendation is to take into account both parties of a couple and other family members related in sharing family commitments, instead of targeting women only in the family policy. The lengthy maternal leave and the very limited paternal leave, for example, imply the gendered stereotype at the policy level (Zhou, 2019). Attempts to remove childcare responsibilities from women alone have to be made, not only in the family domain but also in the public discourse. Further to family-friendly policy, implications could be extended to social environment and policies in a wider sense. Yang and He (2014: 39) identify the outlook of fertility behaviour with the emergence of reproductive technologies as:

> "Developments of contemporary reproductive technologies have brought two breakthroughs: the first is the invention of contraception technologies that separates reproduction from sexual behaviour … The second is the invention of artificial insemination and assisted reproductive technology (ART) that separates reproduction from sex life. Single women could conceive and give birth by ART. This further separates reproduction from marriage and family."

Reproductive technologies facilitate realising fertility demands of a great number of people. Fertility policies should play their role in a similar way that provides favourable conditions for people who desire babies, rather than treat all people indiscriminately. The government should provide people who hope for marriage and fertility with security, while offering possibilities and convenience to those who desire children without getting married. Certain medical support should be available for older pregnant women and infertile couples. Concurrently, individuals' choices have to be respected by the society and the government if they choose to be childless. Reproduction is a personal decision after all and building up a friendly environment for all ultimately leads to a diversified society that accommodates various needs.

8.3 Contributions to existing literature and practice

The thesis offers a number of important contributions to the literature, mainly to the fertility intention studies, fertility policy studies and gender relations literature.

First of all, the empirical findings in this study add knowledge to young people's fertility intentions in China. Previous studies have mainly focused on people's fertility intentions under single context. Additionally, most studies use quantitative data to generally investigate the public's fertility beliefs. This thesis, however, attempted to place young people under two different policy contexts to identify potential changes in their childbearing beliefs. Comparisons are made to understand the trajectories of the general fertility intentions of young people. More importantly, the thesis adopted qualitative strategy in researching the one-child generation's fertility desires, which helps to fully explain their choices and decisions.

Another contribution of this work has been to generate evidence to confirm the minimal influence of the two-child policy on the majority one-child generation, apart from a wider choice pool generated for young people working in state institutes and government sectors. As it is currently impossible to fully evaluate the policy effectiveness, empirical results from qualitative data indicate young people's concerns and complaints on inadequate institutional support. Their attitudes towards the two-child policy directly reflect their potential childbearing behaviour and hence the level of effectiveness of this policy. From this perspective, it provides evidence and references to policy evaluation in the long run. These findings could inform future data collection aimed at understanding or evaluating fertility intentions and behaviours.

This thesis also has some important implications for gender relations in family and work. The findings regarding the gendered experiences of work-family conflicts suggest the rigid stance of traditional gender specialisation in both family sphere and public sphere. This research further expands knowledge on the incompatibility of motherhood and employment under fast-developing modernisation and urbanisation process in China. The layer of intergenerational support added in gendered discussions extends the gender research in China's special setting and identifies the indispensable role of intergenerational exchange in urban China, irrespective of the seemingly receding family ties. It would be unreasonable to strip the intergenerational influence on gender relations and its transmission across generations.

8.4 Strengths and limitations of the study

The thesis offered a relatively comprehensive exploration of the one-child generation's fertility intentions and perceived family life with children in Jiangsu province under different policy contexts. The first major strength of this study is the integration of quantitative and qualitative inquiry together to draw possible links and comparisons, which greatly employ advantages and evade disadvantages of both strategies. Secondly, the research investigated young people's childbearing and family beliefs from different time points, generating a rich and multi-faceted

analysis. Other than mainstream relevant research in China, this research attempts to include male informants in qualitative analysis for inserting a more clear-cut gendered lens.

There are two main limitations during the empirical investigation of the research. The first limitation arose from the mixed method design. Although this approach is useful and applicable to the research questions, it would be better if quantitative data of young people's fertility intentions after the introduction of the two-child policy in Jiangsu is available for a comprehensive population level evaluation. This may help to generate a full picture of childbearing desires of the general public, reinforcing the observations from qualitative analysis. In addition, the availability of population data would have helped us to understand the changes in fertility intentions pre- and post-introduction of the second child family planning policy. However, the inherent limitations of using population survey data such as reporting biases could not be overruled in the present study as well.

The second limitation of this research concerns the sample of qualitative data. The research has investigated a number of informants but due to similar education backgrounds caused by snowball sampling, it is difficult to generalise the results to a wider group of the one-child generation. The results are more relevant to well-educated young people, which may not be applicable to less educated people. With its unique features, the selection of Jiangsu province is likely to share different findings with other parts of China, notwithstanding its implications for the future state of China's fertility agenda.

8.5 Recommendations for future research

This thesis shed light on some certain areas of fertility intentions of young people and future research is demanded to extend the current scope. First of all, it is necessary to build up a longitudinal dataset on childbearing desires and family life for residents in Jiangsu, especially those who were born in the 1980s and the 1990s. This helps to track the changes in young people's fertility intentions and the realisation of intended fertility. Moreover, this could help to investigate the fertility throughout their whole reproductive career. Findings of previous research and this thesis could only disentangle certain issues underlying fertility intentions, as there may be other unobserved individual and policy factors that may influence reproductive intentions and attitudes.

Secondly, the qualitative findings offer interesting observations regarding male involvement in fertility intentions. This calls for further research on men's perceptions and attitudes toward childbearing, although having a child is a couple decision in most cases. The husband's influence

on the couple's childbearing decision is important to understand to properly disentangle the complex factors underlying fertility intentions and childbearing.

Thirdly, as revealed in the analysis, intergenerational exchange, including parent support for their grandchildren's caregiving, financial exchange and intergenerational reciprocity, presents a different dimension to the problem. As the core unit in a society, family always plays a critical role in China and throughout the history. Modernisation and urbanisation have gradually redefined the elements, functions and roles of a family, and this requires in-depth and constant research on its evolution in contemporary China.

Finally, it would be ideal to understand fertility intentions and attitudes of the emerging living-apart young couples in urban China. In the qualitative data, one female informant lives in Wuxi while her husband works in Shanghai. They live apart on weekdays and could only reunite at weekends. It is not rare in the wealthy areas such as Beijing and Shanghai that men work in these two cities and their spouses work and live in neighbouring towns to save living budget. This poses new questions to their family and their life with children, which is worthy of further research.

Appendix A Semi-structured interview

A.1 Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet (Interview)

Study Title: From One-child to Two-child in China ----The One-child Generation's Choice?

Researcher: Ms Shibei Ni

ERGO number: 31980

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a postgraduate researcher in Sociology and Social policy at the University of Southampton. This research is part of my PhD programme, focusing on the one-child generation's response to and views on the new fertility policy. Based on a background analysis, this part will concentrate on the young individual's fertility intentions and specific factors of career aspirations and social interactions.

Why have I been asked to participate?

The participants in this research are from the one-child generation in Jiangsu, China, literally the young adults who were born after 1980. Meanwhile, the participants have to be above the legally marriageable age in 2016. Therefore, the female participants should be born between 1980 and 1996, and the male participants should be born between 1980a and 1994.

You have been chosen because you are located in the area of my research as well as qualified for all the criteria. Your current status is very typical for this research and I wish to benefit from your experience.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, I will invite you to participate in the interview and confirm the time slot and venue at your convenience. The interview is expected to take about 1 hour and a half. The interview content includes demographic information of yourself, your fertility intentions and your knowledge on fertility policy, the relationship between childbearing and your career aspirations, and your experience of social interaction on fertility issues. The interview will be audio-recorded, only for the purpose of transcript and data analysis. All the information you provide will be anonymous and confidential.

The interview will take place once with no follow-ups. There will be focus group discussions at the next stage. If you are interested I will get in touch with you. .

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There will be no material benefit to you, other than you could have an opportunity to talk about your feelings and experiences with a postgraduate researcher. However, your help and participation will contribute to the research on fertility policies, as well as the population strategy for the next decade.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no physical risks, or any other type of risks involved. The time and venue for the interview is based on your preference. You also have the right to refuse any questions, to suspend or withdraw from the interview without penalty.

There is a low possibility that some questions will cause you distress but if you feel in that way during the interview, you can refuse certain question or withdraw at any time up to four weeks after the interview.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes, your participation will be confidential. All the information you provided will be securely kept in a password-protected computer and a locked storage device will could only be accessible to

myself and my academic supervisors if necessary. All the personal details will be anonymous and confidential. Only basic demographic data will be collected in the interview and these will only be used for summarising the participants' characteristics. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants in analysing and writing up, as well as in any possible publications. The research is under the approval of the Ethics Committee of the University of Southampton, UK and the data is in compliance with the Data Protection Act/University policy.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You are very welcome to take part. If you are interested, you could contact me through the contact information below: Ms Shibei Ni (Researcher), +8618206176572; OR Shibei.Ni@soton.ac.uk.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to suspend or withdraw from the interview at any point. All recordings will be destroyed if you decided to withdraw from the interview. After the interview, you can also change your mind and withdraw your interview data up to four weeks after the interview. If you change your mind, you could let me know by email with no penalty or other negative effects for you and I will destroy your recordings.

What will happen to the results of the research?

With your kind help, this research will be written up for my PhD thesis and will be possibly published later on. You are able to receive a summary of the results if you wish. You can contact me by emailing Shibei.Ni@soton.ac.uk. No research data will be available for future research projects.

Where can I get more information?

If you have further questions concerning the research or the participant information, please contact:

Ms Shibei Ni (Researcher):

+8618206176572; Shibei.Ni@soton.ac.uk

Dr Nana Zhang (First supervisor)

Nana.Zhang@soton.ac.uk

What happens if something goes wrong?

If something goes wrong or you have any concerns or complaints, you may contact the following staff who is completely independent of the study:

Manager of Research Integrity and Governance

+44 (0)23 8059 5058; rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Thank you.

A.2 Consent form

CONSENT FORM (Interview)

Study title: From One-Child to Two Child in China----The One-child Generation's Choice?

Researcher name: Shibei Ni

ERGO number: 31980

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (Participant Information Sheet (1)_23/01/2018) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I have understood that the study will not disclose my personal information or share my contact details with any other parties or institutions.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time up to four weeks for any reason without my rights being affected.	
I understand that my interview will be audio recorded.	

I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that my name will not be used.	
Data Protection *I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of ethically approved research studies.*	

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant…….

Date…….. ……..

A.3 Semi-structured interview guide

From One-child to Two-child in China----The One-child Generation's Choice?

Interview length: approximately 90 minutes

Opening	Thank you for being willing to take part in the interview. My name is Shibei Ni and the interview is part of my PhD research named *From One-child to Two-child---- The One-child Generation's Choice?* I would like to ask you some questions about your views and opinion of recent changes in family planning policy in China, how you relate to this in your community such as relatives, friends and other members of the society. The interview will be recorded but your personal information and data will be kept strictly confidential. If you wish anonymity, no records of the interview will be kept with your name on them.						
	• Participant information sheet • Consent form						
Demographic information	Name	DOB	Household registration	Place of living	Occupation	Marital status	Number of children
Topics	Question				Probe		
Fertility intention and the fertility policy	1.1 Have you ever become pregnant? (F)/Do you have any children now? (M)				*If yes, how many times? How many of those ended up as live births? How many children do you have now, how old are they?*		
	1.2 How many children do you plan to have? Why?				Phrasing could be a bit different according to the individual participant's marital status and number of children.		
	2. Does your partner have the same thought?						
	3. Have you ever talked over that?				If you have different opinions, who makes the decision?		
	4. Do you have siblings?				If yes, how many do you have? What is their age and gender?		
	5. How do you feel having siblings?				If you have children, do you want them to have siblings?		
	6. How much do you know about current fertility policy?				If yes, let them say the time of the new two-child policy and what it is.		
	7. Do you think the new two-child policy influences your decision on childbearing?				If yes, how? Is it more likely for you to have a second child?		
	8. Does the new policy affect your life?				If yes, how?		
	9. Could you tell me the most important factors that influence your decision to have or not to have a second child?				Why is that one?		
The influence of childbearing on career	10. Do you think having children influences your work?				If yes, in which way and how big is the influence?		
	11. Is it possible for you to quit your job for your child(ren)?						

	12. How about your partner's view (on giving up work for children)?	This question is for both the partner's view on themselves and their spouses' work choice.
	13. Do you have any career plans later on?	With and without children.
	14.1 Do you know of anyone (friends/relatives) who had difficulties combining work and family?	
	14.2 Generally, how does childbearing influence females' career aspirations?	If they give mostly negative answers, I will ask one more question: Isn't there any good effect?
Social interactions on childbearing	15. Is there anyone around you that have had children/the second child?	The phrasing is based on the number of children that the participant has.
	16. Have they ever talked about that with you (including the decision-making before pregnancy, their life during pregnancy, their feeling, etc.)?	If they talk more about positive feelings of the story, I would ask: So they seem happier with their children. Does it arouse your interest in having a child? Why?
	17. Have your family, especially the elders, talked over childbearing issues with you?	If yes, how did they say? What was your response?
	18. Are you willing to discuss these issues with your family? Why?	
	19. How much influence will their opinions produce on your childbearing decision-making?	
Closing	• Well, it has been a pleasure to talk to you. I appreciate the time you took for the interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for this topic? • Do you have any comments about what we have discussed or about the research as a whole? • I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright to have another interview (or in other forms) if I have more questions? I will send you a summary of the research findings if you wish. Thank you very much.	

Notes:

1. Questions with underscore are not applicable to those who are single (opposite to married) and not in a relationship at the time of interview. Questions in italics will be asked in different ways according to the gender of participants.

2. Questions can be used not in order for better consistency.

3. The interview would be conducted in Chinese and the interviewer would probe more or different questions if appropriate.

Appendix B Focus group discussions

B.1 Participation information sheet

Participant Information Sheet (Focus group)

Study Title: From One-child to Two-child in China ----The One-child Generation's Choice?

Researcher: Ms Shibei Ni

ERGO number: 31980

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a postgraduate researcher in Sociology and Social policy at the University of Southampton. This research is part of my PhD programme, focusing on the one-child generation's response to and views on the new fertility policy. Based on a background analysis, this part will concentrate on the young individual's fertility intentions and specific factors of career aspirations and social interactions.

Why have I been asked to participate?

The participants in this research are from the one-child generation in Jiangsu, China, literally the young adults who were born after 1980. Meanwhile, the participants have to be above the legally marriageable age in 2016. Therefore, the female participants should be born between 1980 and 1996, and the male participants should be born between 1980 and 1994.

You have been chosen because you are located in the area of my research as well as qualified for all the criteria. Your current status is very typical for this research and I wish to benefit from your experience. After your participation in the interviews, you are invited to a focus group discussion.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, I will invite you to participate in the focus group discussion and note down your availability and venues of your preference. I will try my best to confirm a time slot and place that is convenient for all group participants. The focus group discussion is expected to take about 1 hour and a half. The discussion topic includes your knowledge on fertility policy, the relationship between childbearing and your career aspirations, and your experience of social interaction on fertility issues. The discussion will be audio-recorded, only for the purpose of transcript and data analysis. All the information you provide will be anonymous and confidential.

The focus group discussion will take place once with no follow-ups.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There will be no material benefit to you, other than you could have an opportunity to talk about your feelings and experiences within a group. However, your help and participation will contribute to the research on fertility policies, as well as the population strategy for the next decade.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no physical risks, or any other type of risks involved. You also have the right to refuse any questions or withdraw without penalty. Anonymity cannot be guaranteed within group member. If you feel uncomfortable about this, you can withdraw freely at any time up to four weeks after the focus group.

There is a low possibility that some questions will cause you distress but if you feel in that way during the focus group, you can refuse certain question or withdraw at any time up to four weeks after the focus group.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes, your participation will be confidential. All the information you provided will be securely kept in a password-protected computer and a locked storage device will could only be accessible to myself and my academic supervisors if necessary. All the personal details will be anonymous and confidential. Only basic demographic data will be collected in the interview and these will only be

used for summarising the participants' characteristics. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants in analysing and writing up, as well as in any possible publications. The research is under the approval of the Ethics Committee of the University of Southampton, UK and the data is in compliance with the Data Protection Act/University policy.

However, anonymity cannot be guaranteed within the group but all participants in the group will be required to adhere to a confidentiality protocol.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You are very welcome to take part. If you are interested, you could contact me through the contact information below: Ms Shibei Ni (Researcher), +8618206176572; OR Shibei.Ni@soton.ac.uk.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. If you change your mind, you could let me know by email with no penalty or other negative effects for you. All recordings of your part will be destroyed if you decided to withdraw from the focus group. After the focus group discussion, you can also change your mind and withdraw your discourse data up to four weeks after the focus group.

What will happen to the results of the research?

With your kind help, this research will be written up for my PhD thesis and will be possibly published later on. You are able to receive a summary of the results if you wish. You can contact me by emailing Shibei.Ni@soton.ac.uk. No research data will be available for future research projects.

Where can I get more information?

If you have further questions concerning the research or the participant information, please contact:

Ms Shibei Ni (Researcher):

+8618206176572; Shibei.Ni@soton.ac.uk

Dr Nana Zhang (First supervisor)

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Manager of Research Integrity and Governance

+44 (0)23 8059 5058; rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk

Thank you.

B.2 Consent form

CONSENT FORM (Focus group)

Study title: From One-Child to Two Child in China----The One-child Generation's Choice?

Researcher name: Shibei Ni

ERGO number: 31980

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (Participant Information Sheet (2)_23/01/2018) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I have understood that the study will not disclose my personal information or share my contact details with any other parties or institutions and my name will not be associated with anything I say in the focus group.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time up to four weeks for any reason without my rights being affected.	

I understand that the focus group discussion will be audio recorded.	
I understand that anonymity within the group cannot be guaranteed and I will be asked to adhere to a confidentiality protocol for others' confidentiality.	
Data Protection *I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of ethically approved research studies.*	

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant…….

Date……. …….

B.3 Focus group discussions guide

From One-child to Two-child in China----The One-child Generation's Choice?

Consent Process

Consent forms for focus group participants are completed in advance by all those seeking to participate.

Facilitator's welcome, introduction and instructions to participants

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate as your point of view is important. I realize you are busy and I appreciate your time.

Introduction: introduce myself.

This focus group discussion is designed to share your current thoughts on the change of family planning policy, which involves the influence on females' career and social interactions. The focus group discussion will take no more than two hours. May I tape the discussion to facilitate its recollection (If yes, switch on the recorder)? Help yourself to refreshments.

Anonymity: The tapes will be kept safely in a locked facility until they are transcribed word for word, then they will be destroyed. The transcribed notes of the focus group will contain no information that would allow individual subjects to be linked to specific statements. You should try to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. I and the other focus group participants would appreciate it if you would refrain from discussing the comments of other group members outside the focus group. If there are any questions or discussions that you do not wish to answer or participate in, you do not have to do so; however please try to answer and be as involved as possible.

Ground rules

- The most important rule is that only one person speaks at a time. There may be a temptation to jump in when someone is talking but please wait until they have finished.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- You do not have to speak in any particular order.
- When you do have something to say, please do so. There are many of you in the group and it is important that I obtain the views of each of you.
- You do not have to agree with the views of other people in the group.
- The final important rule is that the content of this discussion should stay in the group only.
- Does anyone have any questions? (Answers).
- OK, let's begin.

Appendix B

Introductory question

I am just going to give you a couple of minutes to recall your memory of knowing the new two-child policy. What do you think when you first heard it? Is anyone happy to share his/her experience?

Guiding questions

- How much do you know about the change in the family planning programme?
- What do you think when you first heard it?
- Will the new change influence your plan of childbearing and how?
- How about your friends and relatives? Do you know any of their stories of second childbearing?
- Do you think the social networks you are in could affect your own decisions on childbearing?
- How about career? Do you think you could keep the balance between family life and work?
- In which way does or will two-child policy/two children impact on your career aspirations?
- How much do you agree the following statements and why?
    - A family without kid cannot be happy.
    - Only child can take care of us when we get older.
    - An ideal family should have a boy.
    - You should not give birth if you don't have enough time and money.
    - Raising a kid is the most pleasant thing in the world.
    - Childbearing will influence females' career.
    - Having a kid will influence the couple life.
    - Etc.

Concluding question

Based on your own experience and preference, what would you say is the most important issue when you are making childbearing decisions?

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion.
- Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study.
- We hope you have found the discussion interesting.
- If there is anything you are unhappy with or wish to complain about, please speak to me later.
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in the analysis will be anonymous.

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