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**Fathering and fatherhood in Guangzhou city, China: How
older and younger men perceive and experience their role as
fathers**

By

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degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

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DEDICATION

For my father, with whom I wish to have a closer relationship

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DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

SIGNED: *Pinmei Huang*

DATE: 26 / 09 / 2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in China. It is informed by a growing body of theoretical and empirical research regarding fathers and fatherhood and also draws upon research that has made linkages between masculine identities and men's identities as fathers. However, little research has investigated men's experiences of fathering and fatherhood in China. Thus, employing the principles of social constructionism and a qualitative research design, this study comprised a total of thirty-one in-depth interviews with Chinese fathers. These men were split into two groups; one group of relatively younger fathers and another group of relatively older fathers. The findings show the complex inter-relationships between fathering and China's rapidly changing social, economic and political context, including the One Child Policy. The thesis also focuses on aspects of 'traditional' fatherhood defined in terms of fathers' roles as moral guardians, disciplinarians and educators. Finally, the thesis explores aspects of contemporary fathering in China, including the apparent shift to an increasingly involved fathering and the ways in which men reconcile their changing identities as fathers and their identities as men.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
GNP	Gross National Product
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis reports on qualitative research undertaken in Guangzhou, China, that explores men's perspectives and experiences of fathering and fatherhood. The study focuses on two groups of fathers; one group of relatively younger fathers and another group of relatively older fathers. Drawing on principles of social constructionism and employing a qualitative research design, the study conducted a total of thirty-one in-depth interviews with men who were fathers. These interviews explored men's experiences and views regarding the ideology of fatherhood and being fathered as well as their fathering practices in a rapidly changing social, cultural and economic environment. The interviews also explored the linkages between men's identities as father and their masculine identities as men. In the case of the older fathers, these men were also able to relay their experiences of being grandfathers and their observations of changes in fatherhood and younger men's fathering practices. These interviews, therefore, explored notions of fatherhood and fathering. This research contributes to a nascent field of enquiry in China and adds a Chinese perspective to current debates regarding fathering and fatherhood. This introductory chapter provides a brief background to the research and describes the motivations that initiated this study. It then goes on to introduce the specific research focus and methodology and finishes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Background to this study

Efforts to study fatherhood and promote father relevant social policies have gone global in recent decades (Marsiglio and Pleck 2005: 250).

The study of fatherhood in Chinese culture is significant for a number of reasons. ...The Chinese family has been undergoing

transformation. ...One would ask: what concomitant changes in fatherhood have occurred? (Ho 1987: 227)

It has been noted over recent years that fathering and fatherhood in the West have been of increased interest to researchers, policy makers and practitioners (DCSF 2010; Dolan 2014; Gilligan et al. 2012; Miller 2011). In part this reflects apparent benefits associated with the role of fathers in relation to many areas of family life, including children's well-being and academic performance, as well as improvements in men's health (Cabrera et al., 2000; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2004; Sarkadi et al., 2008). Other, more contentious aspects of fatherhood have also drawn the attention of researchers and theorists, including the role of men in perpetrating domestic violence and the negative impact of this on the lives and health of mothers and children (Brown and Barker 2004; Dowd 2000; Pyke 2000). There has also been recognition that social and cultural change has impacted on men and their roles as fathers that is encompassed in the apparent shift to a more 'involved' fatherhood (Pleck 1987; Lamb 2000; Roy 2004).

Existing research regarding the shifting context and changing practices of fathers in the West can be used to help examine fatherhood in other global contexts, particularly where non-Western notions of fatherhood appear to have come into conflict with new social expectations surrounding fathers and apparent changes in father-child relationships (Kwon and Roy 2007). This is particularly apposite for research in China. Not only has China experienced rapid social, cultural and economic change in recent years, but there is relatively little research about fathering and fatherhood in relation to these changes and virtually no research has included the voices and perspectives of fathers themselves. Therefore, little is known about the effects of recent rapid social, cultural and economic changes on the views of Chinese fathers and their experiences of fatherhood. Increasing our understanding of fathering and fatherhood in China also helps to expand our understanding of cultural shifts in the conduct of Western fathers.

Western research and theoretical studies have also examined how masculinities and being male can affect fathering and fatherhood (e.g., Dolan 2014; Miller 2011; Reich 2008; Wall and Arnold 2007). For example, research has shown how men's apparent difficulties with emotional expression can impact on their conceptualisation of fatherhood and men often compare their difficulties with the perceived emotional connections experienced by mothers (Singleton and Maher 2004). It is also the case that aspects of masculinity may shape men's limited knowledge concerning the needs of their children and their capabilities to implement aspects of care associated with involved fathering (Dolan 2014). Reich (2008) has also pointed out that hegemonic discourses around masculinity can inhibit men's understandings of competent fatherhood and cloud men's judgements as to whether men feel competent to take on the role of father.

According to traditional Chinese culture, men are regarded as having high status within families. For example, Confucian philosophy defines men as the head of the family and they hold power in relation to decision making (Ho 1987). In relation to fatherhood, throughout much of Chinese history this was organized around an ideology of filial piety that encouraged total obedience, respect and loyalty towards the father (Chen et al., 2007; Ikels 2004). Thus, traditionally, it was thought that Chinese fathers were not willing to develop warm and emotionally close father-child relationships (Chao and Tseng 2002; Ho 1987). Instead, it was believed that the fathers' role should not encourage or tolerate emotional indulgence and that they should also be stern disciplinarians (Ho 1987). However, there are a lack of studies that have sought to explore men's adoption of such aspects of fatherhood and how this interweaves with other areas of men's life, such as their role as economic providers (Goh 2006).

However, it is clear that men as a group are not easily accessed in terms of research studies (Chen et al., 2007; Ikels 2004). One significant aspect of this is that the existing literature on the perceptions and experiences of fathers in China is at an early phase of development. To date, predominantly quantitative research studies have tended to focus on fathers' parenting styles

which suggest that fathers exert a high degree of authoritarian control, whilst mothers manifest a high degree of warmth (Chao and Tseng 2002; Chen et al., 2001). In terms of analysis and conclusions, these findings have generally been presented in categorical terms; as a gendered dichotomy and there has been very little exploration of the complexity of fathering and mothering roles and dynamics in modern day China. Thus, whilst quantitative research that focuses on fathers' parenting styles denotes an emerging field of study in China, the picture remains incomplete given the lack of fathers' perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in their own words. Therefore, just as in the West, where research on fathering and fatherhood has become more fine-grained and includes a focus on the notion of fathers as men, further studies are required in China in order to develop knowledge in this field of study.

This study seeks to contribute to bridging this important gap in our knowledge by focusing on the perceptions and experiences of older and younger fathers in the context of contemporary China, which has experienced significant social, cultural and political changes, and also takes into account the complex interactions between men's conceptualisation of fatherhood and their constructions of masculine identity. Thus, as well as providing a greater understanding of fatherhood in China, this research study also seeks to provide a greater understanding of how being male underlies men's experiences as fathers and how men make sense of their role as fathers in the context of wider economic, cultural and political change.

Personal motivation to conduct this study

My interest in the subject in many ways stems from my own experiences of being fathered in China. When I was born, my father decided that I should live with my grandmother as he already had a son. He thought it was relatively useless to raise a daughter and that it would cause him extra burden in terms of financial provision and my mother was busy looking after my elder brother. Therefore, I was grateful that my grandmother was willing to look after me and I spent the first seven years of my life with my grandmother. As a result, I had

no father's influence in my formative years. Even when I went to live with my parents when I was aged seven, my father was either away working in other provinces or very busy with his work and seldom at home and therefore spent little time with me. It was not until I attended university to do my first degree that I discovered how this had impacted on me. I had little self-confidence or self-esteem. However, my life goal was to study hard and to earn my parents' favour and approval. To this day, I continue to wonder how my early experiences may have been different if my father had been more involved in my life. As an undergraduate, I began to understand that my personal experiences are not just the result of the personal agency or decision making of my father, but can also be located in wider societal and structural influences, particularly the traditional preference for sons in Chinese society, the introduction of the One Child Policy and the need for men to migrate to other areas of China for employment (Giddens and Griffiths 2006; Vermeer 2006). As a result, for my PhD I decided to pursue an investigation of fathers and fatherhood that was set firmly within the changing social and cultural context of China and that also paid attention to the links with work from within the field of men and masculinities.

Research aims

The aims of this project were therefore:

a) To provide a theoretically informed and empirically rich understanding and analysis of men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in mainland China

b) To investigate how men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in China have changed in recent decades and the factors associated with this by comparing the experiences of fathers with young children with those of older fathers

c) To explore the interrelationship between men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood with social factors such as urbanisation and migration and changing conceptualizations of masculinity

Research design

The findings of this thesis are based upon a qualitative study of thirty-one fathers living in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong (Canton) province in the People's Republic of China. The study examines these men's perceptions and experiences of being fathers in China. This group of fathers includes the perspectives of both relatively older fathers (aged 50 and 75) and relatively younger fathers (aged 20 and 50). The purpose of splitting the fathers into older and younger age groups was to elicit the perceptions and experiences of men in relation to fathering and fatherhood within the changing societal context of contemporary China. The aim was also to explore how men's understandings of masculinity impacted on men's experiences of being fathers.

To explore the complexity and dynamics of men's fathering experiences I decided to employ a qualitative approach (Hatch 2002). This research design was able to provide in-depth insight into the dynamic processes and diverse viewpoints in relation to fatherhood, the specific social context and masculine identity (Bernard 2000; Kumar 2011). The use of semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection enabled me to investigate this complex situated social phenomenon in a way that gave primacy to men's own experiences and also provided the basis for a robust thematic analysis (Flick 2007; Fielding and Thomas 2008; Gillham 2005). The study aimed to provide a deep understanding of the contextual factors and social issues that influence fathering and fatherhood. As a result, it is possible to discuss the context and style of men's perceptions and experiences as fathers in China.

The field work for this study was carried out in Guangzhou which is a large city in mainland China close to Hong Kong. Guangzhou is a trading city with a modern culture and an advanced economy (Lin 2004; Xu and Yeh 2003; Zeng 2011). This makes Guangzhou an ideal place for migrant workers as it offers much in the way of employment (Li 2005). The interviews were conducted between February and September 2012. Thirty-one men took part in the

research and all had at least one child. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

The findings in this thesis cannot be representative of the lives of men in Guangzhou City or the whole of China and, therefore, the conclusions are not generalizable to the local or whole population. Nevertheless, due to the gap in the literature about fathering and fatherhood in China, this study makes a considerable contribution to the Chinese literature. Although this is a relatively small study, the fact that the participants included older and younger men from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds suggests that this study can be regarded as significant. It takes an inter-generational approach and is able to provide a picture of fathering and fatherhood in China across a significant timescale.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis presents the contextual and literature background to the research study, as well as theoretical rationale of the chosen methodology. It also describes the findings and discusses the implications.

The thesis consists of seven chapters, including the present chapter (Chapter One). Chapter Two presents a review of related literature on fathering and fatherhood. It highlights key aspects of the available Western research, including a review of the main theoretical debates related to fatherhood and more recent work that has sought to link men's identities as fathers with men's identities as men. It also outlines the Chinese historical, social, cultural, and economic contexts and explores relevant research of fathering and fatherhood in China. It then points out limitations in the literature that the current project aims to address. Chapter Three presents the chosen methodology and theoretical rationale for that methodology. It also presents the process of data collection and the ways in which the analysis was undertaken. The findings are presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six. Chapter Four focuses on how the men in this study perceived that changes in fathering and fatherhood had taken place across generations and also how they interpreted and understood

these changes within the rapidly changing social, economic and cultural context. Chapter Five presents how these men perceived traditional aspects of fatherhood and fathering practice and how they balanced or adjusted certain traditional expectations with contemporary notions of fatherhood. Chapter Six focuses on contemporary aspects of fathering and fatherhood in China. Here men talked about the tensions, ambiguities, and lack of knowledge related to fathering and fatherhood. In the main, the contents of these three chapters are presented as discrete aspects of fathering and fatherhood in China. However, it is also clear that the issues raised in each chapter are also interconnected. For example, the ways in which men experience fatherhood in contemporary China is clearly linked with many traditional aspects of fatherhood and also of being male. Finally, therefore, Chapter Seven brings together the main themes contained with the three findings chapters and locates them within the context of contemporary literature regarding fathering and fatherhood. This final chapter therefore expands the findings of this study through further theoretical discussion, draws conclusions and recommendations from this process. Chapter Seven also outlines the limitations of this study and acknowledges its original contribution to knowledge in the field of fathering and fatherhood studies and literatures.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will review three main bodies of literature that contribute to our understanding of fathering and fatherhood in the context of China. The chapter begins by presenting an overview of what is known about fathering and fatherhood in the West. This includes apparent shifts in fathering practice and greater acknowledgement that fathers are also men, which has led to a greater emphasis on issues of masculinity. The chapter then goes on to review the literature regarding China and recent changes in the social, cultural and economic framework of China. This forms the setting within which fathering in China takes place. The chapter concludes with a review of the literature regarding fathering and fatherhood in China and what is known regarding men and masculinity in China.

Fatherhood and fathering an overview

In recent years there has been an increased level of interest in fathering and fatherhood among researchers, practitioners and policy makers (e.g., DCSF 2010; Dolan 2014; Gilligan et al. 2012; Miller 2011). In broad terms, this expanding body of knowledge has noted apparent shifts in both the cultural understandings and expectations surrounding fatherhood and in fathering behaviour; i.e. the taken-for-granted assumptions about the role of fathers and the actual conduct of men as fathers (Wall and Arnold 2007). In addition, there is a growing body of work that has explored the complex connections between men's masculine and fathering identities (Dermott 2006; Henwood and Procter 2003). These three themes; the contemporary culture of fatherhood, apparent changes in the practices of fathers and their involvement in family lives and the relationship between masculinity and fatherhood are central to this thesis. In addition, the thesis will also explore the growing body

of qualitative research that has sought to explore men's own perceptions and experiences of fatherhood and fathering (Miller 2011).

Contemporary fatherhood and the changing role of fathers

Traditionally, the 'provider' role has formed the major component of men's role as fathers, with a significant amount of research having focused on men's experiences as 'breadwinners' and their responsibilities for the financial and material circumstances of their children and families (Roy 2004). Many studies have located fathers' main role as providers within the wider socio-historical context of Western patriarchy, where men are endowed with power and opportunity and where men's main roles take place outside of the home (Silverstein et al., 2002; Wade 2003). Alongside this, essentialist assumptions regarding mothers as the 'natural' carers of children also shape fathers' primary 'obligations', 'responsibilities' and 'practices' in relation to their children (Miller 2011: 13). Thus, in short, fathers' traditional roles in relation to their families were underpinned by biological assumptions around care and social norms that define masculine self-worth and self-fulfilment in terms of economic authority and a breadwinner status (Wade 2003). It is also the case that the role of father as provider has been associated with certain 'costs' to other aspects of men's lives in terms of long and often unmanageable work hours and the stress that this can place on family relationships (Roy 2004).

Men's role as provider has also been the basis of a growing discourse concerning 'problem fathers'; e.g., those men deemed as abdicating the 'responsibilities' of fatherhood, which are largely equated with their economic provision (Miller 2011). The rise in divorce rates and children being born outside of marriage has focused on concerns regarding the apparent low levels of financial support provided by absent fathers to their children (Mott 1997). Men have frequently been portrayed by the media as 'deadbeat dads' primarily because they do not provide financially for their children, but also because they do not have contact with their children (Brown and Barker 2004; Dowd 2000; Pyke 2000). Fathers who are absent have also been linked with a range of childhood problems that include poor school attainment, delinquency

and low self-esteem (Bradshaw et al., 2002; Crouter and Head 2002; Marsiglio et al., 2000). However, in terms of social policies, the main emphasis has been on ensuring that fathers provide financially for their children rather than on aspects of care; e.g., policies have reinforced father's main role as economic providers (Finch 2008). In these terms, researchers suggest that the state and welfare system have shaped fathering experiences (Curran and Abrams 2000; Hobson 2002). State policies relating to parental responsibilities have increasingly focused on supporting working parents with very young children, such as statutory parental leave and flexible working schemes, but the expectation is that mothers will take advantage of such initiatives rather than fathers (O'Brien 2009). As Hobson and Morgan (2002:1) have argued, 'it is through policy discourse, laws and practices that the most conscious and purposeful attempts have been made to connect men to fatherhood'. In contrast, relatively few policies have sought to prioritize fathering as a social issue or to promote fathers' greater involvement in the lives of their children (Gillies 2005). Critical examinations of the assumptions and expectations that underpin this type of approach have also highlighted how this problematizes those families that do not live up to the ideals associated with the traditional nuclear family (Gillies 2009).

Undoubtedly, paid employment is symbolically fundamental to fatherhood and is an often assumed and unquestioned aspect of successful fatherhood (Craig 2006; Featherstone 2009; Roy 2004). However, in recent years research suggests that there has been a discernible shift towards men becoming more involved in family life and the day-to-day upbringing of their children. Thus, whereas paternal involvement was measured in terms of time spent with a child, more recent theorisations of fatherhood have also focused on the practices and emotional (intimate) engagement that fathers assert (Featherstone 2009; Miller 2010). This increased emphasis on father's role as carers has become known as 'involved fatherhood' that has signalled the apparent 'detraditionalisation of fatherhood' and highlighted the 'rising cultural importance of hands-on fathering' (Miller 2011: 9). For example, alongside everyday tasks, Dermott (2003) found evidence of more 'intimate' aspects of fathering and that better emotional connections and openness with their

children were perceived to be important components of involved fathering. However, whilst 'involved fathering' has been defined as men's active involvement in children's care, as well as their social and educational activities, the nature and quality of men's involvement is often varied and has been questioned (Lewis and Lamb 2007; Palkovitz 2005). It is also relevant to point out that alongside the notion of involved fathering is a contemporary discourse regarding men as 'new' fathers that characterises men as more interested in adopting the role of care-taker and co-parent (Freeman et al., 2010). In short, it appears that men want alternative constructions of fathering that include being more involved in aspects of their children's lives, delivering nurturance and having increased and better emotional interactions with their children (Brannen and Nilsen 2006). It is also the case that men's apparent desire to spend more time with their children has been seen to transform the social norms associated with the 'good' father (Henwood and Proctor 2003).

There is also evidence that suggests that increased levels of fathers' involvement results in improved outcomes for children in terms of health and well-being (Cabrera et al., 2000; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2004; Sarkadi et al., 2008). For example, studies have found that involved fathering is related to children's enhanced cognitive development (Cabrera et al., 2000; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2004). Research has also found a link between a father's level of involvement and his children's academic achievement (Rohner and Veneziano 2001). Studies have also suggested that engaged fatherhood is good for men. Men who are involved in meaningful ways with their children report this relationship to be an important source of well-being and happiness and men who are engaged in such caring and care-giving relationships are less likely to engage in certain risky behaviours, such as fast driving or drug use (Eggbean and Knoester 2001; Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000).

Undoubtedly, men's increased involvement in the lives of their children reflects the fact that women are increasingly active in the world of paid employment (Featherstone 2009). However, whilst men may devote more time to childcare and are more visibly involved in child-related activities, a

number of studies have questioned the extent to which notions of 'involved' and/or 'new' fathering have resulted in men changing their fathering practices (e.g., Lewis and Lamb 2007). The evidence suggests that women retain their role as primary care givers regardless of how many hours they spend in paid employment with men retaining a secondary role in relation to the care of their children (Doucet 2006). Moreover, whilst it appears that many men spend more time with their children this does not equate with men taking more responsibility for their children (Gregory and Milner 2005). The evidence suggests that men's involvement with their children continues to focus primarily on play and the more enjoyable aspects of parenthood, leaving women with the more mundane and wearisome tasks (Johansson and Klinth 2007).

Men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood

A great many studies have focused on the tasks and roles associated with fathering (i.e., what men do as fathers) (Miller 2011). However, in comparison, relatively little research has sought to understand men's subjective experiences of fathering and fatherhood (i.e., how men make sense of their fathering practice and of fatherhood itself). The work that has taken place confirms the apparent shift in men's roles as fathers, but underlying this change is the continuing primary distinction between father as provider and mother as carer that can cause men certain problems (Shaw and Dawson 2001). Thus, whilst men are alive to notions of involved fathering that encourage men to take on more caring responsibilities, men may be impeded from participating in the care of their children by dominant notions of what men do; e.g., their primary role continues to be in terms of paid employment outside of the home (Brannen and Nilsen 2006). In short, there appears to be a 'tension' in men's aims to be both a good provider and a good father, with many men reporting it a struggle to achieve both of these aims (Shirani et al., 2012). For example, Henwood and Procter's (2003) investigation into the notion of new fatherhood found that men supported a cultural shift towards men being more involved in, rather than detached from, family life. However, they reported significant areas of tension and difficulty between their providing

cash and care as men tried to juggle work and home tasks. Those that succeeded in managing to do aspects of both regarded this as a source of achievement and saw care not as a chore but as a privilege. Miller (2011) also highlighted how men viewed paid work outside the home as important in terms of their identities as men and that fathers continue to have more choices available to them in terms of the tasks through which demonstrate their fathering/family involvement. Furthermore, it was also apparent that policy makers regarding paternity/parental leave should count the possibility that fathers and mothers might make choices concerning work/caring practices based on their gendered assumptions (Miller 2011).

In addition, Hall's (1994) study regarding first time fathers showed how men's experiences of fathering involved them learning to negotiate the many demands that emanated from their children, their partners and their employment. Hall identified how these men underwent a process of 'redefinition' regarding their roles as fathers after their partners returned to full-time employment. This had caused them to increase their share of household tasks and in so doing came to have greater insights into the role of their partners' regarding family life. Similar tensions were found by Bolzan's (2005) research with Australian men that highlighted the clash between men wishing to adopt aspects of 'new' fatherhood whilst also not wanting to relinquish their obligations within the labour market. These men found that they were expected to be both successful providers and caregivers. Similarly, Barclay and Lupton's (1999) study also revealed how the main expectations and symbolic meanings attached to fatherhood (e.g., as primary providers) influenced how men negotiated paid employment alongside childcare tasks in ways that enabled them to balance the different areas of their life. As with many of these studies, it is clear that many men struggle to reconcile their personal needs as fathers with their work-related tasks and expectations (Genesoni and Tallandini 2009). More recently, Miller (2011) has tried to capture a more nuanced and fine grained understanding of the complex range of factors which shape men's engagement with family and work life through her study that explores men's transition to fatherhood. Prior to the birth she found that men identified themselves as 'willing learners' in terms of their roles

as fathers. In addition, men recognized that 'being there' for their child was an important feature of involved fatherhood, which was also different to the fathering they had experienced. Men also expressed a desire to 'share' the care of their child in both emotional and economic ways. However, in the two years following the birth of their child, men spoke of the stress and 'hard work' of caring, of the need to 'fit' in fathering around their other roles and of their own need for support and trying to 'hold everything together' (e.g., paid work and family life). These accounts reveal the tensions men may experience between their motivations and aims as fathers and the reality of being a father.

The dominant theme across much research in this field is the difficulties many men face in reconciling work and family life. The evidence also suggests that many parents rely on grandparents to resolve some of these conflicts (Wall et al., 2007). For example, Woodland et al's (2002) survey in England and Wales found that twenty-four percent of children were regularly cared for by their grandparents. There is also a growing body of literature that has focused on the experiences of grand-parenting, including grandparents' attitudes and expectations and their roles as well as the derived meaning of grandparenthood (Landry-Meyer and Newman 2004). Some studies have suggested that the tasks associated with grandparents can prevent a sense of stagnation in older adults (Thiele and Whelan 2006). However, other studies have found that some grandparents find caring for grandchildren to be physically and emotionally wearing and felt lengthy care routines uninteresting and tedious (Goodfellow and Lavery 2003).

Studies have also identified the potential tensions between responsibility, obligation and enjoyment. Mintz (2006) found a distinction between those men who tended to view fatherhood primarily in terms of responsibility and obligation and those men who emphasize the role of children as a source of meaning, happiness and stability. There is also the distinction between those men who provide adequately and are actively involved in the day-to-day lives of their children and those for which the provider role can increase men's sense of failure and vulnerability if they cannot fulfil their economic responsibilities regarding their families (Wade 2003). Moreover, whilst the

involved fatherhood discourse emphasizes men's involvement and emotional input, this can have emotional difficulties, not least with aspects of masculinity and men's apparent difficulties with emotional expression that is often associated with femininity (Singleton and Maher 2004). Many scholars have identified how men often consider feminine behaviours as inferior and inappropriate and judge men who display feminine characteristics to be less manly (Barber and Odean 2001; Marlow and Patton 2005). Thus, the devaluation of femininity is also seen as significant when seeking to understand the tension between men's roles within family sphere and why some men seek to avoid certain childcare tasks (Arrighi and Maume 2000; Gentry et al., 2003).

Men, masculinity and fatherhood

These discussions are part of a wider body of research that has started to explore how aspects of masculinity and being male inform men's conceptualization of fathering and fatherhood (e.g., Wall and Arnold 2007; Williams 2009). In general, the literature regarding men and masculinity has developed from a mainly biological viewpoint through 'sex role' theory and more recently encompasses the notion of masculinities as researchers have sought to provide a greater understanding of men and their lives. The biological perspective concentrated on biological factors, primarily testosterone, to explain masculinity. The inference being that men are driven by their hormones to compete for status and reputation that leads men to be more aggressive, which in turn has implications for men's fathering practices (Pleck 2010). However, whilst there may be certain biological aspects of being male, the notion that masculinity is socially constructed and not biological has gained dominance.

This shift was initiated by those operating with the notion of a sex role theory that focuses on the ways in which men and women are socialized into certain behaviours associated with their gender (e.g., Chetwynd and Harnett 1978). Within this, Thompson and Pleck (1986) categorized notions of masculinity according to three main domains: toughness; anti-femininity; and status, all of

which has implications for men's roles as fathers. The first of these purports that men should be tough in mind and body and be able to hide their emotions while demonstrating physical strength. Anti-femininity implies that men should keep away from conventionally female-dominated activities and occupations. The status factor usually connects men's roles with provider and protector (Eisler and Skidmore 1987; Thompson and Pleck 1986). However, critics have argued that 'sex role' theory is rather rigid and that all men are not the same and do not act in the same way, though they might be influenced by similar characteristics. Thus, while certain characteristics may continue to dominate what it means to be male, they can vary across different groups of men and in different 'settings' (e.g. men operating as fathers).

Following on from this, work from within the critical study of men and masculinities has contested the notion of 'masculinity' as an essentially fixed or unitary concept (Dolan 2014). Instead, theorists have started to conceptualize 'masculinities' in the plural sense that recognizes that there are multiple ways of being male. Central to this shift in understanding is Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1994). Hegemonic masculinity can be understood in the ways 'particular men inhabit positions of power and wealth and how they legitimate and reproduce social relationships that generate dominance' (Carrigan et al., 1985: 592). It is a relational approach that can account for men's dominance over women, as well as men's dominance over other groups of men. Connell (2000) argues that the hegemonic form of masculinity 'need not be the most common form of masculinity, let alone the most comfortable' (Connell 2000: 259). The point being that it may be dominant, but that does not mean that all or even most men can live up to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity or even want to. In short, it is supported by men because it enables men to maintain dominance over women and all men, regardless of their position, benefit from what Connell terms the 'patriarchal dividend'. Thus, whilst it is not possible for all men to achieve hegemonic ideals, men are socialised into a culture that encourages characteristics such as stoicism, emotional independence and the denial of weakness. In addition, men will seek to demonstrate hegemonic

forms of masculinity that are equated with success, capabilities and control. All of which have implications for men's role as fathers and caregivers to their children (Williams 2009).

Alongside 'hegemonic' forms of masculinity, Connell identifies a number of other forms of masculinity that are complicit, subordinated or marginalized in relation to hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995). For example, complicit masculinity is 'embodied by the many men in society who do not themselves live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity, yet benefit from its dominant position in the patriarchal order' (Giddens and Griffiths 2006: 1010).

Subordinate masculinity refers to men who behave in ways which are opposite to those that are treasured in hegemonic masculinity, such as those men who exhibit physical weakness, and is often associated with effeminate and gay men (Connell 2005). Marginalized masculinity is associated with men who do not have access to hegemonic ideals because of certain characteristics, such as ethnicity. Therefore, black men and men from other ethnic groups along with disabled men are all examples of men who may experience marginalized masculinity (Connell 2005).

Recent research has also started to include the concept of hegemonic masculinity when examining men's experiences of fathering and fatherhood. For example, Wall and Arnold's (2007) study on stay-at-home fathers pointed out how these men tried to forge new masculine identities and rejected traditional definitions of masculinity. At the same time, however, there was also an emphasis on very masculine characteristics in relation to certain fathering practices, such as 'roughhousing' with their children and coaching children to do sports. Wall and Arnold (2007) argue that the experiences of stay-at-home fathers were associated with contradictory and differing forms of masculinity that can be equated with a form of hegemonic masculinity that also allowed men more flexibility with their fathering. Dolan's (2014) recent qualitative work on men who voluntarily attended a 'dads only' parenting programme explored some of the challenges relating to masculine identity that fathers face when seeking support regarding their children. For instance, the perceived pressure from other men regarding their attendance at a

programme that was deemed as aimed at women was one of the reasons why men tended to be absent from such initiatives. This study also highlights how aspects of masculinity may shape men's limited knowledge concerning the needs of their children and their capabilities to implement aspects of care associated with involved fathering. In addition, Reich (2008) has found that hegemonic discourses concerning masculinity can inflate men's expectations regarding the components of competent fatherhood and therefore cloud men's judgements as to whether they feel capable of taking on the role of 'involved' father.

This section has demonstrated how fathering and fatherhood have attracted increasing research, practitioner and policy attention in the West. A significant amount of this work has focused on fathers' traditional role as economic providers together with the apparent shifts that signal men's increased involvement in the care of their children. This has indicated a corresponding shift in the conceptualization of fatherhood and fathering practice, moving away from the traditional notions of the physically absent and emotionally withdrawn father towards a more expansive and involved model of fathering. Alongside this apparent shift are studies that have shown the tensions that many men experience when attempting to negotiate both work and family environments. The ways in which fathers as men negotiate this terrain has also become a feature of recent research though studies that explore how masculine identities are interwoven with men's identities as fathers are still in their relative infancy. This thesis will explore the extent to which apparent changes in fatherhood and fathering in the West are relevant in the context of China and also explore the relevance of Western theories of masculinities to fatherhood and fathering in China.

The Chinese context

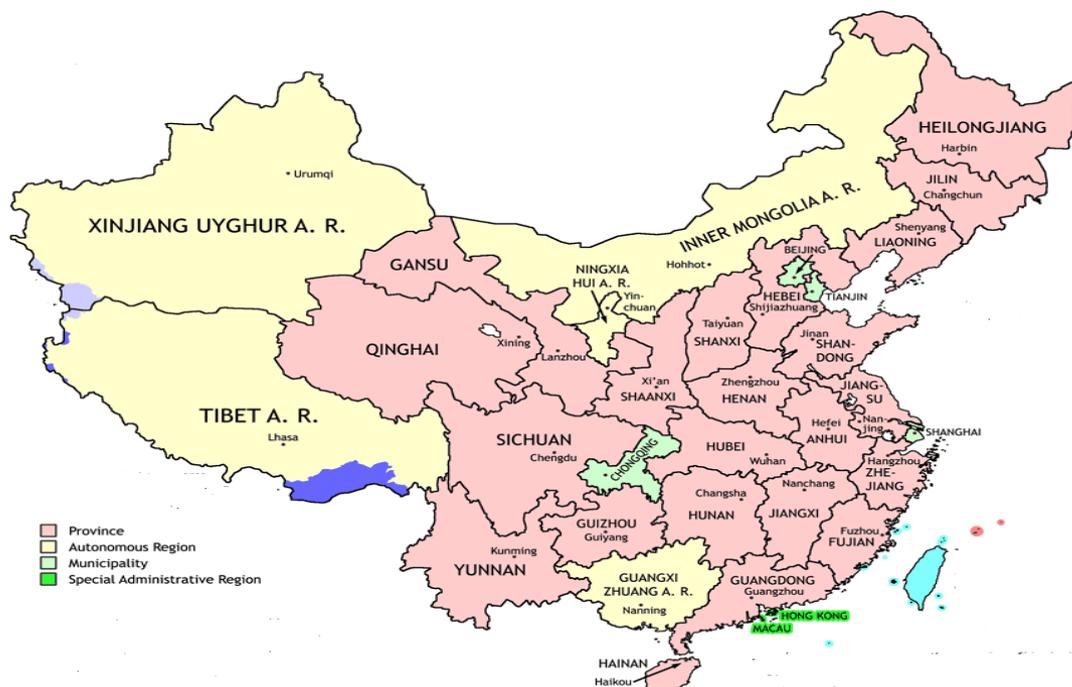
This section will review evidence regarding the changing social, cultural and economic context in which Chinese fathering has been and continues to be embedded. The wider social, cultural and economic context has been shown to be closely linked to men's attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and identities as

men and as fathers. Charting changes in wider society that impact on notions of fatherhood and men’s fathering practices is important because older and younger fathers inevitably face a different social, cultural and economic context from the one in which they were fathered. The section begins with a brief overview of the geography of China and an examination of the three main post-war political periods that underpinned the profound social changes that have taken place in post-war China. The section then provides evidence of the current social, cultural, economic and demographic structure within China and includes a discussion of the One Child Policy. The section ends by exploring aspects of traditional Chinese culture related to parenting.

Geography and ethnic background

China is located in Eastern Asia. It is the third largest country in the world and shares borders with Russia, Mongolia, India as well as Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. China consists of thirty-two province-level divisions, which include twenty-three provinces, four direct-controlled municipalities, five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions (see Figure1).

Figure 1. People’s Republic of China: Administrative divisions



Resources: <http://english.gov.cn/>

In China a province is similar to a county in the United Kingdom. Each of the thirty-two provinces has a capital city which is the centre for political, cultural and economic development (see Table 1). The four direct-controlled municipalities are Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai and Tianjin. These are cities, but they have a status equal to province status and are directly controlled by the Chinese government. These cities have become direct-controlled municipalities due to their political and/or economic importance (Chung and lam 2010). For example, Chongqing was separated from Sichuan province in the mid-1990s as a means of accelerating its economic growth and that of China's relatively poorer western areas (Chung and lam 2010). The five autonomous regions are similar to provinces with the main difference being they have a local government and have a high proportion of specific minority ethnic groups (Guo 2009). The two special administrative regions are Hong Kong and Macau who were colonised by Great Britain and Portugal respectively. These two regions are considered to be different from mainland China in terms of their politics, economy and culture due to the process of colonization. As such, there is a different governing policy referred to as 'one country, two systems' (Oliveira and Cardianl 2009).

Table 1 Province and Capital cities in China

Province	Capital
Anhui	Hefei
Fujian	Fuzhou
Gansu	Lanzhou
Guangdong	Guangzhou
Guizhou	Guiyang
Hainan	Haikou
Hebei	Shijiazhuang
Heilongjiang	Harbin
Henan	Zhen Zhou

Hunan	Changsha
Hubei	Wuhan
Jiangsu	Nanjing
Jinagxi	Nanchang
Jilin	Changchun
Liaoning	Shenyang
Qinghai	Xining
Shanxi	Xian
Shandong	Jinan
Shanxi	Taiyuan
Sichuang	Chengdu
Yunnan	Kunming
Zhejiang	Hangzhou
Taiwan	Taipei

Resources: <http://english.gov.cn/>

China is composed of fifty-six different ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group is Han Chinese with a population of 1.18295 billion that constitute around ninety percent of the total population. Other ethnic groups with a relatively large population include;

huang (sixteen million), Manchu (ten million), Hui (nine million) and Miao (eight million). There are also specific ethnic groups based in the five autonomous regions (see Table 2). Some ethnic groups have different culture, language and religion from the majority Han Chinese population (Mackerras 2003). For example, the majority of the Hui population are Muslim, whereas the majority of urban Chinese report themselves as non-religious (51.8%) or atheist (32.9%) (Yao 2007). Recent surveys put the total proportion of the Christian and Muslim population in China at 3%-4% and 1%-2% respectively (China Demographics Profile 2014).

Table 2 Ethnic groups in Autonomous Region (A.R.)

Autonomous	Xinjiang	Tibet	Guangxi	Ninxia Hui	Inner
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Region (A.R.)	Uyghur		Zhuang		Mongolia
Ethnic group	Uyghur	Tibetan	Zhuang	Hui	Mongolia

Resources: <http://english.gov.cn/>

Political background

Three post-war political periods have had a huge significance in the centralized planning and economic development of China and have resulted in profound social and economic changes for families and communities. These periods are the 'Great Leap Forward', the 'Cultural Revolution' and 'Open Up' (Kanbur and Zhang 2005). The first of these, the 'Great Leap Forward', relates to the 1950s and early 1960s and was characterised as a bid to modernize China and to increase its GNP. For example, within this period Mao introduced the first 'Five Year Plan' for heavy industry and national defence with the goal of coming close to and overriding Britain's steelmaking industry within fifteen years (Cai and Feng 2010; Li and Pichaud 2004). This led to enormous investment in heavy industry (e.g., iron and steel production) that were undertaken in localized collectives in which households were organized to work cooperatively in the form of communes (Cushing and Tompkins 2007). The household was the basic unit of the commune and each commune was usually composed of around three-and-a-half thousand households. Moreover, households were forced to take their meals together and canteens distributed food to each household based upon their work effort (Zhou 2012). However, the commune system and the predominant focus on industrial production have been blamed for the deaths of many millions of people (Cushing and Tompkins 2007). Not only was the commune system seen as inefficient, but also the abrupt withdrawal of the Soviet Union's support, particularly its technological advisers, made it difficult for China to progress its industrial projects. All of these factors caused a significant decline in agricultural production during this period which was exacerbated by unfavourable weather conditions for crops. It is estimated that around forty-five million people died from either starvation, over work or being brutally beaten during the 'Great Leap Forward' (Li and Pichaud 2004).

The 'Great Leap Forward' was followed by a period associated with 'Cultural Revolution' which spans the mid-1960s to mid-1970s (MacFarquhar 1997). In this period Mao stepped aside as the head of the state, while maintaining his role of Chairman in the CCP. President Liu Shaoqi took up the new leadership, together with Premier Zhou Enlai and General Secretary of CCP, Deng Xiaoping. This new leadership implemented a range of new policies that represented a shift away from the predominance of communes, based upon the private ownership of land along with the encouragement of free market trade driven by small businesses. However, this group was soon regarded as too capitalist and bourgeois by other leading members of the Communist Party, including Mao, who criticized the new leadership for leading the country away from a socialist ideology towards a capitalist ideology (Li 2008). In time, the Central Committee of the Communist party published its own documents that espoused the continued dominance of socialist principles (Li and Pichaud 2004). In addition, Mao presented his dazibao (big character poster) calling on people to criticize the counter-socialists in the Communist Party, such as President Liu Shaoqi. One outcome of this was that the Red Guards, mainly composed of college students and other workers, emerged and started movements to challenge or attack the counter-socialists. For example, many of those who were characterized as being rich farmers were beaten to death by the Red Guards (Cushing and Tompkins 2007). There was no freedom of speech and people were scared of being mis-reported when they spoke (Zhou 2012). Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai also issued a political policy called 'go to countryside*' [三下乡] that required huge numbers of governmental officials, doctors, scientists and college students to go into the rural areas (countryside) to work. It was argued that this political policy was designed to devalue the position of elites by forcing them into rural areas and as a means of making them less threatening to the government (Zhou 2012). Furthermore, Mao also tried to eliminate some traditions which he regarded as old-fashioned and that he considered hindered the modernization of China, for example, those associated with Confucianism (Cushing and Tompkins 2007).

The 'Cultural Revolution' phase ended with Mao's death in 1978 and ushered in what has been termed the period of 'Open Up'. Here, Deng restructured Mao's planned economy and combined it with elements of a market economy, including privatization of some state-owned companies. This resulted in the closure of companies and caused some state employees to be unemployed* [下岗]. It was also said that the 'iron bowl' has been broken (e.g., employment was no longer guaranteed and many of the welfare benefits attached to state-owned companies that had been controlled by provincial and municipal governments were also lost) (Groves et al., 1994). The reforms of Deng marked the beginning of China's transitional period. The goal of this restructuring was to 'open up' China to the outside world in terms of foreign trade, foreign investment, foreign technology and export-led development. However, the market economy is not all market based. The government oversees the economy and ensures that it works under certain degree of plans and regulations (Thomas 2010). In addition, the Contract Responsibility Reform, which was issued after 1978, also prompted the growth of agricultural production especially in rural areas (Li and Pichaud 2004). This reform ensured that each household had certain amount of land to cultivate by which to achieve the contracted output required by the government. Any surplus production can be managed by the household itself. Consequently, the household has more motivation to increase the amount of agricultural production. The Contract Responsibility Reform has been characterized as household farming for profit (Thomas 2010). As a result of these reforms, China's annual average economic growth rate has remained between 8 to 10 percent since 1978 (Thomas 2010). However, China also encountered challenges, such as a deteriorating economic situation and negotiating its educational expansion and the increased costs associated with children. Current political power in China resides firmly with central government under the control of the CCP. In other words, it is a centralized bureaucratic system under Communist Party leadership. It is a one-party system and it can be oppressive when it encounters challenges and oppositions (Thornton 2008).

Social, cultural, economic and demographic change

In 2010, Chinese GDP was predominately related to an industrial (46.8%) and service sector (43.6%) with a smaller agricultural sector (9.6%) (Putna 2011; Tisdell 2011). The Chinese economy has also undergone a rapid process of urbanization. For instance, in 2010 about fifty-three percent of the Chinese population lived in rural areas and by 2012 around fifty-one percent lived in urban areas (Gong et al., 2012; Long 2014). The rate of urbanization is rising by about 1% a year (Zheng et al., 2007) and is predicted to continue at the same pace of urbanization for the next ten to twenty years (Chan 2010a). Urbanization is seen as the main contributor to the growth of domestic demand and is therefore regarded as the main driver of future development (Webster 2004).

In recent decades, China's demographic profile has been utterly altered by exceptional population changes. These changes have driven and been driven by the country's economic growth and have redefined people's day-to-day life. For example, the 2010 census identified that from 2000 to 2010, the population of mainland China had grown at an annual average rate of 0.67% with the total population reaching 1.3397 billion in 2010. There have also been changes in the main age groups across the population that suggest that China has an increasingly aging population. The population of those aged 0 to 14 years declined from 22.9% in 2000 to 16.6% in 2010 whilst the proportion of people aged 65 years and over grew from 7.0% to 8.9% in the same period (Peng 2011).

The current demographic picture in China reflects other transitions that have taken place over the past few decades (see Table 3). For example, mortality rates have declined substantially with the crude death rate falling from around twenty-five deaths per thousand per year in the early 1950s to around seven deaths per thousand per year in 2011. In addition, life expectancy at birth has almost doubled from around forty years in the 1950s to around seventy-three years, though this is still relatively low when compared to Japan at eighty-two years and the UK at seventy-nine years (Index-Mundi 2011a). It is also the case that in poorer and more remote areas, such as Tibet, Yunnan, Guizhou

and Qinghai, life expectancy is lower at around sixty-five years (Gu 2009). In addition, infant mortality rates have also declined from just over two hundred deaths per thousand births in 1949 to around fourteen deaths per thousand births in 2010. However, China's infant mortality rate remains high when compared to Japan with an infant mortality rate of just below three deaths per thousand births and the UK which has a death rate of below five per thousand births (Index-Mundi 2011b). As with life expectancy, differential infant mortality rates exist between poorer rural and more affluent urban settings. In 2000 the infant mortality rate in the poorest rural areas was nine times higher than in large urban cities (Chan et al. 2008). Infant mortality rates in the most western provinces were also reported to be three to five times higher than those in developed eastern coastal areas (Ministry-of-Health 2011). It is also the case that fertility rates have also declined sharply in China, falling from around six births per woman in 1970 to below two births per woman in 2010 (Peng 2011).

Table 3 Major demographic indicators for mainland China

Indicator	1953	1964	1982	1990	2000	2010
Population (millions)	594.4	694.6	1008.2	1133.7	1265.8	1334
Birth rate (per 1000)	37.0	39.3	22.3	21.1	14.0	12.6
Death rate (per 1000)	14.0	11.6	6.6	6.7	6.5	7.1
Total fertility rate	5.8	5.8	2.6	2.3	1.7	1.5‡
Female life expectancy	–	–	69.3	70.5	73.3	76†
Male life expectancy	–	–	66.3	66.8	69.6	72†
Infant mortality rate	138.5	84.3	34.7	32.9	28.9	13.8

Percentage urban population	13.0	18.3	20.9	26.4	36.2	49.7
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Peng (2011) †Figures for 2009. ‡Estimated.

Concerns about the size of the population have long been the focus of state policies in China. For example, in the 1950s a series of family planning policies were introduced with the purpose of improving the health of the population and to help speed up economic development (Guo 2009). As a result, these policies focused on maternal and child health with clear guidelines on how to have a healthy pregnancy and how to promote children's health by providing proper nutritious food. Then in the nineteen sixties, concerns about the growth in population saw the introduction of family planning policies, referred to as the 'late long low' policies, that encouraged later childbirth, longer spacing between births and fewer children (Hesketh et al., 2005). These policies were assisted by increasing women's access to contraceptives and to terminations. However, continuing concerns about the growth of the population resulted in the introduction of the One Child Policy in the late nineteen seventies (Chan et al., 2006).

In essence the One Child Policy means that each family is restricted to having only one child. It has been informed by Chinese family planning practices and has led to a significant increase in the number of families with one only child (Yin 2010). The One Child Policy is the first formal planning policy in China or elsewhere in the world to be enforced by strict punishment, including imprisonment. There are also economic benefits for those families who comply and huge fines, takeover of belongings and dismissal from employment for those families who do not comply (Hesketh et al., 2005). In addition to restrictions on family size, it also has implications for late marriage and child bearing and the spacing of children (in those cases where a second child is permitted) (Hesketh et al., 2005). The rationale for the One Child Policy was primarily regarded as neo-Malthusian in that it focused on the relationship between population and development and was informed by the

government's ambition to improve the general standards of living of the Chinese Population (Wang and Mason 2006).

The State Family Planning Bureau determines the targets and sets policy guidelines. Family-planning committees in provinces and municipalities develop plans of action to suit local realities (Hesketh et al., 2005). The policy is harshly imposed in relation to urban residents and state employees. However, the policy gives some leeway to certain groups. These include, families in which the first child has a disability; in cases where both parents work in high-risk occupations; if both parents are themselves from one-child families (only in some areas); in certain minority ethnic groups, such as Hui, a second and even third child is allowed if they live in remote and underpopulated areas; and those living in rural areas where a second child is permitted five years after the first birth (Hesketh et al., 2005). According to official sources, these recent family planning policies, especially the One Child Policy, have achieved their aim of a steady population size (Goh and Kuczynski 2010). For example, the government claims that the One Child Policy has helped to decrease the population by 400 million people over the last three decades (Cartier 2006).

However, the One Child Policy has also raised a number of concerns. The apparent success of the policy is partly due to the number of terminations that have taken place in China with 31% of women of reproductive age having had at least one termination, as compared with 43% in the United States (Winckler 2002). There has also been an increase in the use of prenatal sex determination technologies (e.g., ultrasound scanning) resulting in sex-selective terminations (Chan et al., 2008; Chu 2001; Hemminki et al., 2005; Vermeer 2006). In 2013, data from Chinese Health Bureau showed that there have been 330,000,000 abortions in China since 1973 (Epoch Times 2013). The main reasons given for abortion are contraceptive failure and a lack of government approval for the pregnancy (Hardee et al., 2004). However, there is also the non-acceptance of female children if there is not a son to continue the bloodline and to care for adults in older life (Vermeer 2006). The latter is a significant factor in China's unusual sex ratio at birth. In 2007, for

every one hundred girls born there were one hundred and twenty four boys (Wei and Zhang 2009).

The government, media and general population have shown great concern over this gender imbalance. It is suggested, for example, that the low numbers of women compared to men may have led to the growth of mental health problems and socially disruptive behaviour among men because they are unable to get a wife and start a family (Hudson and Den Boer 2002; Tujapurkar et al., 1995). It is estimated that by 2020 there could be as many as between thirty and forty million men who will not be able to find a partner simply due to the lack of women in China (Coontz 2006). Another consequence of the One Child Policy is the rapidly aging population in China (Wang 2005a; Zhang and Goza 2006). The rapid decline in the birth rate related to this policy combined with increasing life expectancy has resulted in a rising percentage of older adults and a rise in the ratio between elderly parents and adult children (Chen and Silverstein 2000; Zhan and Montgomery 2003). The percentage of the Chinese population over the age of 65 years is expected to rise to more than fifteen by 2025 (World Bank 2014). It also argued that seventy percent of elderly people will be financially dependent on their children due to a lack of adequate pension coverage in China (Sun 1998). Only people who work for government and large companies are eligible for a pension (Saunders and Shang 2001). This problem is referred to as the '1:2:4' phenomenon, as one couple will be solely responsible for one child and four parents (Daniels 2006).

Linked to the One Child Policy has been a decline in family size in China. The average family declined from 5.3 persons per household in the late 1940s to 4.8 persons per household in the 1970s (Mahadevan et al. 1994). There has been a further steady decline since then with the average household containing 3.4 (3.6 in rural and 3.1 in urban areas) persons in 2004 (Vermeer 2006). Alongside the One Child Policy this decline is also associated with rising affluence in Chinese society (Sun 1998; Vermeer 2006; World Bank 2003).

There has also been a change in the composition of Chinese households primarily due to a decrease in the number of extended family households (Xu et al., 2007). Traditionally, Chinese households contained three and four generations of the same family, but these households decreased from 24.3% in 1982 to 19% in 2000 with the nuclear household becoming the majority unit comprising 66.02% of all households in China (Settles et al., 2013; Yi and Wang 2003). That said, the family remains the major elder-care institution (Xu et al., 2007). Yi and Wang (2003) found that the proportion of three generation households increased from 18.97% in 1990 to 20.89% in 2000. They do not suggest that China is going back to traditional family structures, but that one set of parents often live with one of their married (often male) children. This change in household size has also been linked with the shift from a predominately agricultural economy that required a household labour force to an industrial and service sector economy that does not depend on household size (Norris 2001).

However, it is also important to recognise that China is not alone in implementing interventionist anti-natalist policies. For example, the literature on the state and reproductive policies notes that in the 1960s India implemented anti-natalist initiatives to lower the birth rate through a programme of family planning based upon the mass sterilisation of couples with more than three children (Matthews et al., 2009). The introduction of incentive-based sterilisations, including vasectomy, motivated many families to accept sterilisation after their third child even though the policy appears to have had long term effects on the health of women and men, including evidence of reduced endocrine function (Varma et al., 1975). In contrast, other countries have promoted pro-natalist policies rather than supporting family planning programs. For example, Israel has actively encouraged Jewish women to have as many babies as possible, beginning with the award of 'heroine mother' in 1949 that was given to women having ten or more children (Kananeh 2002). In addition, the Natality Committee and The Demographic Centre were set up with the specific goal of increasing the reproduction of Jewish women (Brienbaum-Carmeli 2004). Further, Israeli governments have also implemented policies which have given special

allowances to families having three or more children, including child allowances, welfare payments and housing assistance (Helmann 2011). These strategies have been driven by the desire for a Jewish majority within Israel (Kananeh 2002).

Another factor in changing household composition has been governmental policy regarding the widening of housing markets that has allowed far greater numbers of young couples to buy their own homes and so leave the family home (Xu et al., 2007). In the 1950s the government established a public housing system in cities as a form of welfare for urban employees. The work units* [单位] received funding from the government to house urban employees at low rents (Li and Piachaud 2004). However, this system proved expensive and a series of housing reforms from the late 1970s onwards have encouraged individuals to purchase their own housing, which has also resulted in the cost of housing increasing, particularly in recent years (Wang 2006). For example, in 2000 the average selling price of housing in Guangzhou was about RMB 3,700 per m² which had increased to 8000 RMB by 2010 (Ye 2010). This compares to average income in Guangzhou at RMB 1,590 per month in 2001 (Tian 2008). Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that in cities such as Guangzhou as many as two thirds of people own their homes with around one third of the population living in rented accommodation (Wang 2006).

China has also witnessed a trend in later marriage. Wang and Mason (2006) found that in the 1930s and 1940s most men and women were married by the time they were 19 years old. More recently, Lin and Feng (2006) found that the majority of male university graduates did not marry until they were 26 years old and for female university graduates it was 24 years. In 2010, a report from the Ministry for Civil Affairs showed that 12% of all men who married that year were over the age of 40 years. Moreover, whilst 37% of all men who married were aged between 20 and 24 years this had decreased from 47% of men in 2005 (Wang 2006). This pattern of later marriage is also evident in the West with men now marrying at a later age compared to

previous generations (Davin 2007). Deterioration in the labour market position of young males has been put forward as a possible explanation for the postponement of marriage (Sobotka 2011). It has also been argued that the educational structure can have an impact on the timing of marriage and the realization of parenthood (Alic 2009). In China, the system of higher education expanded in 1998 that has given more people a chance to go to university that may mean they delay other life decisions.

Traditionally, China has experienced a relatively low divorce rate. However, the rate of divorce in China has been steadily increasing in recent years with the rate of divorce (number of divorces per 1,000 married population) increasing from 0.85 divorces per thousand in 1979 to 2.62 per thousand in 2007 (Wang and Zhou 2010). The main reasons given for couples wanting a divorce have been the division of family chores (Wang 2001), love affairs (Wang 2001; Zhang 2002), unsatisfied sexual life (Zhao and Chen 2008), different career goals (Jiang 1995; Li et al., 2007) and couples working in different cities (Jiang 1995; Zhao 1994). However, the divorce rate in China is low in comparison to the UK. In 2011, there were 10.8 divorces per thousand married population (Office for National Statistics 2011).

Since the late 1990s, China has also experienced large-scale rural-urban migration that is unparalleled in the nation's history and unprecedented in other parts of the world. The census in 2010 showed that there are 160 million rural-urban migrants across China with 26 million migrants living in the cities of Guangdong province (Chan 2012). Rural poverty and the chance to share in China's economic growth are the main reasons for this migration (Fan 2002; Li 2006; Rozelle et al., 1999). Three main routes have been identified that enable people to migrate into urban areas, namely employment, education, or the military (Zhao 2004). However, only those migrants who serve in the army or acquire employment with a university degree are granted Urban Hukou (Hu et al., 2011; Wu 2009). Hukou refers to a system of welfare and is based upon household registration; people register as a Rural Hukou holder or Urban Hukou holder. The main difference between the two is that the Urban Hukou holder has access to greater welfare entitlements from the state including

access to state housing, schooling and medical care (Cheng and Selden 1994; Zhang and Zhao 2001).

Migrants without Urban Hukou status tend to be concentrated in low-skilled and low income employment (Fan 2002). They tend to have lower educational attainment and live in poorer often overcrowded housing (Zheng et al., 2009). The children of many migrant workers cannot access formal education as the education budget is strictly allocated to the Urban Hukou population. Therefore, many migrant workers have to pay for their children to attend public schools and these children have to return to their parents' place of origin if they wish to enter examinations to access higher education (Jin 2012). As a result of their poorer standards of living, many migrants leave their children behind in their place of origin; this group are referred to as 'left behind children' (Kong and Meng 2010). Studies report that 'left behind children' are more likely to leave school at a young age, perform poorly in school, and experience problems in terms of socialization and psychological development (Biao 2007; Gao et al., 2010; Jia et al., 2010; Liang et al., 2008). In most cases, 'left behind children' are looked after by often poorly-educated grandparents (Biao 2007). However, to date, studies have not focused on fathers' experiences as migrants and how they feel about leaving their children.

Chinese Culture and parenting

There are a range of significant and fundamental differences between Chinese culture and that of the West (Ho 1987). Holliday argues that culture 'indicates concrete, separate, behaviour-defining ethnic, national and international groups with material permanence and clear boundaries' (Holliday 1999: 242, cited by Clark and Gieve 2006). Chinese Culture is typically portrayed as highly collectivist and is demonstrative of a large 'power distance' culture; e.g., it is driven by a central authority (Zhang 2005). It is argued that the larger a society's power distance the more the system is identified with one or more powerful individuals. It is also the case that in societies with a large power distance people are more likely to accept a

hierarchical order in which they believe they have a place (Hofstede 1984a; Hofstede 1984b). Within such cultures, the interests of individuals are also generally regarded as subordinate to those of the group. Thus, pursuing personal needs and individual autonomy are considered selfish and anti-collective goals, therefore, are discouraged (Clark and Gieve 2006). In short, it is thought that in societies with a large power distance, people not only expect but prefer obedience and to be the subordinates of superiors. In turn, superiors expect loyalty and submission by subordinates (Smith and Hume 2005).

The foundation for Chinese philosophy is considered by many to reside with Confucius (551-479BC) (Chan 2008). Indeed, Yao (2000: 10) has argued that 'Chinese culture, and to some degree, East Asian Culture, would be forever linked with Confucius's name'. Thus, Confucius is considered in the same light as other great 'thinkers' such as Socrates (Aoki 2008). Even in the 18th Century, when Western thought was first considered important, Confucian social values were still given primacy and thought to be the cure to China's problems (Chan and Adler 2013). Moreover, whilst it is considered by many that a transition has taken place from the traditional values rooted in Confucian heritages towards more modern and secular values, it is apparent that the spirit of Confucian thought has become unconsciously retained in the nation; contained within people's world-view and the way they interpret themselves (Junghare 2009; Rainey 2005; Shi 2006; Shi 2007).

Confucius' teachings traditionally emphasize the virtues of family rules, including authority, filial piety (e.g., the young both support and are subordinate to the old), the roles of fathers and mothers within the family, plus the notion that men demonstrate strictness and should be less expressive in relation to their families (Ikels 2004). These teachings also characterise the expectations of parenting in relation to their children, particularly regarding children's moral conduct and a clear emphasis on the importance of education. Many aspects of these traditional teachings continue to guide parents in contemporary China and underlie their parenting practice in relation to control (Chiu 1987). Chiu (1987) argues that in China, parents continue to be

considered as restrictive and controlling and to place a high value on strictness and the proper management of children's behaviour. Although there are other historical perspectives of parenting in China, in relation to family life Confucian thought continues to be the more broadly documented by a variety of researchers and historians (Chao and Tseng 2002).

The family unit has been highly valued, both in traditional and contemporary collectivistic Chinese society (King and Bond 1985). Traditional Chinese families are considered to be authoritarian and hierarchical with dominant elders, particularly male elders (Ho 1987; Lang 1968). The role of hierarchy within families is strengthened by moral and legal regulations, for instance, filial piety that requires children to obey and respect parents. On the other hand, Chinese parents are required to take the responsibility to teach and train children (Hsu 1981).

The authoritarian ideology within Chinese families has its roots in Chinese culture. The Book of Li, which is one of the Confucius classics, details propriety of individual's behaviour, such as respect for authority (Chen and Chung 1994). The Confucian concept of Li emphasizes and regulates how individual maintain propriety, in terms of speech, gesture, and position, in interaction with others (Chen and Chung 1994). The evidence suggests that Chinese people tend to be sensitive to their hierarchical position in social structures and will behave in ways designed to display, enhance, and protect both the image and the reality of this position (Hong and Engestrom 2004). This culture of respect and obedience also applies to the majority of ethnic minorities in China (Mackerras 2003).

Alongside the concept of Li is the concept of Filial Piety that is characterised by 'age veneration and patriarchy' (Chao and Tseng 2002). Thus, parents and elders are considered to be authoritative and to be respected. Research identifies a number of prescriptions for children's filial behaviour, which include caring for parents materially and emotionally, bringing honour and glory to the family and making sacrifices for the family (Chen et al., 2007; Ikels 2004). Parents are greatly involved in their children's lives and are expected

to provide advice and guidance even after the child becomes an adult and leaves the family home (Kipnis 2008). Children, in turn, are expected to consult with their parents and other family members on important decisions even in adulthood.

Ho (1996: 161) argues that filial piety is associated with authoritarian moralism that is defined as 'overcontrol, overprotection, and harshness; placement of emphasis on proper behaviour; neglect, even inhibition of the expressing of opinions, of independence, and of self-mastery'. In addition, alongside the cultural endorsement of parental authority, Chinese parents are encouraged to be more authoritarian and restrictive (Chen et al., 1998; Lin and Fu 1990). This is generally considered to include children being inculcated with the correct moral knowledge, moulded into a personality and being successful in schooling. Physical punishments should also be regarded as necessary and accepted, both by parents and by children. Indeed, harsh parenting is considered to be a legitimate safeguard against the failure of children to live up to parental demands or a device to ensure authority when children fail to behave themselves. 'The Family Instructions of Yen', that stems from the six-century AD, is a well-known foundational text for parents and is considered an exemplary model for family instruction. It states that if beating and anger are abandoned in the family, the failure of children will immediately appear (Lewis 2007). Moreover, it also considered the case that if punishment is not properly administered then individuals, just as society, will experience difficulties because people do not know how to behave; e.g., 'to rule a family strictly should be the same as to rule a nation' (Lieh-Mak et al., 1985). Clearly, many examinations of Chinese parenting and strictness tend to involve reference to the sort of person parents want their children to grow up to be and what is the best way to achieve that objective (Chao and Tseng 2002). Within this, in China, child achievement is closely linked to the reputation of the family. For example, it is commonly believed that children not behaving properly or successfully is a poor reflection on the parents and brings dishonour not only to the family, but also to their ancestors (Luo 1996).

However, whilst Chinese parents tend to be deemed as more controlling when compared with Western parents, in Chinese culture parental control is connected with care and concern. Thus, it is argued that Chinese parental strategies for discipline and behavioural control are 'love oriented' (Chao 1994). Chao (1995) uses the traditional Chinese term 'guan' (the literal translation is 'training') to describe Chinese parenting, which refers to govern/train/discipline with love. Generally, Chinese parents have been found to be highly committed to children's upbringing and often described as self-sacrificial for children's wellbeing (Xu et al., 2005). That said, and consistent with the cultural emphasis on parental power and directedness, Chinese parents have traditionally been discouraged from demonstrating affectionate involvement in their childrearing (Chao and Tseng 2002; Ho 1987). Thus, in order for parents to maintain their authority they are required to control their emotional and affectionate reactions during parent-child interactions. Parental engagement in intimate communications and the explicit expression of affection to the child are often regarded as practices that may undermine parental power in the training of the child (Chao and Tseng 2002). Indeed, in Confucian philosophy, emotional expression in social interactions is generally viewed as socially inappropriate and individuals who are expressive may be considered as poorly trained and socially immature (Ho 1987). Studies have therefore found that Chinese parents are less likely to appreciate parental warmth and affective exchange in childrearing (Chen et al., 1998; Ho 1987) and they may appear less responsive and affectionate to their children (Chen et al., 1998).

In Chinese societies the primary concern in raising children has traditionally focused on morality: the proper development of character (O'Brien and Lau 1995). Confucians believe that morality informs rules of conduct that are usually interpreted as absolute and universal. The typical Confucian moral model is named 'ren', which has been diversely understood as love, benevolence, human-heartedness, sympathy and perfect virtue (Ma 1988). Confucius said, 'the man of ren is one who, desiring to develop himself, develops others, and in desiring to sustain himself, sustains others. To be able from one's own self to draw a parallel for the treatment of others; that

may be called the way to practise ren' (Welty 1973: 143-144). However, this type of teaching and expectation is often considered to be more for boys than girls (Cheung 1996). In other words, 'the Confucian ideal is a sage; a man who through long study and self-discipline has developed humanness of love (ren)' (Wright 1964: vii-viii). He is one who has attained the highest wisdom, which is similar to Plato's ideal man (Ho 1981).

As mentioned, children's morality is seen to have an effect on the reputation of the whole family (Dien 1982). All infringements of the moral code or acts that are contrary to proper behaviour are viewed in terms of the depreciation of character. This loss of reputation is felt intensely and is named as 'loss of lian' (Hu 1944). The foundation principle of 'lian' entails the virtues of a 'decent' man and its 'loss' can result in humiliation. Thus, the fear of 'losing lian' can ensure that individuals have more consciousness of moral boundaries and will maintain moral values because they are wary of social sanctions. Moreover, much social activity in Chinese culture is operated on the basis of trust and if people lose face they can face difficulties (Hwang 2012). Therefore, a great deal of traditional Chinese parenting has focused on the training of moral character.

Children's schooling is also regarded as the primary responsibility of Chinese parents. Chinese parental expectations therefore include a significant emphasis on educational achievement, which has been seen as an important cultural distinction when compared to the parenting in the West (Chao and Tseng 2002). Thus, much societal and parental importance is placed on educational achievement to the extent that for many Chinese men, their parental efficacy is evaluated based on their children's excellence in academic performance (Chao 1996). Educational attainment has increased in importance since the 'Open Up' era in which schools have focused on equipping children with knowledge which is beneficial to the new economic situation (Liu 1998). In 1980s, a saying emerged that said 'if you learn well in chemistry, physics and mathematics, you can lead a good life anywhere in China' (Classical Education 2010). In short, learning scientific subjects was believed to secure a person's living informed by the country's need to develop

science for economic growth. However, prior to 1998, education was not a universal right for all people (Meng et al., 2013). Prior to this, education focused on small classes aimed at producing elites and only limited numbers of students were enrolled by universities (Zang 2001). The University Entrance Examination was also highly competitive and said to be that thousands of horses competed for the single-beam bridge * [千军万马过独木桥]. Only after 1999 did universities in China start to recruit more students (Huang 2003).

This section has discussed recent social, political, cultural and demographic changes that have taken place in China that form the backdrop within which Chinese fathering operates. The section has identified how China has gone through significant change in the space of two generations as the country has moved from a predominately agricultural to an industrial/service sector economy with significant improvements in the health and standards of living for many, but not all, of its population. The section has also explored the impact of the One Child Policy on the gender balance of the population and looked at how aspects of traditional Chinese culture can inform the views and practices of parents in relation to their children. However, as the following section highlights, little of this work has focused explicitly on the experiences of fathers or their views on fathering and fatherhood and even less has taken account of how aspects of masculine identity can impact on men's roles as fathers.

Fathering and fatherhood in China

This section explores the relevant research and literature regarding what is currently known about fathering and fatherhood in China. As it does so, it makes connections with earlier discussions concerning fathering and fatherhood in the West and sets this against the changing social, cultural and economic terrain within China. The section begins by discussing what has been identified as traditional Chinese images of the 'strict father', within the context of authoritarian/authoritative parenting, and also explores an apparent shift to softer more involved fathering that mirrors to some extent what is

happening in the West. The section concludes with a review of the literature regarding Chinese studies of masculinity. It is important to note that relatively little research has focused on fathers in gender specific terms, with the majority of research concentrating on the term 'parent' which scholars use to encompass both fathers and mothers even in cases where the study was predominately with either mothers or fathers.

Shifts in fathering and fatherhood within China

It is necessary to begin by distinguishing between authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles as it is generally thought that authoritative parenting is more prevalent in the West and authoritarian parenting more prevalent in the East, though this rather simplistic distinction is beginning to be questioned (Porter et al., 2005). The notion of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles is based upon Baumrind's (1967) seminal study of pre-school children that identified four important dimensions of parenting: disciplinary strategies, warmth and nurturance, communication styles, and expectation of maturity and control. From this, Maccoby (1992) identified a difference between authoritarian parenting and authoritative parenting styles. Authoritarian parenting styles were characterized by parents wanting to control their children through setting rules and limits to ensure that children behaved well. This style of parenting was also characterized as having little warmth or expression of love. As such, parents usually informed children of what to do, they provided them with few choices, and tried to make them obey. They also imposed requirements without explaining to their children the reasons for this. If a child questioned the regulation, the parent might respond with 'because I said so'. In contrast, those with an authoritative parenting style made rules and guidelines clear to their children so that they understood. This parenting style was regarded as being more democratic. Authoritative parents were apparently more approachable and ready to respond to questions. When children failed to reach their expectations, these parents appeared to be more forgiving and encouraging rather than punishing.

To date, research on Chinese parenting styles has tended to be quantitative in nature. It has often used questionnaires to examine parenting attitudes and behaviors and has used the terms 'paternal control' and 'paternal warmth' to reflect authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles (e.g., Chen et al., 2001; Chuang and Su 2009a). Much of the research regarding parenting differences between Chinese fathers and mothers appears to reflect the traditional distinction/adage of 'strict father, kind mother' (Chao and Tseng 2002; Ho 1987). Similar to studies of other patriarchal societies, fathers are considered to wield greater decision-making power within the home and in relation to their children. Within this model of parenting, fathers are believed to exert more control whilst mothers display more warmth. It is also suggested that Chinese fathers do not typically display emotional closeness or affection towards their children. In comparison, Chinese mothers are thought to provide more emotional support and their parenting is attributed with having more positive effects on their children's emotional well-being and perceptions of self-esteem (Chen et al., 1997; Chen et al., 2000).

Traditionally, therefore, fathers in China have been portrayed as strict, less likely to show affection and that their children view them as having authority (Ho 1987). In contrast, mothers are perceived as warmer parents than fathers (Chen et al., 2001). Chao and Tseng (2002), for example, found that fathers are more likely to retain certain cultural values with regard to child rearing. These cultural values tend to be consolidated in the form of habitual, unquestioned rules. The evidence suggests that Chinese fathers tend to play a lesser role when their children are young and then gradually take up roles, particularly as disciplinarians, as their children grow up (Ho and Kang 1984). Thus, compared with mothers, fathers are the authority figure in the Chinese family and are therefore expected to play a more important role in the discipline of their children and in relation to education (Ho 1987). The expectations placed on fathers to exert their authority and to enforce strictness, particularly concerning education, are clearly apparent in the aphorism; 'rearing without education is the fault of father'. This stems from the *Three-Character Classic*, produced in the thirteenth century, but a chief primary school reading book and memorised by millions of Chinese children

(Chao 1976). Following on from this, Chen et al., (2000) found that strong paternal control positively predicted later social competence for children. Whereas, if fathers were deemed to have 'spoiled' their children it appeared to be related to negative social and academic performance. Thus, if fathers were deemed to have failed to place adequate expectations and requirements on their children then those children were perceived to be more likely to demonstrate poorer academic performance and to be more self-focused (Chen et al., 2001).

Thus, Chao and Tseng (2002) found that there is often an assumption that fathers are less responsive and affectionate given the traditional fathering role as disciplinarians and given that they ultimately hold responsibility for parental authority and control. Yet, there is also evidence that the reality may be different. For example, Solomon (1971) argued that Chinese fathers did have warmth and affection for their children. Although fathers were expected to be strict disciplinarians, they executed this role from the heart with love. As Solomon stated it was the traditional fathering role as disciplinarian that prevented men from showing affection. He drew from the historical record of men as fathers; 'a father loved his child with all his heart, but he would not express it' (1971: 60).

These studies suggest that both authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles exist among Chinese fathers (Chen et al., 2001; Chuang and Su 2009a). Chen (et al., 1997; 2000; 2001), for example, found that many fathers required obedience, showed no affection, had less inductive reasoning and were highly controlling (Chen et al., 1997; 2000). Other studies have also found that fathers were more distant and their relationships with their children were less close than in the case of mothers (Liu and Guo 2010; Zhou 2000). Research has also shown that Chinese fathers were less likely to use inductive reasoning in relation to their children and tended instead to endorse restrictive and high-power approaches (e.g., strict control and discipline) and emphasize children's obedience (Chao 1994). In contrast, other scholars have found evidence of more paternal warmth in their findings (e.g., Liu and Guo 2010, Liu et al., 2010). These studies also suggest that Chinese fathers no

longer require absolute obedience from their children and that they tend to have more democratic relationships with children. Similarly, Chao (2000) found that parents preferred to guide their children rather than impose absolute control. Thus, parents often have specific requirements and standards for their children's behavior, but they also seek to explain the reasons for such requests and expectations that give children greater autonomy to 'make up their own minds' (Gorman 1998: 78).

In addition, parenting studies in Hong Kong have found a mixture of traditional Chinese and Western characteristics, which undoubtedly reflect the composition of the region more generally. Here it has been argued that a redistribution of power has taken place between husband and wife (Ho 1974; Lee 1991; Pearson 1990) and that the younger generation of parents tend to be less authoritarian than their parents (Lau and Yeung 1996). Thus, it appears that a more democratic approach is being adopted in relation to child care practice and that parents are more likely to resort to reasoning in the process of disciplining or teaching their children (Cheung et al., 1986). Further research also shows that contemporary families tend to be less inclined to use controlling techniques to discipline their children and allow their children to be more assertive and independent (Cheung et al., 1990). Research has also found that Mainland Chinese parents who have an understanding of Western patterns of child-rearing are more likely to appreciate inductive reasoning and democratic forms of control rather than the assertion of power in their interaction with children (Xu et al., 2005).

Therefore, just as China as a whole has experienced huge social and cultural change so it appears that fathers' behaviour is also seen to be changing. More recently, fathers are increasingly perceived by children as being as involved and to be as warm and affectionate as mothers (Chen et al., 2001). Fathers have been shown to express their warmth by providing guidance and assistance to children in learning social skills, acquiring social status, and achieving academic attainment. Many studies have also found that paternal warmth and involvement play positive roles in children's social and academic performance (Chao and Tseng 2002; Liu et al., 2010). Abbott et al., (1992)

used questionnaires to explore evidence of this transformation. For instance, they explored subjects such as fathers' perceptions of the gains and pains of fathering and how they could improve their fathering. They found that two thirds of fathers reported that it was pleasing and rewarding to teach and help their children, to accompany them and see the children grow. Nearly half of the fathers in this study also regarded it as difficult to discipline their children when they misbehaved. Importantly, the study shows that twenty-five percent of fathers wanted to gain more understanding of child development and parenting through parent education.

The authors linked these changes to economic factors (e.g., more women entering the job market), political factors (e.g., government-promoted gender equality), and cultural factors (e.g., the influence of western child-rearing values). In other studies, fathers were also found to expect more of their children in the way of personal qualities (such as maturity) that better met the needs of contemporary society (Chuang and Su 2009a; Kurrien and Vo 2004). The implementation of the One Child Policy has also been seen as having the potential to inform changing attitudes and behaviours amongst fathers. For example, a number of researchers have suggested that the One Child Policy has resulted in parents' increasing affection toward children and a shifting of the Chinese family towards a more child-centred perspective (Ho 1987; Jiao et al., 1986). The greater involvement of fathers in Chinese families may also be due to a greater cultural emphasis on the father's role in child development and socialization that has been witnessed elsewhere – as countries become richer so the 'economic value' of children decreases and their 'emotional value' rises (Ho 1987; Trommsdorff 2009; World Bank 2003). A more recent study by Jankowiak (2010), through ethnographic case studies and observational studies conducted between 1981 and 2009, also suggests that fathers in urban areas prefer a closer, warmer relationship with their children. He attributes much of this change to a new urban infrastructure that includes (1) women working outside the home, (2) smaller domestic space consisting of one-room apartments, which place fathers and children in constant close proximity, and (3) new notions promoting fatherly involvement from media and Western culture. Similarly, studies of fathers with young children suggest that

fathers participated in the decision-making on what kind of food their children had and when they went to bed, which the authors regarded as a transformation from the old image of the distant father (Chuang and Su 2009b).

It is also the case, as Chen et al., (2001) have found, that Chinese parents can find it a challenge to keep a balance between showing love and affection and exerting discipline. This is particularly apparent in relation to only children who many parents believe are 'spoiled' by their families (Jiao et al., 1986; Tao and Chiu 1985). Thus, parents want to have affectionate relationships with their children but are also concerned that this may make it more difficult to place limits on their children and that they may not be helping their children to learn self-control. Parents have also to contend with the evidence that suggests children who experience less in the way of boundaries are more likely to exhibit more negative behavioural qualities, including selfishness, poor peer relationships, and negative attitudes (Chen et al., 2001). In contrast, Wu (1996) argues that alongside parental concerns regarding the 'spoiling' of only children, parents are more demanding of only children than parents in previous generations who had more than one child on whom to focus their attention.

Within this, education is an aspect of parenting that has traditionally been seen as the responsibility of fathers. Keith et al., (1993) identified four general types of involvement: (1) expectations for children's school achievement, (2) participation in school activities and programs, (3) discussion between parents and children about school, and (4) a home structure that supports learning (e.g., family rules about homework). As Tu (1985) points out, the requirement of a successful father in a Confucian context is scholarly achievement and moral attainment by his children. In general, Chinese parents tend to hold the view that one cannot be successful without a good education (Steinberg et al., 1992). Therefore, it is important for the father, who has primary responsibility to maintain and enhance the reputation of the family, to optimise their children's educational achievement and as such fathers tend to place a high priority on their children's education (Tsui 2005). Education is seen as key to

financial security and so parents expect their children to study hard and to attend university. Studies (Goh and Kuczynski 2010; Kipnis 2001; Tsui 2005) have found that parents often seek to elevate their children's performance through the funding of private tutors.

The evidence also suggests that children in more affluent households perform fewer household tasks and other family obligations whilst children in less affluent households are less able to concentrate on their school work because their labour is required within the home (Chao and Tseng 2002). The evidence also suggests that parents are investing more in their children at an earlier age, for example, by sending them to early childhood centres to promote their intellectual development (Xin 2012). However, the fees at some of the more elite institutions (around 100,000 RMB per year) mean this is not an option for many parents (Yi et al., 2012). It also appears that parents are making greater efforts to send children to highly selective key-point primary, middle, and high schools to secure children's entry to an elite university. Moreover, a study in Guangzhou showed that the parents of those children who fail to achieve the entrance examinations are often willing to pay an extra entrance fee (10,000 to 30,000 RMB) (Tsui 2005). All of this has been seen to put extra pressure on fathers in terms of them providing both academic and financial support to ensure that their children achieve as high as possible in terms of their academic attainment.

It is increasingly suggested therefore that there may have been a shift in fathering experiences within China and that fathers may have developed more nurturing qualities. This echoes work from the West regarding the apparent shift to a more involved or intimate fathering where fathers appear to want closer relationships with their children (as discussed earlier in this chapter). Thus, the interest in fathers and fatherhood is no longer simply focused on the time that men spend with children, but also on their practice as fathers and men's emotional engagement with their children. However, in the context of China, the western notion of 'involved' fatherhood may not be as relevant to Chinese men. For instance, the notion of 'Guan' is the heart of Chinese parenting, which denotes the mixture of discipline with love (Chao 1986). In

other words, it appears that Chinese fathers are required to display this combination of harshness and warmth in ways that are less apparent in the West (Ho 1987 Chao and Tsang 2002). However, in China this area of research is still in its infancy and more qualitative studies are required to explore some of the issues raised and to reach a more nuanced understanding of fathering and fatherhood in China. As Chao and Tseng (2002: 74) have asserted, 'studies of Chinese fathers are especially needed to determine whether fathers today are as strict and harsh as traditional notions imply'. Furthermore, whilst it is apparent that fatherhood in China is increasingly seen complex with a wide range of fathering experiences, it is also the case that little of this work focuses on interaction of masculinity and fatherhood.

Men and masculinity studies in China

Four main themes are evident in the field of masculinity studies within China: masculinity within Chinese literature; historical changes in the imagery of men and masculinity; the portrayal of masculinity in the media and films; and perceived changes in masculinity among boys in contemporary China. In relation to the first of these themes, Chinese literature has tended to reinforce categorical thinking about men and women. For example, the Taoist Classic text - Yi Jing (The book of Changes) portrays a universal distinction between masculinity and femininity through the concept of the Yin-Yang. In this, Yin represents the essence of the female and Yang represents the essence of the male (Shen 1989; Yates 1997; Wang 2005b). Taoism is a Chinese philosophy that originated from the writings of Lao-tzu and is based on the premise of the harmonious relationship between man/women and the natural world (Wang 2005b). According to Taoism the binary relationship between Yin and Yang is not just useful for understanding sex/gender differences but can also be applied to all things in the cosmos. In this sense, the notion of the male-female binary has its counterparts in light-dark, fire-water and so on. Both Yin and Yang essences exist in human beings and are considered as continuously interacting, where Yin combines with Yang, and vice versa. Thus, masculine men are thought to have more Yang essence than Yin, whereas

effeminate men have less Yang essence than strong men. Similarly, strong women have more Yang essence than Yin essence. Thus, every man and woman can have both Yin and Yang essences at any moment, albeit in different proportions (Ryan and Louie 2007).

Other scholars have placed less emphasis on the conventional Yin-Yang binary in relation to notions of masculinity. For example, Louie (2002) believes that understandings of Chinese masculinity are better understood using another dyadic concept, that of Wen (characterized by literary attainment) and Wu (characterized by martial virtues). This classification of masculinity can be traced to two of the main types of service within Chinese society: on the one hand, the civil service (premised on written examinations) and on the other, military service (premised on skills such as archery and horsemanship) (Wang 2013). Thus, men who possess literary skills achieved success through the civil service and men who had military/practical skills achieved success in the military. These two types of masculine practice were considered necessary to produce a strong civil administration and a strong army to serve the country. Thus, the Wen factor can be understood through the classical portrayal of gentleman-scholar promoted by Confucius (Louie 2007). His masculinity is characterized by a handsome appearance, but physical weakness, along with androgynous and effeminate looks, literary talent, heterosexual orientation, and status in the civil service. The Wu factor is characterized as the macho warrior, who embodies martial virtue and personal loyalty to his leaders and brotherhood (Louie 2007).

Van Gulik (1974) has taken a historical perspective in relation to changing dominant ideas about masculinity and notes that the notion of what constitutes masculine attractiveness has changed over time and particular dynasties, which he relates to the changing preferences regarding certain physical activities. For instance, during the Tang period (AD 618-907) men were considered to be fashionable if they grew beards and moustaches. They also focused on body-building exercises and practiced military arts (e.g., shooting). However, by the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911) there was a shift towards masculine beauty whilst bodily strength and body hair were

regarded as features associated with barbarians. The masculine ideal for young men was portrayed as hypersensitive and physically frail whilst characteristics associated with merchants and entrepreneurs, such as wealth and business success, were not seen as desirable masculine traits (Van Gulik 1974). In contrast, these are now considered highly desirable masculine ideals premised on the notion that American values have come to the fore (e.g., wealth as a sign of achievement and success) together with a masculine association with objects such as brand-name accessories and electronic gadgets is also considered manly (Louie 2002).

Studies on masculinity have also explored the ways in which men have been portrayed in the media, television and film. For example, Lu's (2000) study of Chinese soap operas that focused on transnational romances between Chinese men and Russian and American women found that these tended to depict Chinese men as competing successfully with foreigners for the possession of women and resources. The author deemed this construction of masculinity was a metaphor designed to show that a socialist market economy could rival economies in the West. Similarly Song's (2010) analysis of prime-time television dramas suggests that the male characters in these dramas are also a product of traditional Chinese values. For instance, the main male character (ChenShouTing) in the TV drama serial 'Big Dyehouse' [大染房] is portrayed a loyal and hardworking man who sacrifices himself, either in relation to the company for whom he works or for his country.

In contrast to these more traditional depictions of masculinity, a major Chinese newspaper, Xinhua, has questioned whether boys were 'in crisis' (Xinhua 2010 August 7). This was premised on the suggestion that boys appeared to be physically inferior to previous generations. They appeared to be lacking in manly traits, such as accepting their social responsibilities, and appeared mentally and emotionally less capable than girls. Thus, in short, within contemporary society boys appear to be increasingly characterized by a lack of masculinity. General concerns about the lack of masculine identity among younger men are illustrated in a recent phenomenon in which boys are

sent to camps at the request of their parents to enable them to be tutored in a range of masculine roles and responsibilities (Deng 2008). Scholars have attributed this concern regarding young men to two main factors. The first relates to the One Child Policy and the fear that in many one-child families young boys are more likely to be 'spoiled' by their parents and grandparents, which was seen as harming the development of their character as men (Gu 1998; Settles et al., 2013). Therefore, boys should be encouraged to become 'real men' by learning to face their responsibilities and to become more independent. The second relates to perceived changes in fashion in which young boys look and behave like girls (Xu 2010). To combat this, it has been suggested that the media in China should provide stronger masculine role models to help guide young men. The femininity associated with many of China's contemporary male idols was deemed to be confusing for boys in their formative years (Hird 2009). This potential blurring of clear gender role models has also been seen influenced by wider changes as the global economy has become more information and knowledge based (Gerson 2010). Thus, many conventional masculine characteristics, such as brute strength and courageousness, are no longer deemed to be as preferential and socially validated as they were when China was a predominately agrarian society.

In the main, masculinity studies in China have tended to focus on strong bio-cultural differences between men and women (Lu 1993). As such, the existing literature is helpful for understanding traditional notions of masculinity (Wang 2005b). However, concepts such as the Wen-Wu dyad appear a little outdated given evident changes in masculine identity that appear to have emerged within the contemporary social and economic context of China (Gerson 2010). Thus, this study is also interested in exploring the extent to which Western theories of masculinities help us to understand the apparent shifts in notions of fathering and fatherhood within China.

In summary, this section has explored the research and literature in relation to Chinese fathering and fatherhood that tend to suggest that a shift may be taking place in which fathers are deemed to be moving from a predominately authoritarian position exemplified by the notion of a 'strict father' to a more

involved position that is characterized by men's apparent wish for warmer and closer bonds with their children. However, very little of the research within China has focused on fathers' own experiences and perceptions of fathering. In addition, relatively little is known about the experiences of different generations of fathers. The section has also explored what is known about men and masculinity within the context of China. This has shown how the traditional framework for understanding masculinity has relatively little to say about the diverse contemporary presentations of masculinity and relatively little work has been done in the way of empirical studies on contemporary masculinity or in relation to differences between groups of men.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the three main bodies of literature relevant to this thesis. In the West it appears that shifts have taken place that suggest men have increasing involvement in the care of their children. This apparent shift has also highlighted tensions in many men's experiences as fathers as they struggle to negotiate both their work and family environments. The ways in which fathers as men negotiate this terrain have also become a feature of recent research. The chapter then reviewed the literature regarding China and recent changes in the social, cultural and economic circumstances as this provides the terrain upon which fathering takes place. The chapter then concluded with a review of the literature regarding fathering and fatherhood in China that suggests that similar shifts as those experienced in the West may be taking place, but this work has not drawn on the experiences of men themselves and virtually no work has explored issues relating to fatherhood and masculinity within China.

This thesis intends to contribute to addressing this situation by providing greater understanding and analysis of younger and older men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood within one major city in mainland China. The thesis is also interested in understanding how men's experiences have changed in recent decades, and the factors associated with this within a Chinese context. In addition, the thesis will also provide evidence of the ways

in which men's own conceptualizations of masculinity impact their perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in mainland China.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter evaluated the theoretical approaches to fathers and fatherhood that have developed in the West and the current state of knowledge about this in China. This critical review has enabled the identification of research aims that seek to extend this knowledge base, both in the context of recent rapid social, cultural and economic changes in China and in relation to its historically unique policy framework:

a) To provide a theoretically informed and empirically rich understanding and analysis of men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in mainland China

b) To investigate how men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in China have changed in recent decades and the factors associated with this by comparing the experiences of fathers with young children with those of older fathers

c) To explore the interrelationship between men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood with social factors such as urbanisation and migration and changing conceptualizations of masculinity

This chapter presents a discussion of the social constructionist methodological tradition that has shaped the research design and methods used to achieve the aims. The chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical rationale for the adoption of this approach and will then discuss the research design, which includes a discussion of the practical steps undertaken in terms of the data collection and the method of analysis used following the collection of the data. The chapter ends with a discussion

regarding ethics, reflexivity and trustworthiness in relation to the research process.

Theoretical underpinning

All research is guided by theoretical approaches or schools of thought that provide guidance for the study of the social world and which draw upon particular ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs. Ontology is defined as 'the study of being' (Crotty 1998:10). It is concerned with what is, with what exists, and with what can be known. Epistemology 'is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know' (Crotty 1998:3). It is concerned with questions such as what knowledge can be obtained and what can be said about that knowledge (Bryman 2004). Methodology addresses questions about how researchers establish knowledge based upon certain ontological and epistemological assumptions (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Thus, Marsh and Furlong (2002: 17), writing about the relationship between ontology, epistemology and methodology, suggest that 'ontology and epistemology shape the methods which social scientists utilize'.

In the field of social research, two distinct and opposing ontological and epistemological positions can be identified which are generally defined as positivism and interpretivism (Christians 2005). Ontologically, positivism holds that objective knowledge about the social world can be attained and verified using hypotheses that can then be established as facts or laws (Hennink et al., 2011). The ontological position of positivism connects with a particular epistemological stance which argues that social scientists should use similar principles and methods as natural scientists. This includes being objective and keeping one's distance from the objects of the research, as well as a strong emphasis on the collection of statistics as the essential way to gain knowledge (Bryman 2004). In other words, positivism asserts that this 'scientific method' is the best approach to discovering social reality (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

In contrast, interpretivist ontology believes that the social world is 'constructed, interpreted and experienced by people in their interactions within their environment' (Tuli 2011: 100). It is often connected to the thought of Max Weber (1864-1920) who states that in the social sciences researchers aim to explore *Verstehen* (understanding), which looks for socially situated interpretations of life (Flick 2007). Therefore, interpretivist epistemology considers that knowledge is socially constructed by people and relies on subjective meanings/perceptions of people in particular contexts. The interpretivist school of thought often includes the fields of interactionism, post-modernism and social constructionism. Interactionism argues that individuals see and process things through the mechanism of giving meaning to situations and things and that meaning is produced within their interaction with others (Blumer 1992). This approach emphasizes that individual's understanding is created on the basis of interaction with other individuals. However, this approach does not meet my research needs as I am also interested in making sense of men's experiences in relation to the context and not only an individual's understanding of process. Post modernism rejects the notion that there is a single source of authority and absolute truths (Lyotard and Demand 1993). The notion of critique and scepticism are at the heart of post-modernism because ideas should be contested and we should scrutinize arguments and approaches to understanding the social world (Nicholson 2013). They point out the importance of pluralism and multi-perspectival approaches for understanding social reality. However, in relation to research regarding fathering and fatherhood in China, such a perspective could not sufficiently help to understand men's experiences as without relating fathering to the context how could present a critique.

Constructionist ontology views reality as subjectively constructed by the individual and that the perceptions and experiences of individuals are shaped within their situated context (Flick 2007; Lock and Strong 2010). Although the constructionist approach has been critiqued because it has a tendency to focus predominantly on subjective experience and not take enough account of structures, such as socio-economic position or gender, this is generally a failure of the researcher rather than the approach itself (Gehart et al., 2001).

Thus, constructionist epistemology considers that social reality can only be obtained through people's interpretation, understanding and meaning-making in relation to their social worlds (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Social constructionism encourages the researcher to focus on gaining understanding of individuals' interpretation of their everyday world and social constructionists work with the purpose of disclosing people's understandings within their own context (Burr 1995). In this regard, social constructionists often focus on providing background information of the participants and explore the context in which interactions are situated (Rogof 2003). These different forms of investigation work together to serve the motives of identifying different ways of understanding everyday life; the conditions within which interactions take place and the implications of associated understandings on the social practice of individuals (Burr 1995). Constructionists also assert that the individual is actively involved in producing and constructing meaning and is not a passive recipient of set meanings (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Thus, meaning is not static but develops from dynamic interactions within a fluid social context (Willig 2013). To sum up, social constructionists 'place an emphasis on the power of relationships over individual minds, multiple worlds over singular realities, and dialogue over monologue' (Gergen and Gergen 2003:158).

As my research wishes to explore men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood, it is interested in their meaning, subjectivity and agency, which are closely linked to the social context in which they take place. To this end, a social constructionist approach acknowledges that the social world and social beings are actively produced and it allows for flexible and individual interpretations. Research that adopts a social constructionist perspective also requires a methodology that encourages and makes the interpretation of meaning accessible (Creswell 2012). This requires a qualitative research design where methods are chosen to intentionally explore the everyday life which is seen as subjective and socially created (Hatch 2002). Thus, my conceptual framework for studying the social construction of fatherhood in China (e.g., the interaction between context and subjective meaning) will examine both the perceptions and experiences of these men and the wider structures which potentially shape their thoughts and actions.

Research design

As noted by Bryman (2004: 26), research design refers to ‘the different frameworks for the collection and analysis of data ... a framework for the generation of evidence that is suited to the research question in which the investigator is interested’. In other words, the research design involves decisions regarding the processes associated with the data collection and data analysis, including instruments/methods and sampling procedures. As outlined above, this study is situated within a constructionist approach. A constructionist position makes clear that individual constructed meanings cannot be discovered by the implementation of a positivist approach that assumes equivalence between the natural and social world. My project aims to access men’s understandings of and meanings attached to fathering and fatherhood in China, which can only be achieved through a qualitative research design. Qualitative research ‘stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, [...] seeks answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:10). In contrast, a quantitative research design was disregarded because such approaches usually utilize questionnaires, which are often linear, and which struggle to access some of the deeper meanings attached to participants’ answers (Bernard 2000; Kumar 2011). Thus, as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:4), qualitative researchers ‘deploy interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand’. Therefore, a qualitative research design which addresses interpretation is very suitable to my project.

Semi-structured interviews

Social constructionists specifically recommend the semi-structured interview as a method of data collection because the interview process enables the researcher to explore participants’ perspectives within a dynamic atmosphere that allows the participant as well as the researcher to dictate the flow and content of the interview (Lindgren and Packendorff 2009). Blanche et al. (2006) also note how the interpretive space created during the qualitative interview promotes an understanding of a number of participant perspectives

and can take into account aspects of the social setting. Therefore, this study specifically utilized semi-structured interviews to generate data about how informants interpreted and described their lived experience of fathering and fatherhood. The focus on fathers' own accounts is significant as fathers have often been 'invisible' within the field of children and families (Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003). Thus, in the telling of their stories, these men's voices have the potential to contribute to the body of knowledge related to Chinese fatherhood.

The semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to ask both closed and open questions. For example, closed questions, such as those relating to age, number of children, employment, socio-economic status and so forth allowed me to gain the necessary data to be able to describe my participants (Willig 2013). Semi-structured interviews also allow the interviewer to ask the same questions of all participants, to ensure equivalent coverage of certain topics, but also provide opportunities for the interviewer to probe and prompt for more information or detail, particularly if the interviewees have not dealt spontaneously with some of the questions (Gillham 2005). Thus, many of questions and topics covered in an interview schedule are designed to give participants scope to tell their stories in their own time and the researcher space to probe for details if needed or to discuss issues in more depth (Flick 2007). The use of an interview schedule is necessary as interviews that are totally open-ended can easily wander away from the research questions and make it difficult to summarize the results in a meaningful way (Fielding and Thomas 2008). However, the ability to move away from the schedule is also valuable as this allows the researcher to respond appropriately as opportunities to probe new areas present themselves (Fielding and Thomas 2008). It also allows space for the participants to foreground what they think is important and to articulate the complexities of their situated understandings (Leyshon 2002). This is especially important for deepening understanding instead of accumulating surface information (Corbetta 2011).

The use of semi-structured interviews also allows the researcher to explore how interviewees make sense of their personal experience in relation to social

context and how they draw on or transform this as they talk about their selves, experiences and realities (Corbetta 2011). In other words, semi-structured interviews can be used 'not only as sense-making devices in terms of individual experiences, but importantly as a means of positioning and presenting oneself as a social actor in the social world' (Miller 2005: 23). This also highlights the 'co-construction' of the interview between researcher and participants and also how it is 'impossible' in reality to separate the interviewer from the interviewee because it is 'precisely their interaction that creates the data that will emerge from the inquiry' (Guba and Lincoln 1989: 88). Thus, the researcher and participant both have a role to play in terms of working together to produce the narrative (Hand 2003). Moreover, the interview does not take place in a vacuum and it is the means by which participants present themselves to the interviewer and to the world in general.

A number of scholars have noted what they believe to be the key aspects of what makes a good interview (e.g., Hennink et al., 2011). For example, the researcher should be a good listener. If the researcher stops the conversation too soon because she/he thinks the topic is not relevant to the research question it is possible that potentially useful information will be lost (Corbetta 2011). Thus, Corbetta (2011) suggests that listening to respondents helps interviewers produce more rich information and therefore every effort should be made to encourage participants to talk and to not stop them until they want to finish. That said, the control of interview is also important, which means allowing interviewees the space to talk but making a judgment as to when to bring the interview back to the points the interviewer wishes to cover. For the interviewer, knowing the topic guide well can help get people back on track when they move away by gently reminding people of the question at hand (Bernard 2000). The length of qualitative interviews is another important issue. Many scholars have stated that for interviewees to give rich accounts of their experiences then they have to be given time to talk otherwise such rich data will not emerge (Elliot 2005). Therefore, it is suggested that 90 minutes is the optimum length for a qualitative interview (Laforest 2009).

Given that semi-structured interviews create a great deal of data it is recommended where possible that they are audio recorded. This also enables the researcher to concentrate on the interviewee and the interview itself rather than needing to spend time taking notes. This is necessary as it is impossible for the researcher to remember all of the interviewee's responses by simply making notes at the end of the interview (Bryman 2004). Audio-recording also helps to capture the details of the interaction, such as laughter, pauses and so on, and it is possible that such data along with aspects of the narrative itself are at risk of being lost.

Fieldwork

Study setting

This study set out to explore the views and experiences of Chinese fathers and the city of Guangzhou was the research location. This decision was based upon my familiarity with the city and the nature of its economic, industrial and cultural position that was hoped would provide a range of accounts and experiences. Guangzhou is a chief trading centre and transportation port and is also the capital city of the province of Guangdong (Xu and Yeh 2003). It is regarded as a regional hub in south China and is called the southern entryway to China (Lin 2004). In 1984, Guangzhou was selected as one of fourteen special economic zones that benefited from economic development policy with an increasing number of private sectors (Zeng 2011). As a result, Guangzhou has become one of the most developed cities in China, together with Beijing and Shanghai, and has the third largest population of migrated people (Chan 2010a). Guangzhou is also one of the most significant foreign commercial centres in South China, which is partly explained by its location on the Pearl River near Hong Kong and the economic cooperation between these two areas encouraged shifts in culture. Additionally, because the One Child Policy has been enforced differently according to particular demographic and socioeconomic conditions, different areas have different fertility rates (see Table 4). Guangzhou has a fertility rate of between 1.3 and 1.5. This is because whilst the One Child Policy has been enforced for those with urban status in rural areas it has not been enforced which means that migrated workers may have more than one child. Thus, this

combination of family structures also provided the opportunity to access men who may be fathers to one or more children and to explore the effects of this on their notions of fathering and fatherhood. Thus, it was envisaged that Guangzhou would provide a diverse sample of fathers for this study. For example, men would also be likely to have experienced the changes that have taken place in China, socially, economically and culturally.

There are ten districts and two satellite cities within Guangzhou. Eight of these districts are developed urban areas: Yuexiu District, Dongshan District, Haizhu District, Liwan District, Tianhe District, Baiyun District, Huangpu District and Fangcun District. The two suburban areas are Panyu District and Huadu District. The two satellite cities are Zengcheng and Conghua, which are new and emerging cities. The Haizhu District was my main research area as this was where my gatekeepers who helped me to get access to fathers lived. Based on the literature review, there are four types of rural areas in China. These are rich and advanced areas, areas where people can lead reasonable comfortable life, areas where people only have adequate necessities, and the poorest areas. In the case of Guangzhou, due to its relatively well developed economy the types of rural areas focus on type one and type two (China Yearbook 2009).

Table 4 Fertility in Chinese provinces

Fertility rate	Provinces
Between 1.0 and 1.3	Shanghai, Jiangsu, Beijing, Tianjin, Sichuan and Chongqing
Between 1.3 and 1.5	Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Guangdong, Jilin, Shandong, jingxi, Hubei,
Between 1.5 and 2.0	Henan, Shanxi, Guangxi, Gansu, Hebei and Guizhou
2.0 above	Yunnan, Qinghai, Ningxia, Hainan, and Xinjiang

Sources: <http://english.gov.cn/>

Piloting of the interview schedule

The main research fieldwork was undertaken in China between January 2012 and October 2012. Prior to travelling to China to conduct the fieldwork I decided to pilot the interview schedule with a Chinese father who is the husband of a female acquaintance at the University of Warwick. A pilot study is a small scale study which is conducted before the main project in order to check whether the project is feasible or to improve the design of the project (Hennink et al., 2011). Babbie (2007) argues that piloting is helpful for researchers to get a clear sense of the questions to be asked during the interview and offers a useful experience of conducting interviews for those who lack confidence or who are a novice in the field of qualitative research (Hennink et al., 2011). The pilot was particularly helpful for testing logistics (e.g., to check that the length of interview was reasonable for the interviewee) and to gather information on how the questions were interpreted and answered by the respondent.

Recruitment

Men were recruited into this study in one of three ways, either via members of the researcher's social network in Guangzhou, through 'snowballing' or directly by the researcher herself, with each means of recruitment generating a number of participants.

A number of people within the researcher's social network were asked if they could help the researcher gain access to potential participants (Miller and Bell 2002). These members of my social network were employed in Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou. These people were provided with information sheets regarding the study and then asked men who they knew to be fathers if they would consider participating in the study. They then passed the contact details of potential participants on to the researcher who then made contact with these men. Clearly, therefore, these members of my social network had certain potential power in relation to this study; e.g., they had the capacity to provide me with access to participants and also had an impact on participant's willingness to take part in the research (Wanat 2008). Thus, some may have

felt a need to protect certain men from becoming the subject of research and so could impose their own criteria regarding their decision as to whether to ask certain potential participants and not ask others (Emmel et al., 2007). Therefore, in an attempt to combat such problems, they were asked to invite as many men they knew to be fathers as possible to participate, both old and young and within and outside of the university. They were also asked to invite as diverse a range of men as possible, from both high and low income groups and from a variety of backgrounds. They were also briefed to not communicate such criteria to potential participants themselves, but to stick to the information contained in the information sheets.

Men were also recruited to the study through the use of 'snowballing'. Snowballing is a method of recruitment that asks current participants to recommend others to join in the research (Cortebba 2011). Thus, in this study potential participants were approached following their own interviews and asked if they knew of friends or relatives who were fathers and who might be interested in participating in the research. This form of recruitment has both advantages and disadvantages. For example, it again relies on the recommendation of these individuals who may have a bias or preference as to what type of men they chose to introduce (Abowitz and Toole 2009). Another possible outcome is that this person tends to recommend people in similar positions to themselves, which can narrow the diversity of participants (Arksey and Knight 1999). That said, one means to help reduce this bias is to gather information from men accessed in other ways; e.g., not just from the people interviewed in the snowball process (Blankenship 2009). Thus, a snowballing strategy was used in conjunction with other forms of recruitment.

Finally, men were also recruited into the study directly by the researcher. To this end, I approached men in a number of settings and asked them if they were interested in participating in this research. For example, with the permission of the organizer, I attended an event for couples designed to help husbands and wives to communicate better. There, I approached a number of men, explained the nature of the study and asked them if they were interested in participating. I also approached men within Sun Yat-Sen University and

also at the main parkland area where families go to picnic and to relax. In both of these venues I again approached men and explained the study to them and asked them if they were interested in participating. Although many men refused to participate, those men who expressed an interest provided me with their contact details and I could then make arrangements with them to carry out the interviews at a time and place convenient to them.

Participants

Thirty one men, both older and younger fathers, were recruited into this study (see Table 6 and Table 7). In terms of the recruitment strategy, five of the older fathers were recruited by the researcher, four through snowballing and three via my social network. Thirteen of the younger fathers were recruited via my social network, five by the researcher and once via snowballing. All of these men were fathers who had at least one child and all were Han Chinese (the main ethnic group in Guangzhou). There are twelve older fathers and nineteen younger fathers. The relatively older fathers were aged between 50 and 75 years at time of interview, having been born between 1942 and 1962. These men had become fathers between 1955 and 1990. Nine of the older fathers had Urban Hukou status and three had Rural Hukou status. All of the older fathers were living in an urban environment at the time of interview. Of the twelve older fathers, only two had a single child. The remaining ten had at least two children. Older fathers were chosen because they were considered likely to have experienced the social, cultural and economic changes associated with the 'Great Leap Forward' in the fifties, the 'Cultural Revolution' in the 1960s and 'Open UP' in the 1970s. These older fathers could therefore reflect on three generations of fathering related to these three periods; e.g., their own childhoods and being fathered, their experiences of being a father and their reflections on their sons as fathers.

The relatively younger fathers were aged between 21 and 49 years old at time of interview, having been born between 1962 and 1991. The younger men in this study became fathers between 1980 and 2010. Twelve of the younger fathers had Rural Hukou status and seven had Urban Hukou status. Six of the

younger fathers were living in a rural environment at the time of the interview (approximately one hour by a combination of tube and bus from the city). Eleven of the younger fathers had a single child with the remaining eight having two children. Younger fathers were considered likely to have experienced much social, cultural and economic change and particularly the One Child Policy that was sanctioned in the 1970s. The older and younger fathers were not all Guangzhou natives, but included people who had migrated to Guangzhou for work. This inter-generational approach was designed to help me answer my research question on how social contexts shape fathering and fatherhood and how fathering and fatherhood in China has changed over time (Elder 1994). However, it is important to note not only the relatively small number of men in this study but also the relatively high proportion (48.7%) of men with a higher education qualification. This is higher than in the wider population within China (see Table 5). Together with the relatively small number of fathers, the findings of this study are therefore not generalizable to all fathers in China.

Table 5 Composition of Educational Attainment of Male Population Aged 6 Years and Older in China in Selected Years (%)

Education Attainment	1982	1990	2000
Basic Level	44.8	43.2	37.6
Med. Level	33.5	42.0	53.5
High Level	1.0	2.2	4.6

Data sources: Calculated by using data taken from the 1982, 1990 and 2000 Population Censuses, cited from World Bank (2010).

Conducting the interviews

When arranging the interviews I offered participants a choice of time and location. In terms of time, the majority of interviews were conducted after work or at the weekend. In China, people tend to work nine to five from Monday to Friday and usually have no fixed break within these eight hours. Although four interviews were conducted during work time in the men's workplace, it was generally difficult for me to conduct interviews during working hours.

Therefore, I agreed to interview some of the participants after they finished their work, though I was aware that some of these men may have felt tired after a whole day of work which could have influenced the quality of the interview. In the main, however, I carried out most of the interviews at the weekend.

In terms of location, I suggested that they might prefer relatively quiet locations, as public places in which many people were present might not be conducive to such conversations. For example, I suggested that they might be concerned about others hearing if the venue they chose was too public. Thus, the majority of the interviews took place in the men's own homes or in the men's workplace or in one case in their place of worship. In all of these cases I tried to ensure that we had a quiet environment for conducting interviews. I was aware that not only did we require a quiet environment, but was also concerned that I wanted to keep what was said in the interview confidential and I wanted to encourage fathers to talk openly.

Table 6 Demographic characteristic of younger fathers

Name	Age	Occupation	Education	Housing	Location	Hukou status	Place of origin	Children
Ma	45	Unemployed	Bachelor degree	Rented flat	Rural ¹	HK	Hong Kong	Two sons (6 and 2 years old)
Wang	44	Pastor	Bachelor degree	Rented flat	Rural	Rural	Guangxi	Son 18 and daughter 9 years
Han	31	Lecturer ²	Master degree	Rented flat	Rural	Urban ³	Shandong	Daughter (infant)
Mai	30	IT staff	Bachelor degree	Rented flat	Rural	Rural	Guangdong	Son (1 year old)
Bin	28	Unemployed	Secondary school ⁴	Rented flat	Rural	Rural	Fujian	Son (2 years old)

¹This type of village was produced by the rapid process of urbanization. The areas around the village are all developed and the village is encircled by newly developed urban areas (Deng and Huang 2003). The rent is much cheaper compared to city centre, and it usually takes about one hour or more to the city centre for work.

² There are 2 types of staff who work for the state system including colleges and universities. One is those who enjoy the whole benefit of the state system, the other is not.

³ There are many types of urban hukou. But for those who have jobs, there are 2 types. First is that the working place helps people to get the hukou. Those working places might be very privileged. They usually include state departments, state companies, and other state-related working places (i.e. universities and labs). The second type is the working place cannot get the hukou for employees. But employees can apply to have an urban hukou by providing their social security number and social security account which are acquired by the tax system.

⁴ It is similar as a vocational school. It enrolls students who finish their primary education and it focuses on equipping students to go to work.

Mo	34	Self-employed	G3	Owned flat	Suburban	Rural	Guangdong	Son (1 year old)
Didi	38	Factory manager	Middle school ⁵	One room factory accommodation	Suburban	Rural	Anhui	Daughter 13 and son 10 years old
Shifu	37	Manual worker	Middle school	Rented flat	Suburban	Rural	Anhui	Two sons (5 and 1 year old)
Zuixiao	20	Manual worker	Middle school	One room factory accommodation	Suburban	Rural	Guangdong	Son (1 year old)
Xiaodian	30	Self-employed	Middle school	Rented flat	Rural	Rural	Guangdong	Daughter 1 year old ⁶
Xiaochen	36	Self-employed	Secondary school	Owned flat	Suburban	Rural	Henan	Son 5 years old

⁵ The main education system in China is that 5/6 years primary education, 3 years junior middle school education and 3 years high school education, and then goes to the university.

⁶ He planned to have a second child 2 years later as he is allowed to have a second child.

Zhengce	44	Associate professor	PhD	Owned flat ⁷	City Centre	Urban	Heilongjiang	Daughter 17 years old
Tongji	39	Associate professor	PhD	Owned flat	City Centre	Urban	Henan	Daughter 6 years old
Jingji	44	University Lecturer	PhD	Owned flat	City Centre	Urban	Hunan	Daughter 14 years old
Li	42	Associate professor	PhD	Owned flat	City Centre	Urban	North east ⁸	Son 12 years old
Lidui	47	Security	High school	One room university accomodation ⁹	City centre	Rural	Hunan	Daughter 22 years old, son 20 years old ¹⁰
Jiefu	48	Manual worker	Middle school	One room factory accomodtion	Suburban	Rural	Anhui	Son 23 years old
Zheng	49	Self-employed	High school	Rented flat	City centre	Rural	Henan	Daughter 27 years old, son 25 years old

⁷ The participant paid very little money to get the flat, as the university offered a great amount of funding.

⁸North east usually includes 3 provinces, such as Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning.

⁹ A room literally means a bedroom.

¹⁰ He took risks to have a second child.

Qiu	49	Associate professor	Masters degree	Owned flat	City centre	Urban	Guangxi	Son, 15 years old
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Table 7 Demographic characteristics of older fathers

Number	Age	Occupation	Education	Housing	Location	Hukou status	Place of origin	Children
Xiao	60 ¹¹	Head of security	Associate bachelor ¹²	Owned flat	City Centre	Urban	Guangdong	Daughter 34 years old and son 32 years old
Liang	59	Head of security	Associate bachelor	Owned flat	City centre	Urban	Guangdong	Daughters 42 and 44 years old
Liao	59	Head of security	Associate bachelor	Owned flat	City Centre	Urban	Guangdong	Daughter 30 years old and son 24 years old
Xia	55	Bike keeper	Middle school	Flat with daughter	City centre	Urban	Shandong	Daughter 30 years old

¹¹ The participant told me that he lied to the army officer that he was 2 years older than his real age to join in the army.

¹² It is a degree offered to students who went to 3 years college, especially vocational college. The 3 participants got this degree because they must have a degree higher than middle school education to work there. So after working for a while in the university, they chose to obtain a degree through online education which was organised by the university.

Zhizhan	73	Retired (engineer)	Bachelor degree	Owned flat	City centre	Urban	Guangdong	Sons 42 and 38 years old
Zhanjian	60	Retired (government worker)	Middle school	Flat with son	Suburban	Rural	Guangdong	Three sons, and one daughter 26 years old
Huoche	62	Retired (train attendant)	Middle school	Flat with daughter	Suburban	Urban	North East	Daughter, 30 years old
Zuil	75	Retired (head of car department)	None	Owned flat	Suburban	Urban	North East	Daughter and two sons, 40 years old
Broliu	65	Retired (farmer)	Middle school	Flat with son	City centre	Rural	Anhui	Daughter 43 years old), two sons 40 and 38 years old
Guer	66	Retired (teacher in high school)	Bachelor degree	Flat with son	City centre	Urban	Guangdong	Daughter 37 years old, son 34 years old
Junren	65	Retired (army)	Associate bachelor	Flat with son	City centre	Urban	Chongqing	Son 43 years old, daughter 40 years old

Gongch	66	Retired (farmer)	None	One room flat	Suburban	Rural	Anhui	Three daughters and one son 34 years old
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Whilst the majority of interviews took place in men's homes or workplace these could be quite diverse environments ranging from an office belonging to one participant to a small living space afforded by a migrant worker. In the office environment, there were generally good facilities, such as air conditioning, which is very beneficial in the very hot and humid summer in Guangzhou. In contrast, one interview with a man who had migrated to the city was conducted in his dormitory which was 13 m² and all he had to cope with the heat was a small electric fan. Similarly, in the case of Gongchang [OF 70] his room contained a bed, a table, a small chair and a small TV. I could not sit on the chair during the interview because it was too hot. As I recorded in my research diary, these insights into where some of these men lived enabled me to probe more in certain areas of the interview, asking questions such as, '*How do you feel about your housing?*' And '*Are there any impacts on your fathering?*'

It was also clear that a range of factors could impact on the men's choice of venue. For example, one man, Broliu [OF 66], chose to conduct his interview in a church after a church service. This was partly because it was convenient and because he shared a home with his son, his daughter-in-law and the parents of his daughter-in-law. Thus, he felt it would not be a confidential environment within his home and in addition he also that it might cause problems within his home environment. This was evident in his account when he said, '*I do not want to stay here ... so many people, a lot of conflicts.*' This was also true for Guer [OF 67] who stayed with his son and the family. He chose to have the interview on the rooftop where there was a shield. He did not want to have me in the house. This also provides access to how some men, particularly those who lived with their children, had forfeited power within the household to their sons (Bullock 2005).

It was also the case that interviews could be disturbed by other people. For example, during my interview with Liao [OF 58] in his office his colleague came in to say hello to me and to ask my advice regarding his son's misbehavior. He also commented on how successful Liao was in his

fatherhood as he had a successful son who got a job. I could clearly sense that Liao was happy about his colleague's compliment and it offered me insight into how some men perceived their fatherhood. In terms of his request for advice from me, I directed his colleague to ask if there was a youth counsellor in his area. However, it was difficult for me to shorten this interaction as this might have offended the participant. This also highlights how difficult it is to ensure that interviews are undisrupted, particularly when they take place in a working environment. It is also demonstrative of the fact that despite the best efforts of the researcher an interview can only remain confidential if the participant chooses not to tell family or friends that it is taking place. It was evident in this case that the participant had informed his colleague of the interview and the nature of the research. The venues chosen by the interviewee can also provide evidence of wider context and the type of life that people are leading (Herzog 2005). As addressed in previous examples of some older men who could not have me in the house for interviews, it reflected their subjectivity and their awareness about power.

At the start of each interview I showed the participant my university ID card to prove that I was a PhD student from the University of Warwick. I also showed them my notification of the ethical approval from the University of Warwick and my affiliation to Sun Yat-Sen University. I also went through the information sheet again with each man and confirmed the aim of the research and that everything they said would be kept confidential (the information sheet is presented in both Chinese and English in Appendix I). The information sheet also gave the interviewee an approximate time for the length of the interview and I explained that if they were to find any aspect of the study uncomfortable then they could refuse to answer or stop the interview entirely. All of this was to make sure that the participants understood the aims of the project and their role in it. Before the interview began I also asked each man to sign a consent form to say that they were happy to take part in the interview (see Appendix II). In addition, I also asked all participants for their consent to audio record their interview. All of the men agreed for me to record their interviews.

In arranging and conducting the interviews I intentionally decided to interview as many younger fathers as I could before starting the interviews with older fathers. This decision was made on the basis that I would find it easier to talk to younger fathers than I would older fathers being of a similar age and having lived through similar social changes. This strategy would also allow me to develop my experience and confidence with the interview process so I would feel more comfortable when I came to interview older fathers.

The object of the interview was to invite interviewees to provide their own perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood that were meaningful to them. Therefore, I intentionally devised a topic guide that included a categorical framework, but at the same time encouraged the interviewees to talk about their own lives (Flick 2007). I drafted a preliminary list of questions based upon issues and concepts identified through the literature review. When drafting the topic guide (see Appendix III), I paid attention to the simplicity of the questions and tried to ensure a logical structure to the interview. Chase (2005) suggests that researchers are most likely to succeed in eliciting answers when they use a simple topic guide that clearly relates to the areas that they want to explore and which make sense to the participants. In addition, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) believe that the best way for interviewers to encourage the interviewees to talk is to ask questions regarding specific times and conditions, rather than asking general questions covering the whole range of a respondent's life.

In terms of encouraging participants to talk, the semi-structured interview was especially helpful as a means of overcoming any nerves or unease participants might have felt in talking about aspects of fathering and fatherhood. In Chinese culture, it is often considered embarrassing to talk about private domains (e.g., family life), especially for men (Ho 1987). A common perception in China is that Chinese men are regarded as stoical and less talkative compared to Chinese women. The interview guide helped me to set the men at ease and to direct the conversation towards aspects of their fathering which they felt to be important. It also served as a facilitating device that encouraged fathers to talk about their perceptions and experiences as

fathers and the context-specific process that enabled or prevented them from being the father that they wanted to be (Corbetta 2011). In short, it enabled me to create a relatively free talking environment in which these men could tell their stories about their life experiences in ways which were meaningful to them located within a particular social context (Corbetta 2011).

In addition, the researcher should ensure that the views and experiences of the participant are the main topic of the interview (Babbie 2007; Bernard 2000). Therefore, I was alert to this task and I asked specific questions regarding their own perceptions and experiences and encouraged participants to talk about themselves rather than people in general. I did this by using prompts, such as '*Do you personally feel that way?*' Or, '*Is that something you have experienced?*' For example, Qiu [YF 49] enquired about how to teach his son because he regarded me as a professional who studies overseas. I gently directed this question back to him by asking '*What do you feel you should do?*'

Post-field work

Transcription and translation

All interviews were transcribed and translated into English simultaneously. In other words, I decided to translate the interviews into English as I transcribed them, rather than transcribing them into Mandarin first and then into English. As Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) suggest, undertaking the transcription and translation process simultaneously saves time. To start with (first four transcripts), I edited the transcripts after translating them. However, this process was time-consuming (two days for one interview of ninety minutes) and not very helpful in the sense that I tended to focus on a grammar-detailed transcription and translation and did not spend time understanding the meaning of the data. Therefore, with the rest of the interviews, I chose to undertake a preliminary literal translation from Chinese to English without editing. This was helpful as I could maintain meaning by keeping colloquial phrases in literal Chinese and was able to hold on to the spirit of the idioms (cf.

Jackson 2003). There is a substantial amount of slang expression and sayings in Chinese which do not have an equivalent in English.

In order to maintain confidentiality, I gave each participant a research number and a fictitious name. These details were held separately from original names. In presenting the data, I used the format of [fictitious name YF/OF, age] to represent the interviewees. YF stands for younger father and OF stands for older father. Digital recordings were password protected and were wiped once transcriptions were completed.

Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of searching for 'patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there' (Bernard 2000:419). It is a process that utilizes the researcher's personal inductive and deductive logic and thinking, in which personal presuppositions, understandings and interpretations, together with theoretical knowledge will have an impact on the analysis (Creswell 2007; Dezin and Lincoln 2008). However, the researcher needs certain theories or principles to guide them. Therefore, I used a thematic analysis which identifies, analyzes and reports themes (patterns) that emerge from the data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Ritchie and Spencer 1993). It allows the data to speak for themselves. At the same time, it allows the researcher to acknowledge his/her theoretical positions and values and is compatible with my epistemological stance (Braun and Clarke 2006; Ritchie and Spencer 2002).

Qualitative researchers can utilize a number of different computer software packages to support their qualitative analyses (Bryman 2004; Flick 2009). One example of such a computer package is N-vivo, which is convenient for text-based data because it enables the researcher to use line-by-line coding and rapid searches (Creswell 2007). As mentioned by Flick (2009), N-vivo is also convenient and helpful for coding because it makes the coding stripes visible in the margins of documents. This is especially useful in identifying the location point of codes and it also has a specific analysis in certain speech

context and lingual context (e.g., the adjunctions) (Welsh 2002). In this study, I used N-vivo to code important and frequent terms which emerged in the transcribing process, for example, coding the themes which focus on the collection of narratives sensitive to the social and cultural context.

In this study, I deliberately chose to begin the coding process by focusing on transcripts from four participants who talked openly in their interviews, basing the thematic analysis on my own judgment (Braun and Clarke 2006). Firstly, I coded the data manually, with different colors and symbols and stripes on the paper. I used the colours and symbols in a systematic way through all transcripts. Then I uploaded these codes to N-Vivo by creating free nodes. In this process, I got the chance to read the transcripts and codes again. This allowed me to add new codes to the existing manually done codes. In other words, I did the coding of the same transcripts twice. This is helpful as it ensured that I gave equal attention to each data item. It is also regarded as the very foundation of a systematic thematic analysis as it made sure no data resource was omitted (Hein and Austin 2001). This process also allowed me to go back to previous transcripts to do the omitted coding related to emerging themes in later transcripts. This process helped me to understand the data in depth and gave me opportunities to look at the data in great detail.

This technique of 'familiarizing' oneself with the data is a key feature of thematic analysis because it helps to refine codes and to identify the themes that cover all of the data (Baum 1997). After finishing the coding, I used my initial themes as a starting point and searched in N-Vivo free codes using the words related to codes in the initial themes. Then I organized the themes in a logical way and in this way elaborated the initial themes within a wider range of codes together. Thus, the focus of thematic analysis, looking for patterns and connection of themes across the data, and bringing order to the data was carried out all the time (Hubner 2007). At the same time, I edited the original transcripts as I needed to assign the data extracts to themes. I checked the themes against each other and combined some themes by creating subthemes. I ran the themes several times to make sure each theme was instinctive and coherent. I also went over all the codes in the transcripts to see

if I have missed any. I also used different keywords related to the themes to search through the transcripts, in case I had omitted some information. For example, to search fathers' accounts related One Child Policy I used 'One Child Policy', 'young', '80s' and 'spoil'. Also, I was alert to the themes and codes that are related to my research questions. The different layers of coding across the data helped to form different layers of themes across the process of thematic analysis, which helped to deepen understanding and capture of the data (Silverman 2010).

Ethical issues

This project gained ethical approval in accordance with the University of Warwick's research procedures. It was also carried out in accordance with the guidance of the University of Warwick's Code of Practice for Research and the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association, both of which give guidance to researchers working in the field. Ethics in relation to research participants are reflected in certain rights, such as the right to privacy and right to protection from harm. The respect for participants' privacy has become increasingly significant as it is now considered obligatory for institutions to retain data about individuals (Flick 2007; Herzog 1996). In terms of this research, that used social networks to access certain participants it was important to be aware of the danger of allowing members of this network access to information about the individuals they helped to recruit to the study. Therefore, I was alert that I could not pass information about the interviewee to the gatekeeper or even let the gatekeeper know that an interview had taken place.

Researchers also need to be aware and responsive to the fact that sometimes a participant might not want to discuss a certain topic or feel uncomfortable with certain issues (Hennink et al., 2011). In this study, all participants were made aware that they could refuse to answer any questions they chose and no explanation was required. When that was the case I would pass over to another question. For example, in the context of the One Child Policy, it was perceived that men may find talking about their wanting more children difficult.

In reality, only one man refused to answer a question regarding this area. Having been discussing his wish for a second child, he suddenly said, '*I do not want to talk about it*', and ended that part of our conversation. I also kept in mind that silence during the interview is normal as it could signal that a participant was considering or thinking over a point and to rush in could deprive the interviewee from making their point.

When designing this research study I was aware of certain aspects of Chinese culture and society. Whilst China has become more open, especially in developed cities such as Guangzhou, I was concerned that contact between an unmarried female and a married male may not be deemed as desirable. Obviously, I was keen to avoid moral shame with regard to the implications of me as a young woman interviewing men about fatherhood. However, surprisingly, my interviews with these men were not deemed to be inappropriate as long as they took place in relatively public places which reflects potential shifts in culture (Inglehart and Norris 2003). Hence, I encouraged respondents to choose relatively public venues with the greater likelihood of colleagues or other family members being in the vicinity. To ensure my safety I also gave specific information to my research associate in Sun Yat-Sen University, such as the time I would finish my interview, without leaking other confidential information about the participant. After the interview, I immediately called them to let them know I was safe. If they did not hear from me then they had a sealed envelope with details of the participant and venue. Details of this safety protocol were agreed with my supervisors prior to the field work taking place.

I was also aware that I had a duty to protect fathers from harm. Thus, even if a respondent reported that talking had a positive effect, as the interviewer I had to ensure that I had not 'outed' something that might have a harmful impact on the respondent in the longer term. Thus, I have tried to be aware of the wider context within which the research takes place and have not disclosed any unnecessary information that might cause harm to respondents. However, if a respondent had told me something that had concerned me, such as they had harmed their children, then I would have reported that to the

relative institution. This was stated in the consent form and information sheet that each man received during the recruitment and interview process.

The researcher must also be alert to the potential for the research to have unintended negative consequences. Thus, if I had encountered a man who was distressed by issues raised in the interview I would also have suggested that they seek appropriate support after the interview. I fully disclosed the purpose of conducting this research to all of the participants. Christians (2005) suggests that deception (e.g., not being explicit about the aims of the research) may be counter-productive as well as unethical. It is suggested that honesty together with confidentiality decreases doubt amongst participants and encourages honest accounts (Herzog 1996; Kumar 2011). Therefore, I ensured that informed consent was achieved by providing potential participants with all the information necessary for them to make informed decisions about whether they wanted to take part in the research. In particular, I ensured that I went through the information sheet with each participant before conducting the interview even if that participant had already read the information sheet or made it clear that they understood the research and their part in it.

Reflections on the research process

One essential component of conducting good research is reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Christians 2005; Flick 2007; Hennink et al., 2011). Reflexivity involves the researcher continuously and critically reflecting on the way in which research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes (Guba and Lincoln 2005; Hennink et al., 2011). Included here are reflections about ethical problems and dilemmas as well as reflections upon the active presence of me as the researcher and how my own assumptions and actions could influence the research situation (Holliday 2002); e.g., the researcher's positionality. To guide me in this process I drew on Finley and Gouch (2003) who suggest that there needs to be an emphasis on how a 'researcher's social background, assumptions, positioning and behavior impact the research process' (Finley

and Gouch 2003: IX). These high standards of reflexivity are regarded as key features of qualitative research and as a result I continuously examined whether my actions, thoughts, and words may have had an impact on the men in this study (Baly 2007).

One important aspect of this is the keeping of a research diary (Silverman 2011). As Flick (2007) notes, it is important that the researcher keeps both descriptive records and reflective records. Flick (2007) also emphasizes that this type of diary must be kept all the time during the fieldwork, so that the researcher can link these aspects of the research process with the data itself. In addition, Silverman (2010) also argues that this diary-keeping is part of the analysis and interpretation process because in the keeping of a research diary the researcher actually starts to think more carefully about the data. Thus, I maintained a diary throughout the study and made an entry after each interview. This recorded what I heard, saw, experienced and thought in the process of interviewing fathers and helped enormously in terms of reflection. This was also to guard against becoming 'trapped' in the doing of collecting data rather than noticing what was going on. Also, as Silverman (2011) notes, drawing on the research diary can help to improve the researcher's time management and provides an overview of the research progress over a period of time.

One example of the reflective process relates to cultural knowledge. For example, I noted how the majority of the participants offered me a drink when I arrived at their home or office. This is because it is the Chinese culture that a guest visiting your home is offered a drink as a welcome. I also noted the sense of respect and honour I received from these men which probably resulted from them perceiving me as someone who had the privilege and assets to study abroad. Thus, although I was much younger than the majority of these men I was given a status that may not have been given to another young person visiting their home. Moreover, as a young woman interviewing older men about their fathering and fatherhood, I was also aware of the power relationships between genders in the research process, particularly within the context of China. For example, it was understood that men may seek to

present themselves in certain ways to a woman which would not be the same if I were male. Barbara (2005) raises the difficulties that a female researcher may encounter while undertaking qualitative interviews with men. She hypothesizes that a male researcher might have been easily involved in men's casual activities, such as social events that she found difficult to access and participate. In my case, as a woman having conversations with male fathers it was impossible for me to imply shared experiences. However, if a male researcher interviews a man there might be a problem of complicity. In addition, Hearn (1998) notes that male researchers are likely to occupy a powerful role at various points in the interview, both as a man and a researcher in the competitive masculine sense, that in turn can mean that male researchers exercise even more power over male participants during the interview. In contrast, female researchers have been found to be more sensitive to men's narratives (Woodward 2006).

In a similar vein, Smart (1984) suggests that male researchers might fail to capture men's construction of masculinity. In other words, women are more likely to encourage men to talk, unlike men who may challenge men. Therefore, reflecting on my role as a female researcher I was able to ask men legitimate questions about their experiences and these men did not appear to feel offended at my questions that enabled me to get rich, in-depth data. In retrospect, it may have been that they felt safe by talking to a young researcher who was interested in what they had to say. It could also be that they thought they had some responsibility to pass down reliable accounts of their lives as fathers and as men. The trust they appeared to place in me to tell their stories gave me a great sense of responsibility as a researcher to present their data in the most detailed and accurate ways. The feedback from participants after the interview process was finished appeared to verify this process with a number of these men appreciating the opportunity to talk about their lives as men and as fathers. For example, one of the men commented how the interview had '*made me think through about fatherhood and what made me who I am now*' [Zhengce, YF 44]. After the interview, one of the younger men, Didi [YF 37], reported how he invited his father to stay with him in the city where he worked.

Clearly, therefore, as the researcher I occupied a potentially powerful position in relation to the subjects of my research; e.g., the power differentials between the active researcher and the passive research participant. The role of the active researcher has been depicted as akin to a 'detective' whose purpose is to discover things known by participants (Creswell 2007). Thus, as the researcher I planned and controlled the interview, in which I determined (to a great extent) the topics that would be covered and when the interview would finish. However, I was also aware that the power arising from such control can be unhelpful if the participants in this study felt uneasy about such a hierarchy and as a result would not fully converse their thoughts and experiences (Berg and Lune 2004). Therefore, I sought to develop a rapport between myself and the interviewees and to build a sense of trust and reciprocity (Dickson-Swift, et al., 2006). Thus, in the field, I conveyed my enthusiasm by making eye contact and replied to the participants' accounts with nods or smiles or by saying 'ok, mm, hmm' and so on as a means of building empathy (Hennink et al., 2011). I also stated that there was no right or wrong answers and that I wanted to hear as much as possible of their own views and experiences. However, as a novice researcher, it did take a few interviews for me to be able to gain more confidence and to direct the interview in such terms.

However, reflecting on my research diary it was also clear that I lacked confidence at certain points, particularly in early interviews, that could have impacted on the interview process. For example, one of the early interviews lasted for over two and a half hours as the participant was talking very freely and I did not feel able to stop him. Talking about this with my supervisors and the re-reading of methodology texts, as well as notes from my research diary, I came to realize that it was due to a lack of confidence on my part. One consequence of this was that I did not have a good control of the interview because I was scared to stop him when he went too far away from the topic. In contrast, another of the early interviews was less than sixty minutes because the interviewee responded with shyness and with very simple answers and I was not confident enough to prompt him for more expansive responses. However, as I carried out more interviews, I began to gain

confidence and as a result began to have better control of the interview process. Moreover, as my study recruited a range of participants with different experiences and socio-economic status it was perhaps inevitable that the length of each interview would differ.

I was also aware that these men may well have felt 'constrained' in what they were able to say or to disclose within their interview. There were two main reasons for this. First, both young and old fathers have been socialized within a highly patriotic and often authoritarian country that could have made the articulation of more dissenting views difficult for these men. Second, it is clear that notions of a more emotionally engaged type of fathering have not emerged within Chinese literature on fathers. Therefore, it was envisaged that the language and sentiments conveyed by these men may not have simply 'matched' those that have become more apparent in western studies of fathers and fatherhood.

Research rigour

Research rigour/ trustworthiness in qualitative research originates from notions of validity and reliability, which define the legitimacy and accuracy of the findings (Krefting 1991). In the qualitative sphere, it is the role of the researcher to ensure to his or her audiences that the research findings are valued and can be taken into account. In this study I employed a number of different means of assuring the quality of the research findings in terms of its reliability and trustworthiness. Whilst the findings of any study undoubtedly bear the personal mark of the person conducting it, I have tried to reduce the effect of the researcher by using concepts and methods agreed upon by other researchers. In so doing, I have utilized various ways to guard against bias. For example, as the researcher I immersed myself in the field, using a research diary to capture my thoughts and observations of my interactions with the participants before, during and after interviews. I endeavoured to establish rapport and trust and to build a fruitful relationship with the participants. The data was analysed in a thorough and rigorous fashion. Thus, I sought every opportunity to enhance the validity of this in-depth enquiry and

to build confidence in the quality of the data. Therefore, the level of my engagement with the participants and the rigorous nature of the research process provide confidence that the findings are trustworthy.

Conclusion

The chapter has provided a rationale and examination of the methodological approach adopted in this study. A qualitative approach has been used to provide a deeper understanding of the subject being investigated and thereby reach the aims and objectives of the study. The chapter has also provided a thorough examination of the research design, recruitment process, method of data collection and data analysis. The chapter has also explored the ethical issues raised by this research and the trustworthy status of the findings. The following chapters go on to present and discuss the findings of this study.

Chapter Four

Fathering and fatherhood in the context of rapid social and cultural change

Introduction

This chapter explores the perspectives and experiences of two groups of older and younger fathers set against the background of rapid social, political, economic and cultural change that has taken place in China. To recap, during the course of the post-war period China has experienced three defined periods of great significance in which centralized planning and the driving forward of economic development resulted in profound social impacts on communities and families. These periods relate to the 'Great Leap Forward' in the late 1950s, the period of 'Cultural Revolution' from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s and finally 'Open Up' that incorporates the period since the mid-1970s. The earlier two of these periods are associated with severe famine, estimated to have resulted in the deaths of around forty-five million people (Yang 1996), and high levels of political and individual repression (Zhou 1993). More recently, China has been characterized by great financial growth, an unprecedented and rapid process of industrialization and migration from rural to urban areas, and has implemented the One Child Policy (Bloom and Williamson 1998; Fan 2002).

This chapter explores these changing social conditions in relation to fathering discussed by participants and provides the context for the further findings chapters. For example, older fathers in this study often reflected on three generations of fathering related to these three periods that related to their own childhoods as well as their own experiences of being a father and their reflections on their sons' fathering. The chapter is organized thematically into three major sections, beginning with older fathers' accounts of the impact of poverty and famine associated with their early lives which appeared to have left a strong mark on their views of fatherhood. It will then move to younger

fathers' experiences of migration and urbanization and how a complex network of factors related to urbanization, particularly in relation to education and housing, were important to them. Finally, the chapter will apply a closer focus to fathers' diverse views about the impact of the One Child Policy in relation to both broader societal considerations such as population control and their own feelings about being a father (e.g., the importance of children's gender). The findings in this chapter highlight complex interactions between social factors and conditions in relation to fathering that have not been fully explored in the research literature. It also demonstrates the importance of linking ideas and experiences to the specific social and cultural context in which they take place, as ideas about both fatherhood and masculinity are inevitably affected by such macro factors (Daly 1993).

'Cultural Revolution' to 'Open Up'

In the early post-war period, China experienced poverty and famine (Chen and Zhou 2007) in what has been termed the 'Great Leap Forward'. Studies have suggested it was a 'man-made' famine in that a range of poor policy decisions and bureaucratic mismanagement are clearly evident including the submission of false reports about agricultural production (Becker 1996; Berstaine 1984). The notion that individuals' life courses reflect their social context (Elder 1994) is exemplified by looking at these men's narratives that capture the impact of their social circumstances on their experiences of life in China, including being fathered and their fathering. For example, many of the older fathers in this study commented on how they and their families endured the ravages of poverty which included poor health and a lack of food and other general resources:

The life was hard, as we had the famine in 1960s. The teacher did not want me to starve to death. He left a bowl of corn porridge for me each day. [Broliu, OF 66]

I suffered from starvation and cold. [Xia, OF 55]

We had a little flour and half a kilo of rice for a month. [Huoche, OF 62]

My father died from illness and poverty. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

From the mid-1950s until 1978 people's lives in China were based on a quota system (Riskin 1986), which included the rationing of consumer goods, and the setting of output quotas (Lin and Yang 2000). The quota system was introduced as a means of feeding those in the cities (e.g., to ensure that urban citizens had food) by procuring food from the peasants¹³ working in the rural areas, and limiting people's access to goods, such as food and clothing. It was argued that there was a 'hidden agenda' in order to finance industrial growth, fulfil ambitious economic policies and demonstrate a strong commitment to the welfare of the urban population (Oi 1993):

Rural people raised pigs, chickens, and gave the products to the government first, and then the left overs for themselves. ... Things were owned by the community, not by individuals. Everything I got was based on quota and was limited in quantity. My life was based on a score. I got scored according to the amount of work I did. If I did more work, I got more score on food voucher. I felt it was hard, and everybody was poor. It was all physical work. [Liao, OF 59]

In addition to poverty and hunger, there were also many political movements during the 'Cultural Revolution' in which Mao Zedong mobilized people to attack his assumed and potential political opponents within the communist

¹³Peasant here means a poor farmer or farm worker who has low social status.

party (Lee 1980; Zhou 1993). It is believed that Mao's fear of losing power within the Party had informed this political movement (Kraus 2004). This was based upon the notion of the counter-elite in which the masses were encouraged to seize power from the ruling elite (Lee 1980). For instance, it is estimated that between fifteen and twenty million people were killed because they were perceived to have capitalist tendencies, or assumptions were made that they were against Mao's socialist and proletarian design (Yang 1996). As a result, many of the older men in this study experienced huge family change:

My mother was sent to town to wash dishes because of her rich family background (rich farmer). My mother was criticized* [挨斗]. They put my grandpa and uncles to death. I followed my mother to the town. At that time, my father worked in the government in the city. [Qiu, YF 49]

My grandfather was beaten to death and my father was deprived as an engineer and sent to rural areas. [Li, YF 42]

Thus, many people's day-to-day lives became dangerous and there was the fear that people could be imprisoned without reason based upon certain behaviours or words (Chang and Halliday 2005). Hence, people were quite cautious about their own actions in case they were accused of treason, which also impacted on their experiences of being fathered:

The 'Cultural Revolution' made my father and I dare not say a word. And we were afraid to make mistakes. ... He did not dare to say a word to me. We had little verbal communication. ... There was not that much care. Having enough food was good. [Huoche, OF 62]

It was also clear that the 'Cultural Revolution' could limit fathers' time with their children and that political turmoil also affected the ways in which men felt they could support their children:

My father ... wanted me to do well in study and have wangzichenglong [success]). But at that time, because of the 'Cultural Revolution', he could not make it. The country was at war. [Xia, OF 55]

Clearly, therefore, these difficult circumstances impacted on aspects of fatherhood. For instance, Wang's father worked long hours and also hunted as a means of providing for his family that meant he could spend little time with his family:

My father mainly worked outside to provide for the family. But that was not enough, because my family was a big one which had eight children. Because it was in rural area, we had limited quota of food* [口粮] which was not enough. Your working score was not enough. So he needed to do other things, besides these eight hours' work. After work, he went fishing and caught birds to provide food. So my father was busy when I was young. [Wang, YF 44]

Men's experiences during this time also appear to have impacted on their aspirations for their children. For example, many older fathers talked about their desire to get basic subsidies* [有饭吃], which was a term that first emanated in the famine period. This also informed their desire that their children study hard to get 'youfanchi'. '*If I did not study, how could I live* [混] to have food* [混饭] in the society?*' Liao [OF 59]. Although the older fathers in this study now lived in more affluent circumstances (Chen et al., 2010), the

term 'get basic subsidies'* [有饭吃] has prevailed and has become an important aspiration for younger fathers as well as older fathers who want their children to achieve and to have good standards of living.

As in the previous extract, Wang perceived that the social and economic environment made it difficult for his father to provide, but he still regarded him as a loving father: '*My father was very responsible, hardworking and loved us very much*'. However, other men perceived that this situation could have implications for fathers' relationships with their children:

In the past, fathers worked for living, and were tired, and lost temper easily. [Zhengce, YF 44]

My father came home from work, and he seldom talked.... Part of the reason would be the issue of him being busy with his work. [Mai, YF 30]

It was also clear how many of these men's experiences began to change following the shift to the period associated with 'Open Up' in the later 1970s, when China conducted economic reforms and opened up its market to trade and communication with the outside world (Guo 2009). In addition to industrial and economic trade, the Chinese government also started experimenting with new incentive systems to promote work efficiency in agricultural production, such as the well-known household-based land reform (Thaxton 2011). This resulted in land being re-allocated to individual families rather than the collective ownership via commune that had taken place during the 'Great Leap Forward'. It also introduced the notion of entitled household quotas in which workers submitted their required quota to the state but were allowed to keep any surplus for themselves. A number of the men noted how these differing social and economic contexts affected men as fathers:

Fathers of different generations are different. My father's generation was persecuted by the land owner. For my generation, half of my life was characterised by hard work, the other half is good, easy and more relaxing life. My children's generation is the happiest and most relaxed. Having the opportunity to go to school, work and get a salary. The society develops much better now. [Xiao, OF 58]

My son-in-law's generation is the easiest among the three generations (Liao's father, himself, and his son-in-law). The environment is good...They do not have a hard life. ...They now have everything. [Liao, OF 59]

As is clear from these extracts, the shift to 'open up' was perceived as bringing a better standard of living for most Chinese people:

The society developed. ...Before, the aim of living was just for survival, now it is to lead a better quality of life. [Guer, OF 66]

I like this social context. ...Not like before, where son followed father's career. I worked in my father's work unit* [单位]. Nowadays, in this society, son of farmers can become millionaires and son of government officer can fail. I told my children: 'Do well in study. You have your own future in your hands. If you do labour work* [打工], your annual salary will be as much as your monthly salary after you graduated from university'. [Zheng, YF 49]

The changes associated with the period of Open Up were also seen to have implications for fatherhood. Many fathers (both younger and older) explicitly described the changing social context and differences in fatherhood across generations. The younger generation stood out from the older generation in having a better economic environment to both implement their role as a provider and to be a more caring father:

In the past, fathers in the village were all hard working at that time. They did not earn much money, struggle* [勉强] to raise the children. Basically there was no teaching, and communication. Fathers just provided food, and a house to live in. Sometimes they let the children play. When the children got older, they sent them to the primary school.... Nowadays fathers not only provide food, clothing, and housing, but also care about/tutor on children's schooling. [Guer, OF 66]

Younger father's communication with their children is better than my father; my father could not train* [管] me. [Huoche, OF 62]

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the notion of training is about men passing on advice and emphasizing the importance of hard work, self-discipline, and obedience (Chao 1994). However, the perception was that many men did not have the time to conduct such training when they themselves were struggling within the poor economic context. Thus, there was a general consensus that such fathers did not spend much time with their children and there often appeared to be a lack of understanding between father and child:

In the past, there was not enough food; so few fields, and so many children; and fathers could not train* [管] their children. [Xia, OF 55]

Many of these men explicitly described different fathering experiences related to a more affluent society and better access to education. In short, they continually connected fathering practices with the structural characteristics of the society at the time:

My father and I live in different environments. Now I live in a relatively rich era, and we have different thoughts. For example, I take my son out, my father did not. At his time, he did not have that time and ability. The years of education we received are also different. [Didi, YF 38]

As in this extract, improving educational attainment was viewed as particularly important. One older father who compared fatherhood across three generations also commented that younger fathers recognized the importance of study to enable children to get better jobs. As such, schooling was increasingly seen as vitally important in contemporary China with children now able to improve their circumstances in ways not applicable to older men (Lin and Chen 1995):

For my father's generation, there was little communication. For my generation, there was a little more communication. I was stricter with my children than my father, told my children to study hard and find a good job. [Xiao, OF 58]

However, whilst the Open Up period was generally perceived to bring new opportunities, at least for those who were prepared to work hard, it also meant that certain groups could lose previous privileges in terms of employment opportunities and it also brought an element of risk. For example, the

securities associated with certain governmental jobs, previously defined as 'iron bowl' (secure), often no longer existed:

I am from rural area and worked in a commercial store (affiliated to the government). It is an iron bowl and 'secure for life' [衣食无忧]. After Open Up, the iron bowl broke up and I threw it away. I quit the job, opened a new store and then a factory. Finally it went bankrupt, and I became a labour worker in Guangzhou. [Zheng, YF 49]

It was also apparent that change brought certain pressures for men related to their fathering. For example, one older man linked his unemployment due to Open Up* [下岗] to aspects of fatherhood. This evidence suggests that many workers who became unemployed were not well supported by the state. For instance, their support ration depended on their ex-employers' contributions to the state economy (Knight and Xue 2006):

At that time, my wife and I experienced unemployment due to Open Up* [下岗], it was difficult to provide for [daughter]. Sometimes I could not give money when she needed it. My generation came across all the bad things. [Xia, OF 55]

Another of the older men commented on recent changes in childcare that had previously been provided by the state. For example, prior to Open Up, those parents who worked for the government were ensured childcare so that they could dedicate themselves to their work and to the development of the country (Knight and Xue 2006):

I had governmental kindergarten help with childcare. Now, people need to find a baby sitter. ...The governmental kindergarten had advantages. I could work 'without worries*' [安心]. The kindergarten was just in the community where I lived. ...Parents could go to the kindergarten for feeding once in the morning and once in the afternoon. In the noon, we had two hours' time for rest and we would have the children home. I felt this was good. Now the children are like children who are wandering around with no parents to care for them*[流浪儿]. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

Similarly, another of the older fathers commented on changes in the education system, which he believed increased the pressure on younger fathers. Specifically, it was perceived that younger fathers had to fund their children to enable them to attend a good school and maybe also had to use their personal connection in the government to enable their children to attend certain schools. This phenomenon is termed 'education fever' and is also linked to the increased emphasis on success in exams (Yu and Suen 2005):

Under planned economy, I just sent children to school, and there was no burden. ...My children went to the school based on their score. So I did not have pressure and the tuition fees were not as much as now. Now parents have many choices and they want their children to go to the best school (even paying sponsor fees). [Junren, OF 65]

It was also the case that men who had migrated to cities for work could no longer depend on their farmland to secure their livelihood. Fundamentally, they were unable to manage their farmland while they were away and consequently had to make a decision to either discard it or pass it on to others (Feng and Heerink 2008):

Pressure on my father's generation was less, because they had farmland and they had labour force they could farm. ...There was little worry about the basic living. But our nineteen eighties generation just have this problem. [Bin, YF 28]

Also apparent was the distinction between older and younger fathers in terms of perceived differences in the work ethic between young and old. Those in younger generations were regarded as more precious and less likely to endure hard work:

My generation could bear hard work, now the younger generation cannot. And they cannot understand the situation in old times [Huoche OF 60].

Also clear were the ways in which men expressed their concern over what they perceived to be a recent decline in moral standards in contemporary China. This reflects studies that have argued that the market economy together with an ideological vacuum due to the 'Cultural Revolution' may have led to decline in morality (Hanafin 2002; Lee and Ho 2005):

Morality is different in different periods. ...In Mao's era, people were good, did good deeds for people, and for the country. Now people are selfish, just for themselves, not for people. ...Now just for earning money, for their own better living and more competitive. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

In summary, this section has shown how younger and older fathers linked their fatherhood to the social context (e.g., pre-reformed and reformed eras) and clearly expressed the view that fatherhood was different across generations. In the main, men considered it easier for fathers in contemporary

China, though there were also certain concern regarding fathers' not fulfilling their responsibilities linked to a potential moral decline in society.

Migration and urbanisation

Recent increases in levels of migration and the variations in living standards between rural and urban areas within China are other important socio-economic factors that have implications for men in terms of their fathering. With the exception of one man, Huoche [OF 62], all of the urban fathers in this study (both older and younger) were born without urban status. In other words, they were all born in rural areas and had achieved their status as Urban Hukou through their education, military service and/or employment. Some fathers had not achieved Urban Hukou status (see Table 6 and Table 7). To recap, Hukou is a registration system that defines households as either a Rural Hukou holder or an Urban Hukou holder. The significant difference between the two is that Urban Hukou households enjoy many benefits from the state, such as welfare entitlements and subsidized health care (Cheng and Selden 1994). As all of the men, bar one, in Guangzhou at the time of the study had migrated into the city they were asked to compare their experience of rural life to city life. Many expressed how difficult life had been and continued to be in rural areas compared to urban areas. They expressed the view that poverty drove men into urban areas and that the urban area represented a chance to access wealth and opportunity:

I lived in the rural place and did not have enough food. [Liao, OF 59]

The economic situation in city is better than rural areas ... and it has a low unemployment rate. ...I can earn more money. [Shifu, YF 37]

These men described the importance of joining the military and/or schooling for enabling them to access urban areas. Military service and higher educational attainment were important capital assets for rural men because they gave them access to certain resources in urban areas, particularly the chance to improve their employment opportunities. For example, once a student has been admitted to a state university, they temporarily acquire Urban Hukou status, equivalent to citizenship in the location of the university (Wang and Moffatte 2008). After graduation, if the graduate finds a position with a company that has an Urban Hukou quota then the graduate's Hukou can be transferred to the company and he/she gains Urban Hukou status from this time. It is also possible for people to gain Urban Hukou through joining the army, though this is not guaranteed and is subject to the state intervention (Cheng 1992). For example, there is evidence that the state has recently allocated more conscription quotas to those rural areas with the highest poverty rates and harshest living conditions as a means of encouraging young men to enter the armed forces (Liang and Snyder 2007). A number of the men in this study had used the army and education to gain urban status:

I joined the army. Now I have left the rural area. [Liao, OF 59]

For people in rural areas, if they want to change their fate, they need to study. Without study, you will be a labour worker* [打工仔] generation by generation. [Liang, OF 59]

However, cultural differences and generally lower levels of educational attainment meant that many migrants could not obtain Urban Hukou status and regarded themselves as second-class citizens. In short, the disadvantaged situation of many rural areas meant that many rural people felt inferior to urban citizens that was apparent in many of the men's narratives:

There is discrimination towards rural people from city people. [Junren, OF 65]

This type of differentiation was also apparent in the experiences of fathers who now lived in cities, but who compared themselves to their fathers or peers in rural areas and who felt they had greater knowledge and more varied life experiences as a result of their urban status. They linked urban living not only with increased assets, but also as resulting in the broadening of their horizons. They viewed rural areas as having few facilities and little in terms of input from the outside world, particularly from Western countries. They believed that moving to the city had widened their interests and enabled them to have greater insights into both Chinese society and across the wider world:

My father lived in village, and I live in the city now, and our day-to-day experiences are different. I have been outside for around ten years. What I see is different from my father. [Xiaochen, YF 36]

My son's generation go outside at young age, and have seen many things. [Jiefu, YF 44]

Compared to peers in rural areas, I have broader horizons, because of my experiences in army and my work in the university, where there are many professors. When I go back, I am different from them and there is distance. The thoughts of rural people are rigid. My thoughts follow the city people, especially leaders who work in the university. I was affected and unconsciously improved. When I go home, I feel this change. People in rural areas know very little about the law, and their thoughts

are rough, especially the old thoughts in old times. And they deal with things in a simple way. [Lidui, YF 47]

However, it was also clear that some of the fathers who migrated from rural areas to urban areas faced a variety of issues, including poor quality and expensive housing, that were considered as potentially damaging for their children. As many studies have documented, migrated workers without urban status receive lower wages so have less money to spend on their housing and can do little to save money for their children's education. Unsurprisingly, lower rents tend to be associated with poorer quality accommodation in poorer locations (Hulchanski 2002):

I live in a flat with one room and one hall. ...We have the hall divided to be the children's room. I seldom have guests. I rent it. [Shifu, YF 37]

The house was very small, twenty or thirty square meters with six people. .. We did not have toilet in our house, so went out. [Ma, YF 44]

I rented. I cannot afford housing. When I was young, my family six people lived in a small assigned room (10 square metres) for nearly 20 years. [Huoche, OF 62]

It was the case that some of the men in this study lived in accommodation provided by their employer. This was part of their wages but again this tended to be of a poorer quality and was often overcrowded (Ngai 2006):

My family lives in the dormitory of the factory. One room of thirty square meters. I have the room divided into two parts, one part for my son. [Didi, YF 38]

Leaders and staff lived in dormitories, but I lived in the store with a cloth separating us from the children. [Zheng, YF 49]

However, it was not only rented or employer provided accommodation which was deemed to be unsuitable:

I bought my house with three rooms and two halls. I do not feel good about this house and I want a better one. The environment here is noisy. [Xiaochen, YF 37]

On the other hand, many men felt their housing was adequate. It was also clear that men reported improvements in their well-being when their housing conditions improved, such as improved health and better relationships with family members and neighbours (Curely 2005). They also understood the importance of housing to child and family well-being and a clear feature of their fathering experiences was their sense of satisfaction and fulfilment derived from their ability to provide children with adequate space (Crowley 2003):

My house has three rooms and one living room. I do not desire for luxury house. My basic need is that my child has his own room. [Li, YF 42]

When the house was bigger, we were happier. [Xiao, OF 58]

Across their accounts the cost associated with their housing was an issue for many of these men. Whilst many of these men's incomes had increased, the cost of their housing had also increased. Housing prices in many Chinese cities have soared since the 1990s when the housing provision changed from a socialist welfare system to a market one (Wang et al., 2012). This was another factor that decreased the possibilities of these men obtaining suitable housing:

Before housing prices were 300,000 RMB, and now 3,000,000 RMB.
[Qiu, YF 49]

In comparison to the experiences of those men who had migrated into the city from rural locations, it appeared that some of the men who had achieved urban status had been able to obtain relatively cheap housing or received state aid to buy their homes primarily due to their higher status in the society. This issue of housing inequality in urban China is well charted and is linked to the occupational welfare system whereby the housing benefit varies according to the status of employees (Lee 2000). In this study, those who worked in universities (affiliated to government) got their housing relatively cheap because of the 'house to house'* [房改房] policy. 'House to house' means having deductions based on their working scores. Men were also the recipients of other beneficial state policies that provide the free allocation of housing to certain groups and housing built by collective funding from individual purchasers* [集资房]:

We (my wife and I) bought our house after housing reform. We used our working score in the university and got some deduction and it only cost 147,000 RMB. [Xiao, OF 58]

I bought the apartment under the university's 'house to house'* [房改房] policy between 1998 and 1999, and the price was very good. After 1999, there was no benefit. [Tongji, YF 39]

As was apparent in the previous section, many of the men in this study talked about the high costs of educating their children since the changes introduced following Open Up. These increasing costs appeared to have most impact on those men that had migrated into the cities as their relatively low wages meant they had little means by which to provide their children with better quality education:

I pay the tuition fee (7000-8000 RMB¹⁴) in kindergarten from when the children were one year old. When he goes to primary school, I also need to pay. That is because we are migrated workers. ...I hope for free education as a migrated worker. ...Or I will go back home and have a job there. I have no other choice. [Shifu, YF 38]

We migrated workers need to pay extra money for children to go to school. However, if my children study in my hometown, I do not need to pay extra money. [Xiaochen, YF 36]

It was also apparent that the education system in cities was not always perceived to be welcoming to the children of migrant workers. The different dialects between children's home towns and the city could make it difficult for these children to contribute within their classes. These children had also to

¹⁴His salary was quite high, 5,000 RMB per month, compared to other normal migrated workers at the salary of 1,500 RMB to 2,500 RMB per month. But he still felt under pressure because of the high living costs in Guangzhou.

return to their parents' home towns if they wanted to take the main University Entrance Exams (the state requires that all students take University Entrance Exam where their household Hukou is situated). Not only did this result in costs relating to travel, it was also common that the textbooks and/or syllabuses within cities would be different to those used in the rural regions and many children were forced to return home alone due to their parents' work commitments:

For my son, he cannot understand the dialect at school where his grandparents lived. He does not want to go to that school. And he needs to go back to hometown to have the University Entrance Exam. He might learn different things compared to hometown. That's unfair. [Xiaochen, YF 36]

The children of migrated worker's face problems in education in the city. Children from outside provinces cannot go to local high school and cannot have University Entrance Exam in the province where migrated parents work. The children need to be sent back. That would be difficult. If the children go back for schooling, there are many problems. Such as; Will they get used to being there? Will they be safe? Will my wife need to go back to look after them? Will it affect their study? In addition, some grew up in city and went back for high school and the language might be a problem. [Lidui, YF 47]

It was also apparent that men who migrated to the city could become isolated, with few meaningful contacts within their new communities and limited social networks or support. For example, one migrated man who got married in the city mentioned that he did not have a proper wedding ceremony as his relatives could not afford to travel and they were not able to return home:

We did not have our marriage banquet. In my rural hometown, we should have this banquet to invite relatives. But we were in the city, so we did not have one. [Zhengce, YF 44]

However, their feelings of isolation were not simply related to them living in different environments. Although they did not feel they fitted in with the culture of their urban counterparts, a number of these men also felt excluded from their previous communities. In short, they felt their lives had been extended and somewhat transformed by their experiences of city life and as a consequence they now felt little affinity with their peers who continued to live in rural areas:

I am floating and do not feel steady ...I cannot tolerate or identify with some traditions in the rural areas. But for the city life, I cannot wholly embed in. [Shifu, YF 38]

As in this case, some of the men who migrated to the city felt they were different from both the people in city and in rural areas. They no longer felt there was a place they could identify with. As such, it seemed that the expected gains (e.g., better income) from migrating had come at a certain cost associated with direct and indirect impact of their migration (e.g., the sense of living a marginalised life):

We are from rural areas, and it is difficult to change some habits. It is different from people in city. There is a natural gap between the city and the rural. [Didi, YF 38]

Indeed, having made the decision to migrate to urban areas in the hope of advancement and improved standards of living, some men felt that it was the rural areas that had the advantage in that the social costs were considerably lower and the rural environment was perceived to be safer. Having experienced what they now considered to be the flaws associated with living in a city (e.g., the noise, crowds and pollution) they considered rural areas to be more peaceful, natural and with a greater sense of harmony. In short, many of these men now considered their rural life to be a more desirable environment in which to raise their children:

I feel the rural area is good, except when the hillside the transport is not good. The social cost in rural areas is less than in the city, for example the housing and car stuff... I feel the children in the city are not as happy as the children in rural areas. Children in more rural areas are more free. You can play as you can, except for the safety concerns. [Shifu, YF 37]

There are a few changes in rural areas, because the transport is well developed, and the information is also well developed, they are likely to come across more outside things, and they are affected by outside things slowly and more and more.[Mai, YF 30]

In the light of many of the difficulties facing migrant workers within China's cities it was clear that men often chose not to take their children with them when they moved to find work. This phenomenon where fathers are forced to leave their children in their hometowns is referred to as 'left behind children' (Ye and Lu 2011). The evidence suggests that there are up to fifty-nine million children who are considered to be 'left behind', which represents around twenty eight percent of the whole child population in rural China (Chang et al., 2011). In terms of this study, it is important to note that provinces like Hunan, Guizhou, and Sichuang have many left behind children primarily because the

economy and standards of living within these cities are not as good as other big cities, such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou (Fan 2002). Thus, in the case of the fathers in this study, some of their children were living around two thousand miles away from their parents. For example, two of the participants had children living in the northeast province in Heilongjiang, which is approximately two thousand miles from Guangzhou where they are currently living and working. There were a variety of factors why these men chose not to take their children with them, such as perceived problems with weather, pollution and differences in culture (Watch 2005):

I have a friend who works outside to earn money and his wife cannot get used to the place where he works due to the hot and humid weather. He himself is busy and cannot take care of the child. Then he chose to leave his children in the hometown. [Xiaochen, YF 38]

In addition, many of the younger fathers were brought up in similar circumstances in which they were often living in different places far away from their fathers and who they would not see for long periods:

My father went to another province for work, such as Shanghai and Hubei. He did not spend much time and communicate with me. [Bin, YF 28]

My father seldom spent with me, because he worked outside. He came back home once a year, usually on Chinese New Year. [Zuix, YF 21]

My father worked in town. My mother was a peasant, and I lived with her in the village. If my father had holidays, he went back to the village and did house chores. [Zheng, YF 49]

In some cases, their fathers could not visit them even once a year due to the large distances and poor transportation links between urban and rural areas:

It was quite far, there was no transportation; no car or bus. The road was not good...my father did not come home often. [Zheng, YF 49]

As in their experience as children, this separation was seen to impact on their children's lives and was linked to a range of emotional and behavioural problems (Fan et al., 2010):

The left behind children feel lonely. When they step into the society, there will be a social problem. [Lidui, YF 47]

The left behind children have psychological problems because of their working out parents. [Bin, YF 28]

In many cases the 'left behind' children of those men who had migrated were looked after by their grandparents. It was this that allowed them to work in urban areas without having the concerns about the effects on their children. However, it was also the case that the men had certain concerns regarding the lack of father-child relationships and also that their children were not being disciplined or brought up in the ways in which they considered appropriate. Thus, not only did a number of these men believe that their parents were

spoiling their grandchildren it was also the case that the intergenerational gaps between grandparents and their grandchildren were perceived to be detrimental to their children's development:

My mother-in-law is not well educated. She treated the child extremely well. For instance, when the child fall, she will blame the floor to comfort the child. [Zhengce, YF 44]

My parents were afraid to interrupt my work so they covered up children's problems. My parents spoiled my children. [Lidui, YF 47]

These men were concerned that these grandparent-grandchild relationships potentially had long-term negative implications for their children. For example, men believed that their children had a higher chance of picking up bad habits from their friends and possibly failing in educational attainment because their grandparents were not aware or capable of changing such behaviours. Evidence from Western studies, for example, demonstrates that custodial grandparents have difficulties in controlling their grandchildren's behaviours and coping with the intergenerational communication gap, which can lead to behavioural problems (Sands and Goldberg-Glen 2000):

Because of grand-parenting*[隔代] he was easily affected by naughty students. He had some bad habits, such as drinking alcohol, smoking, internet surfing, and did not go to class. When he was young, he did well in study, this happened after he went to the high school in the city. [Lidui, YF 47]

This perceived lack of discipline among children cared for by grandparents was noticeable among a number of the men's narratives:

Left-behind children of migrated farmers have no people to discipline* [管] them. Grandparents cannot guan well, so they started to commit juvenile crimes. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

For many men, although they felt that their parents had not raised their children as they would have wanted, there was little they could do about it at the time. However, in the case of Lidui (see previous extract), his concerns resulted in him moving his child to the city so that he could be closer to him and resume responsibility for his discipline:

I tried my best to compensate to my son. My son stayed with me here for four and five years. ...I took him here and did not let him continue high school to discipline him, not using violence but by using some scientific ways to communicate with him. I talked about the old time, people could not afford to go to school, and he needed to catch this chance to study. Also I talked how to survive in this society. Now he is good. If I do not discipline I am afraid that he will commit juvenile crimes. Now he is at hometown and I want him to be independent and start his own family. [Lidui, YF 47]

In summary, this section has explored the impact of migration on the lives of these men and some of the implications for their relationships with their children. Their narratives highlight the economic, educational and cultural disadvantages associated with rural areas that encouraged men to migrate to the urban areas for work. However, particularly for those men who could not achieve urban status, it was clear that the high cost accommodation and

children's education combined with their low sense of belonging could impact on their sense of well-being. Significantly, this section has also highlighted how these men often felt forced to leave their children behind with all of the implications that had for those children.

One Child Policy

Alongside the growing affluence experienced by many in China and the migratory shift from rural to urban areas these men also discussed a range of issues related to the One Child Policy and them as fathers. A diverse range of views were expressed in relation to the execution of this policy, which aims for constant fertility decline (Hesketh and Zhu 1997). For example, some fathers, both young and old, understood and agreed with the aim of the One Child Policy:

The One Child Policy is right for the Chinese population. [Jingji, YF 44]

China has a large population. It is so large that there is not enough housing. It does no good to transportation and children's education. It is ok to control the population. [Liao, OF 59]

Although younger men did hold such views, this type of response was most apparent among older fathers. In general, older fathers tended to focus primarily on the national good rather than the individual and also on the notion of 'country is prior to family', which is a core principle in traditional Confucian thought (Hu 2008). Although the influence of Confucius was seriously diminished during the 'Cultural Revolution' it continues to play an important role in ordering people's thoughts (Hwang 2012). For example, many of the older men regarded the family as a unit which contributes to the country and that the family was secondary to the country:

According to Chinese facts of large population, individuals should not be selfish to violate the policy. The country goes first and the family comes second. [Xiao, OF 58]

It appeared that many of the older men expressed nationalistic-patriotic attitudes to their country primarily because they were grateful towards the country that it has brought better life to them. In return, they felt that they should wholeheartedly comply with national policies such as the One Child Policy as this was perceived as enabling the state to provide more for its citizens:

People have jobs and have food* [有饭]. There is housing and welfare. It is not possible for the government to give these to each family. Everyone needs to obey to the One Child Policy. [Liao, OF 59]

In contrast, there was also some opposition amongst these fathers regarding the policy and they highlighted a number of more general problems with the One Child Policy. For example, there were concerns that the policy would eventually result in a lack of people to populate the necessary roles in society, such as the military, and to enable both the rural and urban economies to function successfully:

At that time, teenagers all wanted to join in the army. Now, it is not like that, as there are fewer children, and they are only children, because of the large population. [Liao, OF 59]

The One Child Policy might have impacts on the country's future development. For example, the farming, I have the feeling that my generation know how to do the farm work, but my son's generation does not know how to do that. ... The field has been discarded, no one does farm work. ...If it is continually like this, in the future, I have a question. Do we have enough food to eat? [Lidui, YF 47]

Another potential problem related to their concerns regarding an aging population and in particular the 1:2:4 (surplus); e.g., one child, two parents and four grandparents (Li et al., 2009). The structure of four grandparents, two parents and one child was thought to increase the pressures on men to provide for their extended families family (Yan et al., 2002):

There is a large population in China and it causes great burden to the country. But there will be aging problem and the young will find it difficult to support the old. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

Concerning a large population, it is necessary to have the policy to control it. But for a long term it is not good. Now there is the aging problem that the young need to carry the burden to look after the elderly, for example, the fact of 1:2:4 (surplus) problems. If this problem was not solved well, there would be a social issue. If the social welfare system works, it will be ok. If not, there will be a big problem. The young/youth have jobs, if they ask for a leave for the old parents, their salary gets deducted. It is difficult for them. [Guer, OF 66]

The increase in the numbers of older adults within China's population has become an obvious implication of the One Child Policy (Zhang and Goza

2006). From a younger father's viewpoint, Bin [YF 28] presented his concerns regarding the future with four parents to provide for:

Because the One Child Policy started from our generation, we face the situation to support the elderly. So husband and wife need to support four elders, and we were under big pressure. [Bin, YF 28]

Clearly, therefore, it was apparent that the One Child Policy could result in tensions for men. As in the case of Huoche [OF 62] who understood that men wanted to obey the state, but they had concerns about how men were going to support their extended families in the future:

The One Child Policy is a big thing of the country, we cannot disobey. But we have both the elders and a dependent child to support, and we were just allowed to have only one child. We had no other choice. [Huoche, OF 62]

Huoche [OF 62] then went on to suggest that this potential problem is also related to the gender of that one child:

Although my child is a daughter, I did not dare to have a second child because of the One Child Policy [Huoche, OF 62].

This is linked to the tradition within China that sons are treated preferentially compared to daughters. For example, one older father, Liao [OF 59], had bought a house for his son and not for his daughter. Although he did not

explicitly state the reason it is clear that his decision was based upon the fact that his daughter had become part of another family upon marriage:

I know that my daughter has her own family and son, she cannot look after* [管] me. That is not perfect. Once a daughter marries, she cannot come back home. [Liao, OF 59]

It was also the case that there is a clear distinction between the expectations placed on sons compared to daughters. Studies suggest that Chinese parents have higher expectations of their sons than of their daughters and as a result boys get more in terms of investment from their parents (Xu et al., 2004):

It is good to have one son and one daughter. If I have one son, I can buy a house for him. If having two sons, I cannot afford that. Having a daughter, I do not need to buy a house for her. [Shifu, YF 38]

Thus, there was also a clear sense that the One Child Policy was in opposition to the tradition of having sons. For example, one reason for fathers wanting sons in the past was to have sons to carry on the family line:

According to the tradition in China, of course, I want to have a son to carry the family line. [Xia, OF 55]

The One Child Policy is very strict in my hometown. If you have a son, you cannot have more. If you have a daughter, you can have more. According to tradition, I want a son to carry the lineage. [Jiefu, YF 47]

Traditionally, in Chinese society, elderly people are more likely to live with their children and more notably their sons (Ng et al., 2002). Therefore, having a son was considered to provide greater security for parents in older age as according to Chinese tradition, fathers may seek care from their sons in their old life, which is tied to the traditional notion of having sons to take care of the elderly* [养儿防老]. Thus, the One Child Policy was also considered to dismiss the notion 养儿防老:

The old notion is that fathers earn money to provide for their sons, and leave the heritage to them, and then the sons take care of father. [Guer, OF 66]

The One Child Policy is not good in rural areas. The tradition there is 养儿防老. If parents have two children, the children can have less pressure. [Didi, YF 37]

There was some, if limited, discussion regarding the notion of gender selection in terms of pregnancy and childbirth. A small number of the fathers in this study thought that couples would probably choose to have a termination if the baby was a girl, particularly in rural areas (Chu 2001). As was made clear, abortion is legal in China and a substantial number of abortions take place each year (e.g., 8.6 million abortions took place in 2003) (Sedgh et al., 2007). However, none of the men in this study suggested that they or people they knew had made a decision to have a termination. One man, Xia [OF 55], talked about how he and his wife had considered a termination when his wife was pregnant with a girl, but had decided against this as an option. He justified their decision based on the fact that they did not

need to have a son because his siblings had many sons to ensure that his family line was continued:

According to the tradition in China, of course, I wanted to have a son to carry the family line a little bit. Now, son and daughter are the same. In the past, the One Child Policy controlled. I could not have abortion. ...I did not have much that thought, because my family has many sons. So there are many people to carry the family line. [Xia, OF 55]

In general, those men who had daughters did not expect that their daughters would support them in their old age (养儿防老). In these cases, the One Child Policy was perceived to have impacted on traditional Chinese ideology and to have undermined patrilineal norms within Chinese families (Shek 2007):

There is a change in the expectation of 养儿防老, we have a daughter and cannot have a son because of the One Child Policy. We will not raise the child for our old age. [Tongji, YF 39]

That said, the men's accounts around having daughters and the significance of gender were often complex. Some men recognised women's capacity to support families, which was linked to larger numbers of female participation in labour market. This also aligns with the state's official stress on the value of the daughters in contrast to the popular preference for sons evident in the slogan; 'women hold up half of the sky' (Zhang 2009):

According to tradition, I wanted to have a son to carry the lineage. But now I think boys and girls are the same, because they both go out for work. [Jiefu, YF 47]

One significant aspect of this was that many fathers who had daughters wanted their daughters to be treated as they would boys. Thus, there appears to be a shift in thinking, with fathers wanting both sons and daughters to be successful and that the traditional desire to have boys may be gradually declining (cf. Jankowiak 2010). For example, Jingji [YF 44] and Zhengce [YF 44] both wanted their daughters to do well and to surpass what they had achieved:

If my daughter is not successful, it is my responsibility. .. Men have more responsibility on children's success [Jingji, YF 44]

I want my daughter to be in the social class which is not lower than mine. For example, my father is a farmer and now I am a teacher in the university. My father did not want to be a farmer, which is quite hard-working. If my daughter does some physical work, I do not want that. [Zhengce, YF 44]

In contrast to previous generations, many of the younger men now believed it to be important that they provided daughters with a good education. Thus, typical aspects of traditional father-son relations now also appeared in father-daughter relations. As others have argued (e.g., Fong 2002), it appears that fathers may consider the strategy of 'raising a daughter as a son' to be commensurate with contemporary Chinese society. For example, many of the younger fathers were considering ways to enhance their daughter's future prospects:

I may also sell my house for my daughter to go to a good school.
[Zhegce, YF 44]

The notion that children's success is taken as evidence of successful fathering emerged from the accounts of both older and younger fathers' accounts. In both groups, men clearly stated that they wanted their children to succeed based on ideas about protecting 'face' and honouring the family (Ho 1987). If their children were not successful, fathers would feel shamed and they felt that their sense of masculine identity was damaged within their community. Thus, the negative implication of raising 'failed' children was a significant source of pressure for these men. This process of comparison with other members in society is regarded as a very important feature in terms of masculine identity among Chinese men (Bond and Hwang 1986). Thus, men did consider themselves successful as fathers if their children were perceived as successful:

Of course, when the children have success, I feel honoured as a father and I feel it is worthwhile for me. [Wang, YF 44]

I made efforts to train and nurture* [培养] my children and they have relatively good life. Some have bought housing and cars. My daughter is a teacher after she got her master degree. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

My children pursued excellence. I have never thought about that. They are successful in career. [Broliu, OF 66]

Many of the younger men criticized expectations towards children as vicarious in the sense that men just wanted to gain honour through children's success.

They hoped to change male's discourse and identity around success and thus release themselves from a source of male stress:

Some who do this is to satisfy their vain heart. If the child is successful* [出息], he will be honoured by others* [脸上有光]. [Mai, YF 30]

I feel Chinese culture is about children should honour parents; and they must have 出息. The meaning of 出息 is very shallow, for example, just to enter a good university, or to earn more money. [Wang, YF 44]

Whilst some of the younger fathers challenged the conventional views of successful men via children's success, they actively reconstructed their own masculine identity in order that they did not need their children's success to approve their success and tried to build their male identity apart from their children:

I doubt whether children's success is a standard of a successful father or not. [Lidui, YF 47]

I am successful. I do not have the thought that her success proves my success. [Tongji, YF 39]

However, it was also clearly apparent in the fact that some men were concerned about the reduced chances of their only child being successful; e.g., the One Child Policy reduced the chances of them being successful. Men believed that this pressure could drive men to ignore the policy restriction

and have more than one child thereby increasing the chances of their children being successful:

If I have five children, two of my children might be successful. If I have only one child, there will be more risk. Before I could not understand this, now I can understand after being a father myself. [Zhengce, YF 44]

On the other hand, it was also clear that some fathers welcomed the One Child Policy because it made certain aspects of fatherhood easier to achieve:

The One Child Policy is good. The socio-economic situation of the family will be good, happy and rich if having one child. ...I will be under pressure having two sons. I cannot save money. [Shifu, YF 37]

Clearly, the cost of having children was a concern for many of these men. Men such as Zuix [YF 21] felt that the One Child Policy was 'good' because of the costs related to children. He complained that '*the monthly cost of my son is too much*': Recent research in the West by demographers and economists has examined the link between living costs and fertility outcomes and found that high costs of living discouraged fertility (Clark 2012):

My son cannot afford. ...The burden of raising two children is too high. [Broliu, OF 66]

Indeed, the One Child Policy appeared to legitimate men's desire to limit the number of children they had because of the high cost. A number of men forecast that even without the One Child Policy fathers may not want more

than two children because of the expense in raising more children. There was some sense that increasingly men did not agree with the traditional ideology of 'the more children, the more blessing':

In fact, fathers might not want to have more children if the One Child Policy was loosened. They might just have two children, because the social cost is high. [Tongji, YF 39]

I do not want any more. I cannot afford it. If people are rich, they can have more. [Shifu, YF 37]

These types of responses also fit with an apparent shift towards more individualism that is focused more on personal attitudes and preferences rather than societal goals that was perceived to be more common among young people (Fong 2006). Thus, there was a general sense that increasing numbers of younger Chinese men were choosing not to have children, which was linked to the associated financial pressures:

Some fathers do not want to have children. Some feel the pressure of high social cost to have more children and then are not willing to. They cannot afford to. Some think the child influences their lives and do not want children. [Mai, YF 30]

The younger generation now have different thoughts from the older generation ... some do not want to marry or have children. [Junren, OF 65]

In contrast, it was also the case that some of the fathers in this study had more than one child despite the One Child Policy. For example, some men, particularly those in rural locations, had made a decision to have a second child even though they knew that there was the possibility that they could be punished by the state for this and even be imprisoned. One of these men expressed their desire for another child in terms of them not wanting to have a son but rather in terms of the welfare of their children; e.g., that they would not be an only child (this is discussed further later in the section):

I have a son and a daughter. I have violated the One Child Policy. I want to have two children. I felt it was good to have two children so that they might have company. I did not do this for having a son. I took a risk to have a second child. At that time, I was under pressure violating the One Child Policy and the economy in 1990s was not very good. [Lidui, YF 47]

Another of the father's living in a rural area believed the risk was not as great as is apparent in the previous extract. Here there was a general perception that the implementation of the policy was more relaxed in rural areas:

The One Child Policy is good. In my hometown, I can have two children, if the first one is a daughter. [Xiaodian, YF 30]

It was also possible, in certain cases, when a first child was a girl for a couple to apply for a second-birth permit that allows them to have a second child (Skalla 2004). However, this did not guarantee that a second child would be a son. For example, Liang [OF 59], who had migrated to the city and obtained his Urban Hukou through his military service, had applied for a birth permit from the state to allow him to have a second child who also turned out to be a daughter:

I wanted to have sons but I could not have more children. For my second daughter, I applied for birth permit* [准生证], because my wife and I both work for government. It was difficult to apply for a birth permit. I do not want to talk about it. [Liang, OF 59]

There was also evidence to suggest that some fathers who had achieved higher educational attainment were allowed to have a second child. This supports Fong's (2007b) assertion that the implementation of the One Child Policy was also influenced by desires to ensure the intellectual abilities of the population:

My third son who has a PhD degree, he is allowed to have a second child. I asked him to have one more. [Broliu, OF 66]

However, for other men this was not an option, particularly for those who worked in government positions. As other studies have found (Hesketh et al., 2005), these men risked dismissal if they violated the policy:

Individuals cannot combat with the government. ...We can do nothing, as we work for government. We cannot have more than one child, except we divorce. ...As we work for the government, we can only have one child, or we will not have our jobs. [Zhengce, YF 44]

Some fathers want to have more children, but they dare not. Some work for the government, some work for education departments and some are teachers in school, they have no way to have more children. Some work

in work unit* [单位], or nationally owned companies, they cannot have more children. They can only have one. Although they want more, they have no way. If they have more, they will lose their job. Unless they do not want the job, they go to other places. It is difficult. [Mai, YF 30]

I got an only children certificate* [独生子女证] to show compliance with the policy after the birth or else we too would lose our jobs. [Xia, OF 55]

It was clear, therefore, that not all fathers had identical perceptions and experiences of how the One Child Policy had been implemented. It appeared that men at either end of the social spectrum, either socially privileged groups such as those with higher qualifications or rural farmers, tended to be able to have more than one child which was interpreted as a form of discrimination:

The One Child Policy works well for those who are controlled by the government, for example teachers. But it does not work well for the private entrepreneurs and farmers. The farmers might have three to four children. The aim of population controlling is good, but they have no control on the farmers. Those who have high qualification should have more children, but the government has strict control on them. [Tongji, YF 39]

Some government officers go to another place to have two children. The law just controls the common citizens. [Qiu, YF 49]

These differences were a cause of concern among these men, not least because they felt that it could lead to problems in the way society was structured that hinted at the notion of a decline in the calibre of the population:

One Child Policy should apply to certain groups of people. ...Those who have a job and have money should have more children, but are just allowed to have one child. I am not discriminating. In rural areas, fathers who cannot earn much money, but can have two, three or four children. Then there will be a problem in the structure of population. [Li, YF 42]

Alongside this were men's worries concerning the lack of younger people and other fears regarding only having one child:

There are many risks, if the only children die, what can the parents do? [Qiu, YF 49]

How about the only children who are disabled and unhealthy? [Wang, YF 44]

The one child policy is against the aim of happiness. One economist has calculated how much happiness of the birth of a child can bring to the family, and how much loss can bring when miscarriage of the child happens. If I have two children the degree of happiness can improve. [Li, YF 42]

Many men also felt that the One Child Policy was creating certain problems for parents in that only children were increasingly likely to be spoilt. This is evident in the fact that Chinese children have been referred to as 'little emperors' to convey the notion that children are indulged and become selfish

and are not expected to contribute to family or societal life in ways that were apparent in the past (Bin 1996):

I think having two children is better. The only children easily get spoiled and become self-centred [Tongji, YF 39]

Most of the parents, who were born in nineteen eighties are only children. All treat their children as jewels. [Bin, YF 28]

If I have only one child, I will not let my child do farm work or hard work. [Lidui, YF 47]

Moreover, many men believed that the way in which children were cosseted and the fact they did not have interactions with siblings could be detrimental for future generations (cf. Fong 2004):

I think it has become a social problem. The only children are proud and self-centred. The only children have problems, such as psychologically in communication and identification. [Zhengce, YF 44]

There is a saying 'only children are very unfortunate' – China Worm* [中国虫]; opposite of fathers' wish towards children to be a dragon; e.g., able to take responsibility for their families. It will be a big problem. They are self-centred. They do not have siblings and do not know how to deal with others. When they grow up, they do not know how to

communicate with their wives and children and do not know how to help each other. [Wang, YF 44]

Men felt that some children had become increasingly unsociable and maladjusted and that these traits could affect children's reactions to the pressures and difficulties they are likely to encounter in life:

Some students who study at a famous university committed suicide. Why? Because they could not bear the pressure, they grew up under parents' spoiled love. When they come across difficulty, they cannot bear it. [Zheng, YF 49]

In addition, many men felt that the higher expectations placed on only children was also stressful for them. Thus, whilst only children had benefited from improvements in standard of living this had come at a cost in terms of them being solely responsible for maintaining 'face'; e.g., that a child's success is a reflection on their family:

Only children live in a quite good social economic situation and they are treasured. But at the same time, they have lots of pressure, such as wish to become a dragon* [望子成龙]. ...In the past, the social economic situation was bad, and there were many children, parents would not put all expectations on one child. [Junren, OF 65]

Many men also raised concerns regarding the impact on children of not having siblings:

Surely I want a second child. Only one is very lonely. [Mai, YF 30]

Having two children is better. When the children face pressure they can have someone to talk to. [Qiu, YF 49]

Clearly, many men thought that having two children provided a better environment for their children in terms of their ability to interact with others which is in line with studies that suggest that children who have siblings receive more in the way of relational resources than children without siblings (Kaestner 1996; Noller 2005). Time and again they made the point about their children benefiting from improvements in standards of living but being harmed by their lack of siblings:

My son was an only child. ...I put all my love on him. He had excellent socio-economic situation. There is no chance for him to train his moral character, such as diligence * [勤劳], frugality * [俭朴] and they did not know how to share. If I had more children, it might seem too poor to provide for many children but it offered an environment that they could share. [Wang, YF 44]

Men also drew on their own experiences as only children to highlight some of these issues. For example, Didi [YF 37] felt that siblings, particularly male siblings, could be a potential source of support and someone with whom men could share familial pressures:

In the funeral of my mother, I am the only son and carried lots of pressure. I felt helpless. If I had had two or three brothers, we could discuss and share ideas. This was also because, in rural areas, sisters

do not join in such things. It is sons' thing. When facing prominent incidents, I have no one to talk to. [Didi, YF 37]

Consequently, a number of the men in this study suggested that the One Child Policy be revised or even removed, which also reflects recent reports that suggest the One Child Policy may well be replaced with a Two-Child-Policy as a means of enhancing the stability of the population (Chen 2009):

The One Child Policy should be loosened. [Liang, OF 59]

The One Child Policy should state in this way 'encourage having one child, but not forbidding having two children'. [Qiu, YF 49]

It is evil, does not respect life, but respect material. ...The state should abolish this policy. [Wang, YF 44]

In summary, this section has explored the views and experiences of these men in relation to the One Child Policy. It is clear that they viewed it to be both beneficial and not so beneficial to Chinese society. Thus, on the one hand it was seen as necessary to ensure that economic progress could be maintained, but it was at odds with the Chinese tradition that fathers desire a son or sons to continue the family line and to provide a secure future for their parents in older age and was also perceived as creating a range of problems for children in terms of their moral aptitude and their psychological well-being. Whilst these men clearly favoured the tradition of having a son, they also suggested that they were relatively happy with having a daughter and that certain aspirations that traditionally applied to sons were now being applied to girls. This could reflect changes in father-child relations in light of the One

Child Policy and may also reflect the fact that these interviews were being conducted with a young woman that may have caused men to tone down some of their attitudes towards the One Child Policy and the gender of their children.

Conclusion

This chapter has begun to demonstrate some of the complex inter-relationships between China's rapidly changing social, economic and political context and perceptions and experiences of these men in relation to certain aspects of both being fathered and their fathering. Prominent within their accounts was their awareness of the significance of social and economic conditions for fatherhood. For example, older fathers' experiences reflected the realities of fathering in times of famine and 'Cultural Revolution' that made it difficult for fathers to have meaningful or close relationships with their children. In the main, all of the men in this study considered that the conditions for fathering had improved in contemporary China, though it was also felt that the shift to a market economy and individualism had resulted in fathers' not fulfilling their responsibilities that fuelled a potential moral decline in society. The chapter has also demonstrated the impact of migration on the lives of these men and certain implications for their relationships with their children. Whilst some men clearly believed that they and their children had benefited from the migratory process it was also the case that others had not been so fortunate, particularly those men who had been forced to leave their children. Finally, the views and experiences of these men regarding the One Child Policy highlighted how men made sense of the policy and how they believed it impacted on them and their children.

Chapter Five

Traditional fatherhood in China

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the broad social, economic and cultural context within which Chinese fatherhood is located. This chapter will take a closer look at three significant aspects of traditional Chinese fathering and fatherhood clearly evident in their accounts namely their role as moral guardians, as disciplinarians and in relation to their children's education. These three themes were contextualized in relation to Chinese tradition and culture, including the influences of Confucianism and Taoism, and more contemporary influences that appear to have their origins within Western ideologies and the shift to a less strict fatherhood. In order to explore these issues in finer detail this chapter is organized thematically into three major sections, beginning with fathers' accounts of their perceived responsibility as moral guardians. It then moves on to present fathers' diverse responses and rationales in relation to the issue of discipline and how they manage the tension between the influence of traditional perceptions of fathering and those associated with modernity. Finally, the chapter will focus on fathers' involvement in their children's education, which was a significant topic of conversation within these men's interviews and a clearly important aspect of their role as fathers. The findings in this chapter highlight the complex interactions between culture and fathering in China that have not previously been fully explored in the research literature.

Fathers as moral guardians

Many of the older fathers in this study tended to regard their country, their family and their children as their primary responsibilities. This three dimensional sense of responsibility was arguably informed by Confucius (300 BC) philosophical thoughts on 'king, father and son', which stressed the hierarchical order of men's responsibilities (Myerson et al., 2010). Many of

these men thought that men needed to be loyal to their country and sons needed to be fully obedient to their father and both older and younger fathers directly mentioned certain aspects of Confucius thoughts, such as filial piety:

The main responsibility is to manage* [管理] family and train* [教育] children, do well in work to make contributions to the country, the party, and the people. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

Although men recognised that the 'Open Up' period had resulted in general improvements in people's social and economic environment, it was also evident that many men, particularly older men, had strong traditional party affiliations and identities. For example, in the case of older men, their patriotic passion appeared to be derived from their experiences of the state (the communist party) helping the poorer workers to get farmland during the civil war with the opposition party* [国名党] (Brandt et al., 2002):

The government is good and probably the best. It helps farmers... It is better than opposition party* [国名党]. [Gongchang, OF 60]

Many of the older men often described an intense devotion to the country and passion for contributing to the country, which they believed should subsume the interests of the individual. For instance, working for the good of the party/country had resulted in some of the older men delaying their marriage, which also affected the timing of when they became fathers (Hoffman 2006):

I married when I was 30 years old. I have not thought about when to marry, only thought about how to work for the country. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

Alongside older men's perceived responsibility toward the state, they also addressed their responsibilities in terms of family and children:

My main responsibility is to be responsible to family and take care of children. [Xiao, OF 58]

My main responsibility is to take good care of the family, train* [管教] the children well and then the children get a job, basic subsidies* [有饭吃] and have a family. [Liao, OF 59]

In Chinese tradition, Confucius places great importance on putting the needs and interest of the family and children before one's own (Nelson et al., 2004). This was supported by many of the men in this study who believed that the family unit was more important than the individual (Chan and Leung 1994):

Those who were born in 1950s might be influenced by the Confucius Culture, put more effort and have a stronger sense of responsibilities for their family. [Tongji, YF 39]

For instance, Zheng described how perceived failure in his career resulted in him sometimes having suicidal thoughts and how these feelings were overridden by his belief about his responsibilities towards family and children:

I had low and high times. For instance, I went bankrupt once and I experienced people's cold eyes. I wanted to die, but as a man, as a son,

I had an ill father. As a father, I had children to send to school. If I died, my father would die, and my children would be beggars. I had a responsibility to them. [Zheng, YF 49]

The role of the father as a moral teacher has also been evident in a substantial amount of Chinese Literature (Ho 1987; Fung 1999; Kleinman et al., 2011). Morality has also long been considered as the golden governing rule for leaders and it has been rooted in many Chinese people's mind through many classical Chinese writings. For instance, a great deal of indigenous descriptions regarding child rearing are based upon the core value of Confucius that the morality of the individual is the foundation of all social goods. Similarly, Zeng Guofan, who was the army leader in late Qing Dynasty (1811-1872), also commented that 'morality is the mother of national salvation' (Cheung 2004). Thus, many of the older fathers in this study articulated what they considered to be their culturally inherited responsibility for the moral standards of the family, which they believed was evident in their children's behaviour. They tried to teach their children what they needed to become what they considered to be good people. This included helping children in learning social values and moral codes, acquiring common beliefs, developing appropriate behaviours and gaining social skills (Chen et al., 2010):

Children need to be educated* [教], such as in filial piety, studying hard and how to socialize with people. [Liang, OF 59]

Thus, to have a good child older fathers considered they needed to be a good moral role model within their family, which is in line with the Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi's belief 'teach by modelling rather than just by words'* [言传身教]. That is to say, fathers have to act in certain ways themselves if they expect their children to do the same. Men's own moral cultivation was seen to be of

great significance in having a well behaved child. Indeed, the father was traditionally regarded as the parent with greater theological understanding as well as a moral character and thus more suited to good child-rearing than the mother (Perälä-Littunen 2004). In this study, older fathers regarded the moral characteristics of men as an important element of being a responsible father, which included establishing certain values such as honesty:

My main responsibility is not to join in bad behaviours, such as alcohol and smoking. It is my moral characteristics should be good* [品行端正]. Be honest to others and others will do the same to you. [Broliu, OF 66]

A good father starts from being a good man. This affects my children to how to be a good man. [Liang, OF 59]

It was also apparent that the majority of the younger fathers in this study appeared to have inherited this traditional role of the father as moral teacher and often commented on their responsibility as fathers to have a well-behaved child (Zhong 2002):

The most important thing is to teach and train his characteristics to become a useful person. [Wang, YF 44]

My main responsibility is to teach* [教] my children to walk on the right path, be outstanding man* [精英], and how to communicate with people* [待人]. [Xiaochen, YF 37]

I will guide and let her understand what decisions to make in the future.
[Shitling, YF 31]

My responsibility is to train and nurture* [培养] my son's character, and to guide his life. [Mai, YF 30]

My main responsibility is to raise my son and train* [教] him well. [Zuix, YF 21]

In particular, younger fathers clearly put a great deal of emphasis on the notion of guiding their children so that they would have a good future with many men talking about pointing them in the right direction. In these cases the right direction is more than simply morals and manners and also includes the wider notion of equipping children for adult life which was also linked to the greater opportunities available within contemporary China (Fung 1999). Compared to the older generation, younger fathers were more conscious of providing a 'pathway' for their children that contained the notion of planning ahead in terms of their thinking about their schooling, job and marriage. Many of the younger fathers often used the term 'vision' or 'direction' in relation to both their sons and daughters:

Train child's character, guide his life, and give the direction. This is the responsibility of a father. [Mai, YF 30]

Being a father means that I give my daughter a goal, vision and life design to guide her. [Jingji, YF 44]

Fathers can point out the right path for their children and think about their future. [Xiaochen YF 32]

However, it was also apparent that these responsibilities were not considered to be properly or fully exercised by all fathers with some men suggesting that this aspect of fathering was in decline. Specifically, it appeared that younger fathers were more likely to be the focus of criticisms by both the older and younger fathers in this study who believed that younger men tended to focus primarily on the economic and physical aspects of fathering whilst ignoring the equally important moral, emotional and psychological aspects. For instance, it was acknowledged that they provided for their children, but did not tend to consider the wider dimensions associated with the moral education of children. These concerns also appear to echo more general notions of a moral decline in China and father's concerns regarding children's morals and manners (Li et al., 2001). In making these points men were aware that the reasons for this lack of focus among younger men were complex. On the one hand, they understood that men could struggle in their role as a good provider and simply did not have the extra time and energy to fulfil their role as moral teacher. On the other hand, they also suggested that some men were simply satisfied by fulfilling their role as provider and ignored their other roles:

The big problem in China is that fathers just meet children's material needs. They do not have time to care for children, no education, and no moral teaching. [Junren, OF 65]

Some ignore children to work for life. Until child was in prison, the father started to understand the money cannot compensate the children's mistakes and crimes. [Mo, YF 34]

Once these men began to discuss these concerns it was also apparent that many of the younger fathers in this study were also fearful that they too did not fulfil certain aspects of their teaching role. They had concerns that their children may not be taught to be a good moral person and they were worried that as a result that their children may become involved in crime and other anti-social behaviour, which would reflect poorly on them as fathers:

Teenager also puts father under pressure. If I did not teach him well, it would be my responsibility. I am worried that children will commit juvenile crime. Children are my main pressure. [Wang, YF 44]

When my children grow up, I have pressure on whether they walk on the right path and how they behave. If they are not good, people will think it is my problem and responsibility. [Shifu, YF 37]

This aspect of their interviews also illustrated the decisions these men felt forced to make in terms of the best strategy for ensuring their children were both successful and also good people. For example, Wang [YF 44] acknowledged that all fathers wanted their children to succeed in life but he also wanted to focus on his children's moral characters rather than simply their success in terms of their employment, although obviously the ideal would be for his children to be both successful and have a good moral character. Thus, it seems that Wang had certain primary expectations about his son, e.g., he wanted him to be a moral person first and foremost and therefore felt he had to prioritise his son's moral teaching:

Of course, when the children have success I feel honoured as a father. But I feel it is more important for the children to be people of value and walk in the right path. When the children go to prison, commit sins and

have drugs, the father fails. [Wang, YF 44]

In recent years, given wider concerns about a decline in moral standards, it is also the case that there has been a greater emphasis on moral education within Chinese schools that mainly consist of teaching students to formulate and apply (morally or legally) appropriate rules (Kleinman et al., 2011). However, in keeping with Chinese tradition, many of these men, particularly the older fathers, believed that the family should take the majority of responsibility for communicating good morals and manners to children, as opposed to depending on the education system to fulfil this role. In simple terms, they felt that schools were responsible for academic teaching and families were responsible for moral training. Moreover, it also appeared that many of the older fathers perceived that schools were not as effective as parents in providing children with good moral characteristics:

I taught my grandson to not waste rice. I agree with the opinion that at school children learn knowledge, at home children get moral education and how to be a citizen. [Junren, OF 65]

Similarly, younger fathers also believed that more parents should take ownership of teaching children good morals and not to depend on the school, particularly as many fathers had concerns regarding the moral stance of contemporary teachers. Thus, although fathers expected schools to take some responsibility to teach morality to children they should not be responsible for all moral teaching:

We cannot let those who are not moral educate the children. We just think we can take it easy as we have put the children in the top school....I want to inform the young parents that the educating right is

the parents' job and school is only a helper. [Wang, YF 44]

The quality of education in China is not good and teachers are not that responsible. [Qiu, YF 49]

In summary, this section has explored fathers' responsibilities in terms of their children's moral aptitude. It has illustrated how older men in particular believed that it was the duty of the father to be a good moral role model within their family. Thus, fathers were expected to behave in ways that encouraged their children and established certain values such as honesty and a sense of loyalty to their country. There were also concerns regarding a perceived decline in moral standards that was linked to a failure among fathers to fulfil this important role.

Fathers as disciplinarians

This section examines fathers' roles as the main disciplinarians, albeit with an apparent shift to a more caring disposition. Many popular Chinese beliefs indicated that paternal control and the notions of discipline and strictness are intrinsic to Chinese fathering practice. For instance, the notion of 父要子死, 子不能不死* dictates that 'if a father wants the son to die, the son must die' (Shek 2007). Traditionally, coercive practices, such as smacking and criticism, have been used as main ways of exercising or demonstrating paternal control and strictness (Fung 1999). In this context, smacking is acceptable in China and it is a culturally authorized disciplining practice. As mentioned earlier, many of the fathers in this study were worried about their children offending. Some of the older men looked back at their father's smacking and appreciated their fathers' strictness so that they had not gone down the 'wrong path', though they had resented this when they were young:

I was very naughty, if my father was not strict, I might have become a

bad person. [Junren, OF 65]

I did not go to school, I was naughty. My father smacked me often. Now I think it is right for him to smack. For children, if fathers are not strict to discipline, that will be a great mistake and cause trouble for children. The saints said 'son not well educated, father to be blamed' [子不教父之过]. [Xia, OF 55]

Consequently, many of the older fathers were explicit in reporting that they had been severe in smacking their own children and often portrayed this in terms of it being in the child's benefit:

I smacked and chastised them when they misbehaved. If I was not strict, there would be no good children. When my daughter lied to me, I had her kneel on the washing wood which was very rough. [Guer, OF 66]

Indeed, some older fathers believed that had they not executed enough discipline that one clear consequence would have been that they had not raised well-behaved children. For instance, Liao [OF 59] blamed himself when he saw that his son did not behave well, which he ascribed to his lack of discipline:

When I look back, I think I failed. I did not discipline my son enough. When he was in his third year in primary school, I should have disciplined*[管] him and laid a good foundation. I did not do enough and he became hyperactive. Even the teacher cannot 管 him. He could not sit and read. [Liao, OF 58]

Other men justified their smacking in terms of it resulting in success. In these cases men suggested that their children's success was a justification for them being strict and exempt them from feeling guilt. However, whilst corporal punishment was often portrayed in terms of encouraging success in children this was not always thought to be appropriate; *"I doubt smacking children for their success is scientific"* [Lidui, YF 47]. It was also apparent that men's attitudes to smacking could change. For example, one father used the case of his nephew to demonstrate changing attitudes towards discipline. In this case his nephew, prior to having children himself, had disagreed with the notion of smacking children. However, now he too had children he was more open to such discipline as he blamed his own lack of discipline for his children's lack of success. This extract also hints at how some older fathers were not oblivious to the impact of their discipline and the pain they had inflicted:

I feel pained* [舍不得] and worry that the children would feel pain* [可怜]. However, before, my nephew thought me not good, because I smacked children. Now he says I am good, if not, he could not succeed* [成材]. [Broliu, OF 66]

When reflecting on their experiences of being fathered, younger fathers were also often resentful that their fathers were quite controlling and commanded obedience (Chiu and Ring 1998; Yang 1989); *"In China it is not very democratic, the role of father is higher and I need to obey to my father"* [Didi, YF 38]. Their fathers also had the power to plan careers and even marriage for their children, which was not always considered a good thing:

My father was controlling and not democratic. He asked me to do something without any reason. I did not have any freedom. My father

planned all things for me. [Tongji, YF39]

This was also considered to be potentially damaging for men's sense of responsibility and independence. For example, some of the men, such as Tongji [YF 39], described how they had become dependent on their father's control because their fathers had been making decisions for them since they were young. Tongji felt this degree of control had impacted negatively on his ability to think independently and the sudden withdrawal of his father's input when he reached adulthood (defined in terms of employment) had created difficulties for him:

Controlling affect my independence. After my marriage and starting to work when I was 25 years old, I start to learn independence. Chinese parents are strange. Before you get a job, they are very controlling. After you work, they ignore you. [Tongji, YF 39]

In addition to wanting their children to be successful, which was the justification many older men put forward to legitimate such the fathering practices, many of the younger men also felt that the reason some fathers executed such control over their children's lives was to satisfy their own desire for success:

Many Chinese parents' requirement on the children is just putting their thoughts on children. They have a vain heart* [虚荣心] and the thoughts of 'hope for children's success'* ['望子成龙', '望女成凤']. The children need having a good future* [出息], and do well. Some regard this as a way to care the children. But this caring method is not right. [Mai, YF 30]

It was also the case that fathers' desires for their children to succeed continued after their children had grown up and that they therefore attempted to exert control over their adult children's decision making, such as when and who they married and the careers their children chose. One possible reason for men's control over their adult sons in China is related to property inheritance, which goes from father to son (Sun and Roopnarine 1996):

Chinese fathers have too much control on their children. They do not leave much space for them. For example, parents treat the children who got married like a child and intervene in their life a lot, such as marriage, work and housing. [Wang, YF 44]

My friend's father asked him to go home to have a governmental job or to marry a certain girl. ...The father of my nephew controls everything, such as how to take rice into bowls. So my nephew does not want to live with him. [Ma, YF 45]

Alongside the loss of guidance from their fathers, there were also the problems faced by the fathers themselves as they lost control. This was particularly among some of the older fathers. For example, many of the older fathers talked about their decreasing degree of control over their adult children and the decreasing opportunities to participate in their children's decision making. In making sense of these changes they were aware that they could do little about their own decreasing dominance and their children's increasing power and control (Wilson et al., 2003):

I cannot train* [管] my grown up daughter, because we have different thoughts. [Xia, OF 55]

The younger generation like independence and do their own things by themselves and they do not want parents to interfere. [Guer, OF 66]

In general, all the men felt that they tended to have a less hierarchical relationship with their children as they grew up. For instance, their role shifted from one linked to discipline to one linked to monitoring and they changed their strategy to include more persuasion as they got older:

I was strict when my children misbehaved and did not study. ...When they grew up, I was not strict. ...The responsibility of parents then is to monitor/ guardian* [监督/监护]. [Junren, OF 65]

When they are young, I will control* [管] strictly. Gradually, I will give more freedom. Give different amount of freedom at different age. [Ma, YF 44]

Because I grew up, he was old and he could not be strict and control me. When I grew up he would not treat me as a child, but as an adult. [Han, YF 32]

Many younger fathers also sensed that their financial independence was the main reason that they could gain some control and their fathers also respected this. For example, Tongji [YF 39] described how it was after he gained responsibility for his own finances that his father gave him more autonomy:

The relationship between my father and I now is more equal, because he cannot treat me like the time when I was young. In fact, after I went to the university, the relationship changed. He thought that I grew up. The authoritarian relationship existed when I was young, in primary school and middle school. When I was young, he had the right to control me. However, after I work and have my own income, he thought I am grown up. I can be responsible for myself. Of course, when I am independent, he gives me some suggestions, but in more equal way. [Tongji, YF 39]

It was also apparent, having described how they were resentful of their fathers' controlling tendencies, that some of the younger fathers chose to implement control and enforce strictness in relation to their children in the name of their children's well-being:

Strictness is to guide. Now, without father's strictness, he will not have good judgment and he will fail. [Qiu, YF 49]

In the main, however, younger fathers did try a different approach with their children primarily due to their experiences of being strictly controlled by their fathers. Instead, they described how they wanted to listen to their children's opinions and tried to involve them in decision-making, albeit whilst recognizing that this was dependent on the age of their children and also those certain of their decisions had to be obeyed regardless of their child's opinion. When describing their rationale for this approach they often talked in terms of them having learnt something positive from their own negative experiences (Tugade et al., 2004):

My father was very controlling. So I want my child to have her own thoughts. I will meet her need to do something for her. Encourage her to have her own judgement. This resilience results from the adverse impacts of my father's controlling behaviour. I will ask for her opinion and care about her willingness on doing something in order to give her ideas of being independent. If she likes painting, we would send her to learn. I will hear from her ideas on decision-making. But for something there is no need to have her opinion, I will have control, for example filial piety. When my father-in-law was ill, we went to see him on weekends. But my daughter did not want to and wanted to play. I did not let her do that. The basic morals, I will not let her violate. [Tongji, YF 39]

Alongside this change to how they had been fathered, some of other younger fathers also rejected the use of smacking as a disciplining tool. For instance, Tongji [YF 39] chose not to use smacking at all, but used separation and isolation as a means of discipline. Similarly Mai [YF 30] chose to appreciate children more instead of *'blaming and scolding'*:

I cannot smack her. I will tell her the right thing. If she does not listen, I will separate her* [leave her alone]. [Tongji, YF 39]

I pay more attention to appreciation teaching; appreciate the child, appreciate what the child does. ...the appreciation method is quite good. [Mai, YF 30]

Alongside their rejection of smacking children, many of the younger fathers also tried to organise more activities in which they and their children could participate. These men described how they wanted to share similar interests as a way of being more fully connected with their children. They were more

willing to programme events such as sports and other entertainments, which they thought their children would be interested in:

I am aware that I have impacts on my son, so I intentionally play basketball with him and teach him to be competitive and encourage him to do the best. ...I play, do sports, travel, and go shopping with my son ... my aim is to become friends with him. [Li, YF 42]

I need to be aware that I have a way or hobby that my child can also participate in. This might be my interest or her interest. I need to find the same activities between us, for example, swimming together. [Tongji, YF 39]

Men also described how they had spent more time observing their children as a means of trying to find opportunities to connect with their children. This is also in contrast to the more traditional images of Chinese fathers which emphasise their responsibilities for the more major aspects of their children's lives, such as success in school, rather than the more trivial aspects of fatherhood, such as taking account of their children's behaviours and patterns of play (Faure and Fung 2008). For example, younger fathers such as Zhengce [YF 45] were committed to this new aspect of fathering:

I will record her behaviours, and have communication with her to affect her values. [Zhengce, YF 45]

However, it was also apparent that many of the younger men recognised that they did not always have the patience to deal with their children in such way and as a result sometimes found themselves abandoning negotiation and

observation and resorting to harsher forms of discipline. For instance, Shifu [YF 37] noted that after taking extra time and using different strategies as a means of instilling values and discipline, he lost his patience and resorted to smacking his son:

When I talk to him, he does not listen. Later I will try with saying nice things to the children to stop them from misbehaving* [哄], he does not either. I use material things to make him obey, for example buying things for him. But my patience is limited and I will smack. [Shifu, YF 38]

Thus, whilst these men reported that they wanted to be different from their fathers and to not implement the means by which they were fathered, some of the younger fathers found that their experiences of being fathered continued to impact on how they fathered, sometimes in unconscious ways. In short, despite their best efforts to be different, they recognised that they would sometimes act in exactly the same ways as their fathers and would treat their own children strictly when their children misbehaved. This aspect of their accounts also highlights a potential tension between what might be termed aspects of their intellectual parenting based upon new knowledge and their desire to be warm and their intuitive or instinctive response to smack and discipline which is derived from the Chinese culture and their experiences of how they were fathered:

I will not be like the older fathers just let the children do and just provide them with food. I pay attention to his emotions and sometimes communicate with him. But maybe the old parenting ... may also affect me. For example, when he is naughty, I will be very angry and blame him very harshly. Although I know this is not good, I cannot control myself. Maybe I am now aware of using other ways to talk, I use the way when I was young to teach. It might have some influence. [Bin, YF 28]

This type of intuitive response often resulted in many of the younger fathers regretting that they had simply implemented a more traditional response to their children's misbehaviour. These types of responses were therefore clearly linked with intuition rather than a more measured response where they responded without giving a thought, which usually led to regrets. Many of these men said that they had to work harder and exert more effort to shift from such intuitive responses to what they considered to be proper parenting:

When the teacher complained about his misbehaviour to us, we smacked him. But later, I realized that I should not smack him, but communicate with him. ...I adjusted. I think I need to change my attitude. I need to respect him and give time and space to him, not just discipline and impose requirements on him, but to make friends and communicate with him. [Wang, YF 44]

In contrast to such apparent changes in fathers' attitude towards discipline, other men, particularly older men, felt that these types of changes in fathering practice were influenced by wider changes in society, especially the shift towards individualism and more freedom for children and had resulted in a generation of fathers who could not control their children. It was the opinion of many older fathers that younger fathers often went too far and offered their children too much freedom. They also thought that the general perception of Western parents as providing their children with far greater freedoms had also led younger Chinese fathers 'astray'. Reiterating traditional notions of Chinese fatherhood, older fathers often held the view that younger fathers should have a certain degree of strictness as this would enable them to guide their children and to protect their children because their children did not have the necessary knowledge and values to look after themselves:

My son sometimes is not strict with his son and wants him to be independent, free developed, and does what he desires. I say no to this. As the child does not know what is right or wrong. Some says American parents are like this, and they let the children develop and grow freely. I say how about the child wanting to get drowned in the river. This will only harm the children. Fathers need to educate and teach children what is right or wrong and how to do things. But fathers do too much on letting children grow freely and they do not have guidance on that. [Guer, OF 66]

There were also examples of younger men, such as Wang [YF 44], who felt that some fathers provided their children with too much freedom. This was not only viewed as spoiling their children, but was also viewed as potentially damaging to children both physically and psychologically:

I feel the biggest mistake Chinese fathers make is that they just let the children do what they like when they were young. ... The children smoke, drink alcohol and become addictive to internet. [Wang, YF 44]

Two themes, related to a changing society, were apparent in men's discussions regarding these perceived changes in fathering practice regarding discipline. The first of these relates to the perception that younger men were less able to be disciplinarians because they did not have the same authority as their fathers. For example, some of the younger fathers appeared to resent what they perceived to be recent changes in the cultural representations of fathers as softer, less authoritarian and less powerful within families. This shift in cultural image was given as a reason why many children were not as obedient as in the past (Abbott et al., 1992):

Fatherhood for the older generation was much easier. Before, as a father, the head of the household * [一家之主], what he says counts. Others seldom disagree. Then, of course, it was easy for them to be a father. ...What father said, children must listen to. ... If not, he is not filial. He dare not listen to what the elder * [长辈] said. Nowadays, children are very difficult to train. [Han, YF 32]

The other main theme when men talked about why fathers were perceived not to be as strict as in previous generations related to the One Child Policy. In short, it was felt that this increased the pressure on fathers because on the one hand they wanted to be strict for all the reasons outlined above but on the other they did not want to treat their only child too harshly. Thus, there appeared to be a clear tension between what fathers wanted in terms of obedience and them not wanting to impose as much control on their child. For instance, Qiu [YF 49] believed that he was not as severe as his father and he also experienced upset when he did smack his son:

Before, my father was strict, I would be afraid. I was smacked. If I smack my only son, that would hurt. Now I smack my son not that harshly. Maybe I am not strict enough. I feel hurt * [舍不得] when I smack him. [Qiu, YF 49]

Alongside this, many younger fathers held the view that they should be less strict with their children when they were small, but they needed to be stricter as they got older, though this could also lead to certain problems. Wang [YF 44], for example, described how he was less strict with his son when he was young but then went on to regret this in later years. The following extract illustrates how Wang [YF 44] reflected on his decision and in hindsight realized that it would be better for a father to be strict from the beginning and to gradually become less strict as his child got older. However, it also

illustrates that men may find it too hard to be strict with a very young child:

Fathers spoil * [宠] their children when they are young. ...They felt the children were so small and they said they could discipline when they grew older. In fact, it should be that training them to be polite and doing things according to rules * [规矩] when they are small. ...When they are small do not give so much freedom. That is because when they are small, they do not have the ability of awareness. If you give them choices they do not know what is good. So do not give them choices. So I feel that I have gone the wrong way that I gave them too much freedom when they were young. For example, I bought many toys to let them choose. ...So there are many people who go in the wrong way. When the children grow up and become rebellious, we want to control them.In fact, when they are old we should give them more respect, freedom and space. When you gradually loosen, it will do good to the children. [Wang, YF 44]

There was, therefore, a clear tension between their perception that fathers had to enforce a certain level of strictness as otherwise the child would suffer in the longer term, but that warmer and less controlling fathering was also valuable. Consequently, some of the younger fathers chose a combination of warmer and strict fathering. However, whilst there was a sense that men were unsure about how much warmth and how much control they should exercise in general they described how their reactions were driven by their children's behaviour:

I will be both strict and kind. I will follow what my parents did. When the child misbehaves, I will be strict. Other time, I will be kind. It will be good. [Xiaodiao, YF 30]

I can describe myself as being both strict and kind. Sometimes I take him out to play and for dinner. When he does not work hard on his homework, I will smack him. [Didi, YF 38]

If children misbehave, men use a strict fathering role to discipline. If children have issues in their heart, father gives counselling as a friend. Both roles are right, fathers cannot just do one side. [Ma, YF 44]

In summary, this section has demonstrated fathers' perceptions and attitudes towards their role as disciplinarians and the potential shift towards warmer fathering practices that were in contrast to their experiences of being fathered. It is clear that older fathers had a different view regarding discipline compared to younger fathers, which was explained in terms of a changing society, but was not always perceived as good for children or the country more generally. Younger fathers were clearly aware that they had different fathering practices from their own fathers but also experienced a potential tension between the two positions of disciplinarian and warmer fathering practice.

Fathers' role in their children's education

As was previously discussed, traditionally, the educational achievement of children gives much status upon the father and family within Chinese culture (Pieke 1991). Not unsurprisingly, therefore, a number of the older fathers in this study located their aspirations for their children's academic performance within wider notions of family reputation and respect:

I want her to continue her study to do a PhD to earn honour for my family Xia. Her degree now is the highest in my family. Every father wants children to have a bright future, just like a dragon* [望子成龙].

[Xia, OF 55]

This aspiration for high educational attainment for their children and for their family was also evident in younger fathers' accounts. For instance, Zhengce [YF 44] required his daughter to do well in schooling to honour the family. Also clear here is the recognition of the pressures this could put on young people to meet such high expectations:

We tell her that if you do well in your study you will bring good to the country and the family. ...The daughter replied with; "These things are so far from me. Why do you put these on me?" Myself I also reflect on this. It is to honour the family, right? [Zhengce, YF 44]

Alongside the honour that higher educational achievement conferred on families, fathers were also clear about the concrete benefits for their children in terms of secure employment and higher wages. As mentioned earlier, given the extreme poverty that many of these men, particularly the older fathers, experienced, many described how they themselves were determined to use education as a route out of poverty:

I had my determination to study hard to change my family which was too poor. My father died from illness and poverty. The offspring should work hard to discard the poverty. [Zhangjiang, OF 60]

My father went to school and worked in governmental work unit * [单位]. At that time, if a person went to school and was literate, he could work in 单位. [Zheng, YF 49]

Thus, the experiences of older fathers in using educational achievement to escape poverty shaped many their aspirations for their children and informed their discussions with the children regarding the fact that they could achieve a better standard of living than those who did not study (Bai 2006):

If you study, you will have food* [有饭吃]. If not, you will do farm work in village. If you study well, you will leave here and have food. [Guer, OF 66]

My father told us to study well because we were so poor. ...Because of poverty, the fathers of my peers all wanted their children to study well. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

Similarly, many of the younger men talked about how they were enabled to leave poorer rural areas via their performance in the University Entrance Exam. They described this as life changing and how this had instilled the benefits of educational attainment, particularly as a means of achieving upward mobility (Kao and Tienda 1998; Heard 2007):

The University Entrance Exam has changed my life, and helped me to move from the countryside to the city. ...We live a good life through the University Entrance Exam. ...I want my child to be in the social class which is not lower than mine. [Zhengce, YF 44]

I left the village because of the University Entrance Exam. I studied hard and caught the opportunity to go to the UK in an exchange program. My

vision is different from others. I have many excellent friends and I learn a lot from them. [Li, YF 42]

Therefore, the majority of the men in this study regarded their children's education as one of their main concerns, goals and responsibilities as fathers, both in terms of older and younger fathers:

One of fathers' main responsibilities is to teach children to study hard. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

My main responsibility is to train my son and send him to university and to be elite. [Shifu, YF 37]

Given the importance placed on education, both older and younger fathers described how they would do all they could to provide their children with a good education, which included borrowing money:

It was important to train and nurture *[培养] children. I could not earn much money then I must borrow. I could not affect my children's future. I was not afraid to borrow money or tiring work, I only want to 培养 children. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

My father begged for money, sold the house, basically sold all things to provide us with university. He did all his best. Every penny is my father's hard work. [Zhengce, YF 44]

I used my own hard work to send two of my children to the university.
[Broliu, Of 66]

It was also apparent that some younger fathers considered sending their children abroad to study as they felt the social context in China was not conducive to their children's education. Some had also considered migration as a means of improving their children's academic experiences and thereby increase their children's power to compete in the employment market (Yeoh et al., 2005). There was also an indication that some fathers had a sense of dissatisfaction towards the Chinese education system:

I want to provide international learning environment for my son. Because of the rule in China, it might block his development. I might use my profession to work abroad and take him with me so that he can study abroad. Or I provide the money to send him abroad. [Li, YF 42]

Also clear were the ways in which younger fathers in particular had a greater opportunity to actively participate in their children's schooling (Trommsdorff 2009). For example, many of the younger fathers helped their children to get into better schools and helped them with their homework, though this could be sometimes done in potentially controlling ways as was discussed earlier:

I help him to correct his homework, teach him how to study. [Didi, YF 38]

Before he went to junior school, I always accompanied him to do homework. I watched him in the room near the room where he did homework. I kept an eye on him. [Jiefu, YF 46]

Younger fathers also appeared to have more understanding regarding ways to help their children with their homework, which included the potential for them to use their educational success to encourage them to study:

How can I inspire her to not waste time and do well in study? She can participate in my reading activities. I think my excellence can inspire her to mimic me. [Tongji, YF 39]

Younger fathers' participation in children's schooling was also linked to a willingness to express their emotions regarding their pleasure at their children doing well. In contrast, expressiveness was not as common amongst the older generation of fathers (Faure and Fung 2008). However, whilst some younger fathers explicitly stated that they felt happy that they could help this could also result in disappointment with the performance of their children:

I was happy to see him doing his homework. [Jiefu, YF 46]

I taught him to do the homework, and I had a similar one for him next day, but he could not do it. I felt angry. And I am worried about his study, he is not doing well. [Didi, YF 38]

Men's responsibility for their children's education was also manifested in their strong views that children should devote appropriate amounts of time to their school work. For example, some older fathers felt that their children should not have to help with domestic tasks because this was viewed as a distraction from their studies. This was also apparent among younger fathers with the

added differentiation in that they could ask more questions regarding their children's academic performance and be more involved in how their children progressed:

After the 'Cultural Revolution', we moved from city to village. My father himself did farm work, did not ask me to do house chores or farm work and he asked us to use the time for study. ...I grew up in this kind of family. So now I provide the environment for my son's study, how he gets on, I cannot control, it depends on himself. ... If he does not do well in study, I will communicate with him. [Li, YF 42]

There was also evidence that men made decisions regarding the location of their families based upon the education of their children. For instance, in order to provide a good environment for his son's education, Li [YF 42] chose not to take his son with him when went overseas to work and instead travelled back and forwards between his place of work and his home:

I do not want take my son with me to Korea where I will work for one year, the education there is not good. ... So I need to come back for many times during this one year. [Li, YF 42]

The progress men placed on their children's schooling led many fathers to evaluate themselves as fathers based on children's academic performance. Some felt they were doing all they could but in some cases fathers they perceived that they were not good fathers. For example, Guer [OF 66] gave himself a relatively low score as a father because he had felt he had not concentrated enough of his efforts on his children's education:

I will give myself fifty-five scores on being a father, if the full score is one hundred. ...I put my whole heart on the work. ...If I had time to pay attention to the children's study, it would be better. The children would have gone to a good university. ...I felt a loss. [Guer, OF 66]

Similarly, other fathers in this study did not find it easy to provide their children with the help they considered necessary for their children to perform well in their education. For example, older fathers had been forced work long hours and that had kept some from helping with their children's schooling. Added to which, some of the older men had experienced fathers who did not value education or were not sufficiently educated themselves to enable them to help with school work:

My father was busy with farm work and did not have much at home. He did not care about my study and was not educated. [Liang, OF 59]

It was clear that many of these men worked long and tiring hours and therefore had little energy to help with children's academic performance. Their lack of understanding could also mean that they tended not to interfere with their children's education (Li 2004):

After work, my son asks for his son's study. My generation did not know enough about this. I just let them develop freely. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

Those men who had migrated to urban areas and left their children behind could also do little to help with children's schooling, other than writing letters or making phone calls. However, these men were also keen to point out that they did what they could in such circumstances and were concerned with their

children's education:

I teach* [教育] my children by letters once a month. I asked about their study. [Liang, OF 59]

I called home to check their study. [Lidui, YF 47]

Whilst some men were able to encourage their children through reference to their own achievements this was not available to all men and some of these fathers had even been rejected when offering to help their children with their education. For example, Qiu [YF 49] suggested that his personal failure in his academic career was the reason why his son did not want his help:

My son does not like me to help him on study. ...My son said that I have not finished my PhD...So I am worried that I do not have many good impacts on my son. [Qiu, YF 49]

Similarly, Zhengce's [YF 44] daughter focused on the fact that he did not have the necessary personal contacts * [关系] to help secure her a place at a good school:

She complained I have not provided good socio-economic situation for her. If I know some governors I can send her to the famous high school ... and get a decent job in government. [Zhengce, YF 44]

Alongside these personal difficulties many of the younger fathers felt that new technology (e.g., internet) could make it more difficult for children to concentrate on their schooling. In other words, a changing society could challenge their expectations and goals as fathers in terms of interfering with their children's study:

The result of my tutoring on my son is not obvious because now children like internet surfing and playing games. [Didi, YF 38]

Now it is difficult for the children to be better. There are more distracting things, such as the internet. In the past we just had radios and life was simpler. [Zhengce, YF 44]

As a result, a number of men reported that their children required greater discipline to encourage them to study. As was apparent in the previous section, these men often used corporal punishment alongside greater monitoring of their children and restrictions on their leisure activities as a means of enhancing their educational performance:

I was strict with them, especially in study for success* [望子成龙]. For example, they watched TV in neighbour's house behind me, I smacked* [管教] them. [Broliu, OF 66]

I was strict to children, and forbid them to join in unhelpful activities and required them to study hard for the future happiness. All three children went to university, they are very clever. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

Discarding any hobbies, the only aim is to enter the university. ...What the child needs to do is only dinner and study. ...The study schedule of my child is like a mule from 7 am to 10 pm [Zhengce, YF 44]

Clearly, therefore, education was an aspect of their children's lives in which men would often enforce strong discipline. There were many instances in which men described how they had resorted to smacking their children when they did not perform well in school:

I smacked my older son when he did not do homework wholeheartedly. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

I would discipline my children when they did not do well in study. [Junren, OF 65]

Having identified how the University Entrance Examination was a turning point for them, one of the reasons that drove younger men to be strict in children's schooling was the competition for places in good universities. Many of the younger fathers thought that good educational attainment began when children were small and they all reminded their children about the competition as a means of getting them work hard in school:

Nowadays the public school continually give children pressure, make them face huge pressure. [Bin, YF 28]

If you want to go to good university, you need to study hard... Your competitors are all the students from the Guangdong province. [Zhengce,

YF 44]

It was also the case that younger men's personal experiences of higher education gave them insights that were not apparent to older fathers. This could also be linked to the fact that having fewer children made it easier for fathers to concentrate on their child's schooling:

That is because our generation all went to school, and more or less have some knowledge; not to have more children blindly. We focus on how to educate the children well. [Bin, YF 28]

In summary, this section has concentrated on fathers' perceptions and experiences of their children's education as an area of their children's lives that fathers tended to take responsibility for. Their wish for their children to succeed in education was linked both to a better life for their children and fulfilled men's own desire of family honour. Men's focus on education had implications for their relationships with their children, in terms of their involvement and encouragement but also as a source of anger and the potential for discipline.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on three of the main aspects of fathering apparent in these men's accounts, namely their role as moral educators, as disciplinarians and as the main source of guidance in relation to their children's education. It has demonstrated how all of the men in this study believed that it was the duty of the father to be the moral guardian and a good role model within their family. In terms of the older men, it was a reflection on them if their children did not behave in certain ways that reflected certain values such as honesty and a strong loyalty to their country. Among older

men in particular there were also concerns regarding a decline in moral standards that was linked to younger fathers failing to adequately enforce their role as moral guardians. It was felt that many younger men were not as committed to instilling certain values within their families which was also a feature of the apparent shift in men's role as disciplinarians. Younger fathers in particular appeared to experience the tension between wanting to enforce certain behaviours and attitudes through discipline whilst also wanting to demonstrate a warmer fathering than they had experienced. It was clear that the difference between the traditional fathering practices (e.g., smacking) and the new thoughts regarding communication and discussion could lead to certain difficulties for younger fathers. In short, men wanted their children to behave in certain ways both in terms of their values and in education but often were unsure about how to achieve this. Their experiences in relation to education were a clear example of this. They wanted their children to work hard both as a means of them securing a better standard of living and because it reflected on them as fathers through the honour it bestowed on their family. However, fathers were increasingly aware that they wanted to be encouraging and understanding but that this could dissolve into irritation and the need for discipline.

Chapter Six

Contemporary fatherhood in China

Introduction

The previous chapters have examined the broad social and economic context within which Chinese fatherhood is located and explored three key features of traditional Chinese fatherhood. This chapter builds upon this with a closer examination of the main roles associated with fathering and fatherhood in contemporary Chinese society. In exploring these issues, this chapter is organized thematically into three sections, beginning with men's accounts of their main role as providers for their children and families. It then moves on to highlight the apparent shifts towards a more 'involved' fatherhood and the potential tensions men experienced between fulfilling aspects of their main role as provider and their other roles as carers and their wish to build relationships with their children. Finally, the chapter will explore the cultural barriers that potentially hinder men's ability to demonstrate emotion with their children and the ways in which men seek knowledge regarding their children and their practice as fathers.

Fathers as providers

Across Western literature on fatherhood the notion of men's primary role as 'provider' appears to continue to structure men's experiences as fathers though research has also begun to illustrate men's increasing involvement in family life and how this may be beneficial to both men and children (Doucet 2006). Echoing this research, this study also found that first and foremost these men defined being a good or proper man/father in terms of their providing role. As such, their relationships with their families were often identified in primarily economic terms with both older and younger fathers demonstrating the importance of taking personal responsibility for the financial circumstances of their families which they equated with them fulfilling their main role as men:

I feel ... as a man ... I need to be a provider. [Lidui, YF 47]

Being the only man in family, I need to provide for the whole family.
[Zheng, YF 49]

Being a man means to earn money and should be hardworking.
[Zhanjiang, OF 60]

As a man, for me it means that I need to have a steady job. [Huoche, OF
65]

Across their accounts, men often emphasised how they worked hard to provide for their family even though this may have been difficult and demanding for them both physically and psychologically (cf. Lam and Chang 2007):

No matter how tiring and stressed my work was, I was not afraid of tiredness, which was for family and children. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

The notion of hard work and self-sacrifice was also clearly apparent when men talked about their own fathers and that they appreciated how their fathers had provided for their families. In short, men's self-sacrifice was not just equated with moral notions of goodness, but was also related to the maintenance of appropriate masculine identities (Nugent 2010):

My father was responsible. I have five siblings. He brought us up. One person provided for eight persons. My father was very capable, and made the wild field cultivated* [开荒]. [Xia, OF 55]

My father was qualified. He was hard-working, taking care of the family. He was responsible for his work. [Tongji, YF 39]

My father loved his wife and children. He was very responsible. He was hard working and loved us very much. [Wang, YF 44]

The emphasis men placed on their primary role as ‘provider’ was also reflected in the fact that many of these men believed that this was the foundation upon which a strong marriage and good fatherhood was built. In short, they believed that women wanted some guarantees of a strong economic foundation before they made the decision to marry and start a family. Indeed, other research has found that many women in contemporary China regard men without a strong financial position as worthless or ‘junk men’ that was also perceived to be a potential source of pressure on men to fulfil this role (Happy 2013:1). In keeping with such a philosophy, many of the men in this study, particularly the older men, considered the acquisition of property as an essential marker of masculine identity and a basic requirement before they considered marriage and fatherhood. For example, one of the older men from a rural area described how because he was not able to afford housing in the city he did not perceive that a woman living in the city would have viewed him as a potential partner; ‘*When I did not have housing in city I could not marry an urban wife*’ [Liang, OF 59]. Therefore, he had based his decision about who to marry based upon his access to housing and had married a woman living in a rural area because of this. Thus, the conditions relating to rural and urban locations together with men’s ability to attain appropriate markers of masculine identity influenced men’s decisions relating

to marriage and subsequent fatherhood. Similarly, other men also noted how the lack of affordable housing in China, particularly in the wake of economic growth (Li 2011), was seen as a potential barrier to both marriage and fatherhood:

Without money, men cannot marry. There is high requirement in marriage; housing. [Huoche, OF 60]

After graduation, men just start to work and have not much money and cannot afford housing immediately. If they do not have a house, they cannot marry. If they cannot not marry how can they be a father? [Xiao, OF 58]

The societal expectation for men, in terms of their incomes, could, therefore, restrict their choices of partner selection and consequently determine other areas of men's lives. As these extracts illustrate, providing adequately for their families was closely tied to men's sense of self in relation to being male and a good husband and father and they were highly motivated to fulfil their responsibility of providing for their family (Mott 1997). Not surprisingly, therefore, men's inability to provide for their families was perceived to be a major source of distress among men (Fox et al., 2002):

There are different types of fathers who have good socio- economic situation* [条件] and bad one. Those who have good 条件 provide food and material things and they have no burden in their heart and have different attitudes. Those who have bad 条件 and have many children, they found it difficult to provide for family and they got angry and lost temper* [暴躁]. [Junren, OF 65]

It was also clear that some men, particularly younger men, felt that the nature of men's economic provision had widened beyond the home environment; e.g., food and the other basic necessities that were more evident in the older men's accounts. There was not the expectation that men would also provide the means by which their children could take advantage of opportunities in wider society, particularly in relation to education. As discussed earlier, education was a significant aspect of their identities as fathers because of the fact it brought honour to the family and increased the likelihood that their children would be secure in adult life (Vojdik 2005):

I can provide a good environment. ...The child can be happy. The whole family is happy. ...I think some of my colleagues are very good. They send the child abroad and they provide such a good environment for the child. [Tongji, YF 39]

However, it was also the case that these apparent increases in expectations could result in many men experiencing greater levels of stress. For example, some of the men who had migrated from rural areas could not live up to contemporary notions of the good provider due to their limited earning potential. Thus, when asked about his feelings regarding fatherhood, Shifu [YF 37] replied with '*just pressure*' and it was clear that their sense of position as men was undermined by their inability to provide what was increasingly expected:

As we migrated workers* [打工族] we cannot afford both buying a house and sending them to university. So my only hope is sending them to university. If he is an elite* [人才], he can buy housing and get a wife by himself. [Shifu, YF 37]

For many of these men, like Shifu, the financial costs related to having children was a significant and continual concern and was also a source of uncertainty in terms of the future and their ability to provide for their children's needs. As was previously discussed, the increasing costs associated with having children were also part of the reason why the One Child Policy was welcomed by some men as means of reducing their financial burden:

The first birth was exciting, the second birth was happy, and the third one may become a worry. For the third one, we will worry about how to afford. It needs hard work. We cannot afford the education and whether we have money or not. ...I was very excited about the first birth, not the second birth. [Ma, YF 44]

It was also the case, and echoing earlier discussion, that men felt that the One Child Policy was in some ways responsible for the increases in familial expectation as fathers increasingly 'spoiled' their children. Thus, some fathers, particularly older fathers, criticised other men for providing their children with too much that inevitably increased the pressure on other fathers to provide more and more material goods:

Provide food and drink, give best to the children. Take good care of them. You do not want them to have hard life. One of my friends says that we Chinese fathers should learn from Western fathers. We have the children spoiled, like a flower in the greenhouse. That is not better than wild flower in the nature. [Broliu, OF 66]

In contrast, whilst some felt that men were under ever increasing pressure to

provide, men also pointed out that in contemporary China fathers did not appear to be as committed to their family and children as was the case in the past. For instance, there was a perception that fathers did not necessarily contribute all of their earnings to their family, and would often spend a significant proportion of their income on themselves. This was linked to the fact that younger fathers were brought up in an era of increasing individualism and as a result now cared more about themselves than their families. This was also perceived to be indicative of an increasingly unpatriotic population more interested in their own well-being than that of their country (cf. Filipov and Dorbritz 2003):

Fathers who were born in the nineteen sixties and nineteen seventies have more awareness of being an individual and focus on self and they are more independent. They will not give all the money which they earn to the family. They have their own life. Those who were born in the nineteen fifties focused more on family [Tongji, YF 39]

Men such as Zhengce [YF 44] and Shifu [YF 37], for example, were both explicit about this and the fact that fatherhood was affected by the trend towards individualism that meant men did not have to simply follow the pathway that fathers had traditionally inherited:

Nowadays fathers are more willing to tear their masks (not follow traditional notions of fatherhood) and to enjoy themselves. ...It might be related to the notion of self-realization and self-development. [Zhengce, YF 44]

If I offer too much, I am living for the children and not for myself. [Shifu, YF 37]

Alongside this, many of the men in this study upheld traditional attitudes that men should be given status within the home linked to their role as economic provider (Eagly and Steffen 1984). Thus, not only did these men make assumptions regarding women's primary role as the main care-givers for children, this distinction was also used to provide men with greater power within the home:

Compared to women, men are ... the cornerstone of the house* [顶梁柱] to make family better and richer. [Lidui, YF 47]

Men were not only expected to be the main provider and to earn more money than women it was also clear that some of these men, particularly the younger men, felt uncomfortable and threatened when these circumstances were reversed. Even though these men were fulfilling their economic duties in terms of providing for their families, nonetheless this clearly had an impact on their sense of masculine identity:

I was under high pressure when my wife's salary was higher than mine. But now I am higher than her. I was indeed under pressure then. In fact, if women's salary is higher than men, the majority Chinese men will have pressure. Chinese men are a little bit traditional. [Xiaochen, YF 37]

Not only did this increase the pressure on men it was also suggested that this imbalance could lead to instability within the family. For example, Tongji [YF 39] believed that the family structure was stronger when men earned more than women. He justified this with the notion that there was a natural foundation for why men and women took responsibility for different aspects of

family life. These thoughts were clearly based on a natural hierarchy within the home that was built on the notion of that men should earn more than women (Chodorow 1995; Mill 2001; Seidman 2003):

Earning money is a man's thing. If men earn more money, that is natural. If not, that will be unnatural. Some research says if men earn more than women, the family is more stable. Men should earn more. [Tongji, YF 39]

However, it was also the case that most of the men in this study believed that it was the duty of women to contribute to the economic position of the family and many described the greater pressure they experienced when their wives were not in paid employment. Thus, in short, most of these men wanted their wives to be in paid employment in order to share the economic burdens and responsibilities, albeit on lower incomes than the men themselves. This again can be contextualised within the contemporary socio-economic circumstances in China where high cost of living expenses mean that it is very difficult for a family to be supported by a sole-earner. Time and again, these men described how important their wives' incomes were to the economic position of their family and what they were able to do for their children:

I found it was difficult to provide the children to the university. My wife's salary was low. [Liang, OF 59]

I had pressure to provide the family. At that time, my wife did some temporary work, and the salary was not good. My pressure became less, when she had an official job. [Xiao, OF 58]

As has been evident in many Western societies, as more and more women participate in paid employment there was also apparent change regarding gender divisions within the home, though this was not uniform across all of their accounts. On the one hand, many of the older men drew on Chinese tradition that distinguished fathers from mothers and reinforced the notion that it was not suitable for men to participate in women's/mother's spheres within the home (Ho 1987):

The Chinese style is men work outside. Women take care of the family. Men are providers and need to do well at work. And women are responsible for family. It has been like this for a thousand years. Women do more in feeding, cooking and taking children out to play. There are role divisions in the family. [Guer, OF 66]

There are role divisions. Hakka men work outside and women take care of the family, such as doing house chores and welcoming guests. [Liao, OF 59]

When supporting this division, many men argued that this use of household labour was in the best interests of their children. For instance, Mai [YF 30] described how he had suggested that his wife left her job so she could take care of their son:

It is very important to be aware what is the main thing in the family ... it is the growth of the child. So my wife is at home to bring the child up and the child can have a good growth. And then I work outside. That is it and this is the decision. ...In fact, it is not difficult to make the decision of having my wife quit her job. ...Before, although both of us worked and

the salary was much higher, we did not focus on the salary we cherish the child's growth first. [Mai, YF 30]

The economic dependence of women on men also helped men to justify their lesser involvement in housework. If women did not work or not work as many hours as men then men would expect them to be the house-keeper. As Zuo and Bian (2001: 1129) point out, 'the tacit agreement that breadwinning released men from participation in housework and housework performance released wives from the obligation of breadwinning'. It was apparent that some of these men clearly linked women's subordinated position within the family to their relationship with the employment market:

I worked in the army and it was impossible for me to do house chores. My wife had more time. It is complementary. And the couple together is responsible for the family and has the same direction. That is enough and we do not have disputes regarding this* [计较]. ...I did not feel sorry. I like doing rough things. It's not male chauvinism * [大男子主义]. There needs to be role divisions in the family and society. [Junren, OF 66]

In contrast to some of the more explicit patriarchal views regarding the gendered divisions of household labour some of these men, including older men, rejected these strict gendered divisions. They did not agree with the traditional norms and proposed a different gendered relationship in the family based upon mutual respect and cooperation:

In terms of housework, I propose mutual help. It depends on the amount of work, who works more, then the other help. [Gongchang, OF 60]

Husband and wife worked together to manage* [管理] family and train and nurture* [培养] children. ...Two people make work go faster. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

Similarly, many of the younger men also disagreed with traditional gendered stereotypes and suggested a more flexible model that took into account men's greater involvement in housework and childcare:

I do not agree with the notion that men do not do any house chores. The couple should work together. [Mo, YF 34]

I did feeding sometimes, because my wife sometimes worked night shifts. [Qiu, YF49]

In summary, this section has shown the importance to these men of being a provider, while also highlighting the implications of rapid social change for men's ability to provide what they perceived to be an ever expanding array of goods and services. The section has also highlighted the shift away from traditional towards more contemporary patterns of gendered household tasks and their attitudes towards these changes. In short, the high costs of living in China had resulted in more women in the workplace and men reporting that they contributed more within the home.

Shifts towards a more 'involved' fatherhood

The previous section has highlighted how men's roles within the family appeared to be changing driven by the fact that women were increasingly in paid employment outside of the home. Across their accounts it was clear that men had started to take responsibility for some family orientated tasks that

had previously been regarded as women's work. In so doing, these men clearly expressed the view that they were open to helping women with household tasks and would adapt to daily demands such as cooking and childcare:

My wife also worked. Men and women both should be responsible and they are the same. Women also earn money. [Xia, OF 55]

I washed and cooked, because my wife had tiring work. [Xiao, OF 58]

My wife had to work and it was my responsibility to do the feeding and change the diapers. [Liang, OF 59]

Both wife and husband need to go to work nowadays. So they share burdens inside the family. So it is all like this nowadays. [Ma, YF 44]

Perhaps, not surprisingly given the recent socio-economic changes in Chinese society, this shift in men's roles as fathers was particularly apparent among younger fathers. For example, Wang's [YF 44] adjustment to changes in gendered roles was partly in recognition of his wife's high contribution to the family economy that was linked to higher costs of living:

I did more bathing and the feeding at midnight. Sometimes, I got up two or three times to make the children go to pee. ...In my family, there is cooperation in housework, because my wife was quite capable. She was busy outside and I did more in housework, such as washing the quilts and diapers, feeding and washing the feeding bottles. [Wang, YF 44]

However, Wang [YF 44] found these changes difficult to come to agree with and he felt other men would also struggle with such change:

So men will have complaints. Women are not behaving like women. They do not stay at home. ...After work men need to do the cooking, washing and cleaning. [Wang, YF 44]

In a similar vein, other men also noted the tensions that emanated from the changes to traditional gender roles. For instance, whilst Tongji [YF 39] tended to agree with the traditional gender role divisions within families, he also recognised that in most modern families women were forced to work due to high economic costs. The tension between these two positions is clear in the following extract:

Now, there is confusion between men and women's roles in family. Women all work to earn salary. ...I thought wife should stay at home, as I am quite traditional and do the washing and cleaning and cooking. ...This is the conflict [Tongji, YF 39].

Whilst a number of the men said they experienced difficulties in adjusting to their new roles within the family they tended to resolve this by locating these changes within the wider context of a changing society:

The traditional model has been broken up, like men outside, women inside. Now both men and women work outside. Men are more traditional and think that women should do the house chore. ...I adjusted

because women work. It is impossible for them to do house chores as before. [Wang, YF 44]

Another of the younger men, Zheng [YF 49], continued to have traditional views regarding male authority within the home, whilst also recognising that his wife required more help because she also worked outside of the home. In making sense of these changes, Zheng contextualised his help in terms of men showing respect for their wives though this did not reduce his authority within the home:

I do not think that men should not do women's things. You can see today I did the cooking and dish washing. ...I agree with the notion that men need authority, but I know also I need to respect my wife. According to the tradition in China, I am male chauvinist * [大男子主义], but I also have respect. [Zheng, YF 49]

However, other men did perceive that these changes could reduce men's power within the home and that this could lead to arguments between wife and husband. Thus, some younger men believed that the traditional patriarchal model of man/father as head of the household was preferable as this was less problematic for most families:

Both wife and husband work and share the burdens. It is more balanced. But there is no head and no submission. When they have different opinions, they will easily quarrel. It is like this nowadays. Tradition is right, I emphasize. We need to go back to that tradition. That is 'father works outside the family, mother works inside the family'. Father is the head and mother needs to submit. [Ma, YF 44]

Whilst many of these men made the association between gendered roles and potential reductions in patriarchal power within the home, they also appeared happy to discuss their increased contribution to childcare and household tasks. One means by which they sought to claim a privileged status was by pointing out that they were superior to women in many of these tasks. For instance, Zhengce [YF 44] felt that he was a better cook than his wife:

When I help with childcare, I felt a sense of responsibility and happiness. I do the childcare, so others do not need to do. ...For example, I cook and it tastes good. My wife and daughter like it. It is safer than eating outside. They flatter me a lot to make me cook. ...It is worthwhile ... they are busy. [Zhengce, YF 44]

As in the previous extract, it was also apparent that these men increasingly sought to include aspects of childcare within their notions of contemporary Chinese masculine identity; e.g., real men did do more childcare tasks within the home. The suggestion that these changes had taken place across society was also a means by which men legitimated their changing role:

I did better than my wife in feeding our children. The old saying is that 'if you do well in wife's work, you do not have success* [出息]. ... Take bath for the children. Men do women's work. I love doing that. [Broliu, OF 66]

Men might also know how to cook. Men cannot lose their face or their reputation* [失派] and they must know how to do washing and cooking. ...I teach my son that he needs to learn like me as I can do

everything like cooking and washing so that his wife cannot use this as an advantage over him* [欺负]. [Liao, OF 59]

However, whilst many were happy to help within the confines of the household, some younger men felt that they would be perceived differently by other men if this was done in public (cf. Pimentel 2006). They sensed that in public places, people had not been comfortable with those men who got involved in non-traditional areas and were looked down upon as a result. In this sense, men were aware that they could be assigned to subordinated positions in relation to other men (Connell 2005). However, other men felt that Chinese society had changed and that they were confident about their new role:

I do house chores as a habit. I feel happy about this. Others feel surprised. They say 'you are a professor, how come do the washing and cleaning?' [Zhengce, YF 44]

These extracts demonstrate how these men made sense of their changing roles as fathers and that men appeared to becoming more 'involved' as fathers and did more tasks that resulted in 'hands on' fathering (Gauntlett 2008). One related aspect of this was men's increasing concern about the nature of father-child relationships and their connections with their children (Knoester and Eggebeen 2006):

I know what kind of father is qualified or not. Have a good relationship with the children, take them out and help him on study, and he feels good and the family environment is good. [Shifu, YF 38]

However, while they perceived that as men they were more involved in their children's lives they also highlighted clear tensions within these changing roles. For example, a number of these men felt that the amount of pressure men experienced at work was important for whether they were able to develop their relationships with their children:

I have two classmates. They are successful in their career. They have good relationship with children. That is because that they do not have much pressure, although they are busy at work. [Zhengce, YF 44]

Men's concerns about their ability to adequately fulfil aspects of their perceived caring responsibilities were also located in their own experiences of growing up that made them aware of the difficulties that men experienced if they wanted to fulfil the role as provider and involved father. For example, these men had a clear understanding that their childhood experiences had undoubtedly been influenced by histo-socio-cultural norms regarding expected and accepted fathering behaviour in China. Thus, when they were children China was experiencing a period of intense poverty and famine and it was recognised that their fathers had little option but to concentrate primarily on providing their families with food rather than developing their father-child relationships:

My father's life was hard and his training towards me was not that ideal. I studied and worked for the future by myself. Before, a father could not manage to train* [管] so many children. The life was hard and the work was tiring. I just depended on myself. [Zhangjiang, OF 60]

My father was busy with farming, how could I learn from him. He seldom spent time with me [Gongchang, OF 60]

At that time, we lived for survival and we did not communicate much.
[Shifu, YF 37]

Indeed, in such difficult circumstances, many of these men felt that providing for their families were the main and perhaps the only responsibility that men should focus on:

The main responsibility is provider. Earning money is enough and all for father. [Huoche, OF 62]

Moreover, despite improvements in the economy and employment opportunities in contemporary China, many younger fathers also experienced difficulties in providing both adequate financial provision as well as attending to their new found caring responsibilities. For example, some fathers felt that the pressures and long hours associated with paid employment held them back from bonding with children:

I do not spend much time with my children, because of my work. I am usually not at home in the evening. In the daytime, my children go to school. So I feel guilty* [亏欠]. In the evening, I have many meetings. When I am back late after 10:30 pm, they fell asleep already. On the weekends, I spend much time in church. So there is not much time to travel with them. My children feel that I do not spend much time with them and they feel it is difficult to be children of a pastor. [Wang, YF 44]

At that time, I worked as a teacher. I put all my effort on that. If free, I read, I took care of the children as an extra activity. [Zheng, YF 49]

As previously mentioned, some men felt that their providing role could make it difficult for them to provide good moral teaching due to time constraints. It was also apparent that the tiring and stressful nature of work could make fathers impatient in their fathering. Thus, although fathers expressed the view that they wanted to better understand children they found it difficult to be both a good provider and an involved father, which increased their levels of stress. Although men aimed to achieve a balance between aspects of fatherhood and their time at work they found their choices seriously constrained in a society where the cost of living is quite high:

There is a paradox. I know I need to understand children. But I cannot make it. ...My patience is limited. I smack him when he does not obey to my words. ...Sometimes I know what I do is wrong. But I do it because of my feeling and the working pressure. [Shifu, YF 37]

I know some are busy with career. I know there are some fathers who make efforts to bring up children. I know they try to balance on family and work. But I cannot act on what I want. I have no choice. I try my best to be a good father. If I spent more time with child I might fail in career and vice versa. If I did not do so much administrative work to earn more money I would have more time to be with the child. It might affect the child's imperfections. [Qiu, YF 49]

Thus, many of these men perceived themselves to be lacking as fathers because their time was limited due to their employment. Their assessment of their overall relationships with their children was also thought to be undermined:

I am not a successful father. The good examples have money and success, personality and hobbies. These fathers might like playing and going around. They have more time to communicate and engage in more activities with children. I do little in activities. I want to have them. But I cannot because of money, time and good mood. [Jingji, YF 44]

As is hinted at in this extract, a number of these men tried to justify their primary focus on their providing role by saying that without adequate provision their children would not be successful and hence they themselves needed to succeed in their professions. In short, therefore, the notion that men's identity was equated with the role of a strong provider still dominated for some men and this was a choice that men had to make; either they put their efforts into being a good provider or they chose to be the type of father who spent more time with children, but that he could not do both. Thus, in the case of Jingji [YF 44], he was clear that success could lead to men spending more time with their children, but without success there was little point with men spending time with their children as the problem had already been created:

I need to have balance between work and children. However, it depends on different stages in life. For this stage in my life, I pursue work success, and I give more time to work. If I am successful, I will give more time to children. I do like this. There is no way to solve the issue of not spending much time with children. If you are not successful, how can you raise the child? If not, there will be a problem. [Jingji, YF 44]

These men often put forward suggestions that could help to overcome such tensions between their work and fathering roles, particularly the fact that employers and the state should help men with more family-friendly policies. For example, Tongji [YF 39] pointed out that fathers were not allowed to take their family on trips organized by working place that would enable them to

spend time with their children:

It will be good that the work units* [单位] allows the staff to take family with them when it organizes some trips. Generally speaking, the 单位 does not focus on the family it just focuses on the individual staff. [Tongji, YF 39]

He also complained about the mismatch between children's holiday time and parents' holiday time and suggested that parents should also have a holiday on Children's Day (1st June):

On children's day, children have their day off but the parents do not. It is ridiculous. The parents should have the day off too, so they can be with the children. We also want paternity leave. [Tongji, YF 39]

However, whilst these men wished for greater help from the state and better paternal welfare they were also aware that in contemporary China such desires were not realistic given that China does not have the strong economic conditions of some Western countries. It was more apparent that men generally appreciated the current support given by the state and did not envisage this being extended in the short-term at least:

It is possible that the state can help fathers, but it is not practical. We have marriage and paternity leave. It associates with society development. After twenty or thirty years we can do more. Like Sweden, it is a high welfare country. Now in China, if we have the same policy we cannot put it into practice, because we are in a different developmental stage. [Jingji, YF 44]

Men living in rural areas were even more positive regarding the state policies they felt had helped a lot in their providing role and could not offer too much more. For example, the rural health insurance policy and rural pension policy that were introduced in early 1990s to rural residents (Ebenstein and Leung 2010). These policies allowed rural citizens to use the medical care at a lower price, which helped fathers to fulfil their fathering responsibilities in terms of the providing role. Moreover, they did not expect the state to help with their role as caregivers:

The government has helped. There is free education and medical reform in rural areas. But many things need money, for instance, children want to eat well and play well. [Didi, YF 38]

In contrast to those men who placed most emphasis on their role as providers, other men felt that the family was as or even more important than work and these men wanted to focus more on their families rather than their employment. It was clear that in these cases men had changed their opinions and also recognized that building connections with their children had not been a core ideal of Chinese masculinity. As was evident in a previous section, the catalyst for the change in these men's thinking was often concerns about the perceived decline in morality and concerns about children's involvement in problematic behaviour:

I think I need to have some adjustment. Before I thought work was important, but now I change and I think family is important. Children are important and you need to spend time with them. This is father's responsibility. I do not do well. In my heart, I feel guilty about these two children. ...A father worries that the child might smoke, drink alcohol,

have drugs and commit juvenile crime. It is secondary to provide food and clothes. [Wang, YF 44]

Some think for a man to be successful is that he earns much money. I regard success as both good family and good career. I want to adjust myself. .. Love the child, consider for his future. [Mo, YF 34]

As a means of helping them with the care of their children many men turned to their own parents as a means of support, as in the case of those men who had migrated to the city and had 'left behind' their children. More generally, many of these men pointed out that drawing on the children's grandparents as a means of support allowed them to pursue their careers without concerns about how their children were being raised, albeit there were some concerns about their children being spoiled by their grandparents (see previous discussion). Whereas the children of some migrated men had often left their children in rural areas to be cared for by grandparents, for those men living in the city they chose to have the grandparents live with them to help them look after their children:

It was good that my mother helped to take care of my children. It reduced my burden. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

If I bring up the child myself without my parents' help it will affect my career. [Qiu, YF 49]

Having their children's grandparents helping with childcare not only reduced their concerns regarding child care it also increased men's sense of

confidence that they were fulfilling important aspects of their masculine identities as good providers:

I am under pressure of being a provider. Now my parents stay with me and help, I feel secure. [Xiaodian, YF 30]

One significant aspect of this was the ways in which these men's own fathers now took on caring roles in their capacity as grandfathers. It also appeared that older men may have gained greater satisfaction and meaning as a father through their care of their grandchildren in ways that had not been available to them when their own children were young. Thus, grand-parenting not only appeared to serve a function that could ease younger men's burden, it also demonstrates how older men may also be showing greater aspects of care as grandfathers. It was clear that some grandfathers offered large amounts of assistance in terms of care-taking:

My father always wants to help to give me more time for work. He takes care of the child and sends her to school. He does the cooking and cleans the house. He does these to save my time and for me to have more time to succeed. [Tongji, YF 39]

My two sons both work as teachers, I helped send the grandson to school and take home for lunch. Now for this granddaughter, she is small, and the baby sitter had asked for days off. So I am here to help. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

The reason I migrated from my hometown Anhui to Guangzhou is just to help my daughter to look after her child, such as sending my granddaughter to school and having her home [Huoche, OF 60]

However, there was also the sense that some men may have felt obligated to become caregivers and that some were not willing to take on such roles:

My son and daughter-in-law want me to help with childcare, so they can work to earn money. I do not have a choice. I must help them. I want him to work without childrearing. [Jiefu, YF 47]

I am angry with my parents a little bit, because I treated them very well. If they helped me to take care of the children, it would just be for one or two months. But they were not willing to do that. At that time, I worked outside and my wife was with my parents in my hometown. My parents liked playing cards at home. [Shifu, YF 37]

It was also the case that the apparent increasing use of grandparents as a means of allowing parents to work encountered criticism from men's peers. For example, it was perceived as a selfish utilisation of grandparents when it appeared that there was not necessarily economic need for both parents to work full-time:

In some families, both mother and father do not care about the child. Both of them want to work so many of the children are given to the grandparents to be brought up. [Mai, YF 30]

The amount of time that some children spent with their grandparents also meant that some men found it more difficult to bond with their children. In short, it appeared that much of the caring responsibilities associated with fathers had been handed over to grandparents with implications for father-child relationships:

I do feeding and washing for my young daughter, but not very often. That is because my parents do the most part because I am busy. ...I do not hug her very often. She sleeps with my parents. Maybe I do not hug often, she does not like me. She likes my parents more. [Xiaodian, YF 30]

I did not know how to care and love my children. Maybe because I stayed with my parents and they looked after the children. [Zheng, YF 49]

In summary, men highlighted some of the tensions men experiences between fulfilling aspects of their identities as men and also their identities as fathers. For example, the notion of a 'good' provider was so strong that some men chose to delay their marriage until they fulfilled the expectations that they perceived came with this role. A great number of these men also found it difficult to balance the time and pressures associated with work and their desires to spend more time with their children. One result of this is that men could lose patience and would discipline their children rather than communicating with them or finding other strategies to their practice as fathers. Whilst men were generally positive about using grandparents to help them with their children, there was also the possibility of tensions with the different parenting styles and practices.

Fathers, emotion and knowledge

In general, the men in this study tended to describe themselves in terms that drew upon core aspects traditional aspects of Chinese masculinity. For example, the majority reported how they were generally conventional and that they did not find it easy to demonstrate emotion or affection. Alongside this, they also tended to agree with core aspects of Chinese culture in terms of their father-child relationship in that this was viewed in predominately vertical terms with status and communication moving from the father to the child (Chan and Leong 1994). Thus, many of these fathers felt there were a range of factors linked to Chinese masculine and fathering identities that held men back from becoming more involved, both physically and emotionally with their children. For example, Xiao [OF 58] stated that he deliberately chose to present himself in detached and less approachable ways. Though he was aware that other fathers were more expressive and had closer relationships with their children, he described how he wanted his children to have respect and to actually fear him as this defined his authority as a father:

I seldom say a word, so if I say something the children will fear me.
Children are more obedient to me. [Xiao, OF 58]

Other men, such as Mai [YF 30] felt that the traditional Chinese culture, particularly in rural areas, did not encourage or allow men to be expressive and this affected fathers in these areas. In making this observation he also suggested that men in urban areas were more educated and therefore more likely to be expressive. He used the example of Mother's and Father's Day in China to demonstrate how men in rural areas did not celebrate such events and it was this type of response that was passed from one generation to the next:

In rural areas, men are more matter-of-fact* [务实] and seldom express their feelings. Men are all like this. In my village, there is Mother's Day and Father's Day but no one cares. But in cities, there might be many people who care about the Mother's Day and Father's Day. My generation in rural areas also behaves according to their own fathers' ways. [Mai, YF 30]

It was also clear that the men in this study had experienced this type of detached fathering when they were growing up. One feature of their fathers' lack of expressiveness was that relatively innocuous interactions and comments could have a profound effect on these men. For example, it was evident that when fathers were warm to their children this could come as a surprise. This was the case with one of the younger men who reported how he was shocked and touched when his father was complimentary about him. This extract also illustrates the potential lack of communication and connection between son and father in that this man had little idea that his father had positive thoughts about him:

I felt his encouragement once. It was my graduation ceremony. We held a fashion show and I invited my family. Then I was given a creative award. My father said, 'This boy was good at study when he was young'. Wow, I felt great encouragement. In fact, his word of assurance was better than anything, even the award. He seldom said this. I did not know he thought so highly about me. [Ma, YF 44]

As previously mentioned, this lack of expressed affection, particularly among older men, could also be linked to the pressure that these men were under pressure to provide for their families in times of national famine and poverty. This was also evident among those younger fathers who felt under great pressure to provide for their families in contemporary China. For instance,

Shifu [YF 37] was a migrant worker who suggested that his workload acted as a barrier to being more emotionally attached to his children:

I am under pressure ... work ... I do not feel happy and feel angry when the child wanted to stick to me* [粘]. [Shifu YF, 37]

In a similar vein, some of these men found that when the degree of stress in men's lives decreased they were able to be more involved in children's lives. For example, one of the younger fathers described how his relationship with his father had improved and they had become much closer after his father had retired from work. Also apparent here is the status that many of the men in this study attached to employment and the position of the main breadwinner within the family which had moved to the younger man:

The time when I was intimate with him was when he retired. ... He prepared lunch for me. Just two of us had lunch together. ...When my father worked and he was tired ... he got our service. ...Me and my mother. When he retired, he served me. [Ma, YF 44]

It was also evident that many older men had started to explore differing ways of being fathers and indeed grandfathers in their wish for greater bonds with their children and grandchildren. The thesis has previously explored the important role that grandparents played in the lives of their children; here it is clear that this role also appeared to be important for the grandparents themselves. For example, some of the older men in this study described how they decided to undertake their role as a grandfather in order that they could maintain contact and to bond with their adult children. Thus, many described how they felt satisfied to assume grandfather responsibilities as it also provided them with opportunities to spend time with their children:

I want to communicate with my children and create more opportunity to spend time with my children. So now I am here in Guangzhou with my third son to take care of my granddaughter. [Broliu, OF 66]

One aspect of older men taking on more caring responsibilities in relation to their grandchildren was the ways in which they also suggested that their perceptions of appropriate masculine behaviour changed compared to their earlier experience when they were experiencing fatherhood themselves. Thus, whereas they had demonstrated more traditional aspects of masculine/fathering behaviour when their children were younger many now sought to reconstruct and reframe their conception of masculinity/fatherhood, which they also related to age. For example, some of the older men who had not spent large amounts of time with their children when they were young now suggested that spending time with their grown up children and grandchildren was the best part of being a father:

I find the best part of being a father is to take my children to park on weekends and have dinner together. Now on my birthday, my grandson will say happy birthday to me. [Zhizhang, OF 73]

The best part of being a father is to have children and my wife together for dinner together. [Liao, OF 59]

In a similar vein, a number of the younger fathers in this study also reported that they had taken on new forms of masculine behaviour and attitudes and wanted to express a less restricted kind of emotionality. Thus, they deliberately tried to be more open and more willing to express their feelings

and they were more likely to have more communication and be closer with their children. Some younger fathers ascribed this shift in attitude to having fewer children, linked to the One Child Policy, and also to having greater knowledge regarding the perceived beneficial quality of better father-children relationships. In other words, this knowledge encouraged men to distance themselves from certain aspects of traditional masculinity, such as emotional remoteness, with clear perceived implications for their fathering practice:

Because fathers have fewer children now they have more peaceful communication and they do not smack children as often as before.
[Shifu, YF 47]

Another younger man, Mai [YF 30], declared that he now concentrated on the good things his son did rather than simply scolding him though it was also clear that as a father he remained responsible for his son's moral character:

In fact the appreciation method is quite good. ...I need to appreciate what he does, spend time with him and communicate with him. Train his character and pay attention to his stuff. [Mai, YF 30]

It was also apparent that some of the younger fathers paid attention to ways in which gender differences led to different parenting practices. For example, they expressed the view that compared to women men were more likely to allow children to take risks:

Men are rougher and women are softer. Men might be more willing to encourage children to take risks. Men want children to have curiosity and explore things and allow children to make mistakes. Women are

more likely to worry about whether the children will hurt when take risks. They wish the children stay clean and listen to their words. This is the big difference. [Tongji, YF 39]

Also apparent was that men acknowledged that the different parenting practices between men and women led to their wives' taking a more significant role in parenting when children were young and that they were able to be more involved in child related activities when their children were older. In making these connections, men often suggested that women were more 'natural' parents and as such their role as fathers did not materialise fully until their children were older and they could begin to understand more about the social world and their position in it. As such, these men believed that their main roles as fathers were best understood as being linked to their children's age and stage of development though the men themselves did not verbalise this in such terms (Marsiglio and Pleck 2005):

Taking care * [哄] of children may be women's nature. In fact, men and women both should be responsible for the upbringing of their children. But when children were small women made more contributions. [Xia, OF 55]

When the children were young, my wife took good care of them and spent more time with them and train* [管] them. She showed more care when the children were small and now I care more. It depends on two different stages. [Xiao, OF 58]

Thus, it was clear that many of these men felt that different parenting practices had different impacts on children. It was generally considered that women had better bonds with their children that made them better at child

care and this explained why children were closer to their mothers than their fathers (Coltrane 2000). However, whilst mothers may have had more influence on their children in terms of their emotional development, men had more influence on aspects of social development; e.g., how they operate as adults in the social world, which were deemed to be more important skills, particularly in relation to their sons:

Mother's impacts on children might be bigger, like the habits. Children might be more dependent on mother for small things. But for outside social things, father does better. [Lidui, YF 47]

However, it was also apparent that there were concerns regarding the social development of boys which were often explained in terms of the perceived decrease in male authority. Thus, a strong masculine identity was understood as an important component for being a male and a decline in this was put forward as posing a potential crisis for many young men in China (Xinhua 2010). Many younger fathers believed that a child, especially males, needed his father's influence but felt their male power was in danger and blamed mothers for not helping them to be a good model for children. In short, as women were increasingly strong so it made some fathers feel less competent:

If the mother is dominant it will not be a good example. Fathers should show responsibility and the son will follow. The right role of mother and father will be a good model for the children's future family. Father should train son to have a man's character. If the roles of husband and wife exchange, it will not be in harmony. Women can be dominant in work, but not in family. It should be equal. If not, that will do harm to child. The image of father will be bad and he cannot discipline the child. ...Men manage the big things. It will be good to the children as it shows authority of father. ...Sons need to depend on their father, because the

mother is soft. If he depends on her, he will also become soft. [Qiu, YF 49]

Following on from this, some men were concerned that certain aspects associated with nurturing fatherhood could potentially put their children, particularly boys, at risk of not developing the requisite social skills necessary for a strong Chinese society. In short, for some the practice of more involved or warmer fathering was quickly dismissed by both older and younger fathers who criticized such fathers for not being strict and for letting their children develop without clear moral and social values. This also highlights some of the tensions and ambiguity concerning the role of fathers in the molding of masculine identities in contemporary China. A number of these men were unsure as to the degree to which they could show affection and the degree to which they should be strict. For instance, Liao [OF 59] felt that his less strict approach affected his son's male characteristics and he suggested sending his son to the army to improve his character and to strengthen his manhood:

I was not very strict to my son. ...I hope my son can join the army first and then go to work. By doing this, he can be a man with good character. My son is very cautious about other's opinion. He needs to be very bold to face the leaders. [Liao, OF 57]

Underlying these dilemmas regarding potential changes in contemporary constructions of fatherhood and the impact of this on masculine identity was men's concerns regarding a lack of knowledge about the 'right' decisions they should be making as fathers. This lack of knowledge was seen as a contemporary issue facing younger men and they often compared their position to older generations who they felt did not have to think about such things; '*My father did not have parenting knowledge*' [Zhengce, YF 44]. Similarly, Bin [YF 28] felt that such concerns were not a feature of the way

that his father treated him and was not a feature of the way in which his grandfather treated his father and so on through the generations. In the following extract, 'intentionally' refers to the lack of thought that there might be another way of being a father:

I am different from my father. My father would not intentionally train children. Maybe that is because the fault of low education levels in rural areas. [Bin, YF 28]

Thus, many of the younger men differentiated themselves from their fathers not only in terms of their socio-economic status and higher educational attainment but also in the sense that they thought about their practices as fathers. This echoes recent research on fatherhood that has highlighted how many men feel the need to work hard on how to care for their children and how to build relationships as fathers with their children (Brotherson et al., 2005; Miller 2011). Thus, many of the younger fathers in particular felt that they needed to gain more knowledge in relation to their fathering practice and were concerned that they actually knew little about what to do in terms of fathering skills, which was also felt to be a common concern amongst many men:

I did not know how to care and love my children. [Zheng, YF 49]

I feel that I am not a perfect father. I need to learn to how to look after my son. I want to learn to be a good husband and father. I want my behaviour to have impacts on my son. [Mo, YF 34]

My brother wants to train* [教育] his teenage daughter, but does not

know how to. [Mo, YF 34]

Whilst certain masculine ideals, particularly the notion that men do not ask for help (Dolan 2014), may have impeded men's ability to access support these men appeared to reframe their pursuit of knowledge in terms of benefiting their children and therefore were enthusiastic about accessing parenting knowledge. For example, a number of the younger men talked about how they observed what they considered to be good examples of fathering practice amongst other men and went to other men for advice:

I learnt from good examples, such as my colleagues at work. [Zhanjiang, OF 60]

I asked for advice from older fathers. [Wang, YF 44]

Many of the younger fathers also used the internet to gain knowledge and often compared themselves to their own experiences of being fathered when discussing what they perceived to be the benefits for their children:

He did not like expressing compliments. Now the internet has taught me that I should praise my child. [Didi, YF 38]

Younger fathers explicitly stated that they wanted knowledge across a range of issues related to fathering including the planning of pregnancy and prenatal preparation as well as child care issues and how to improve their child's intellectual development. Many of the fathers in this study believed that this knowledge was proving to have significant effects in raising intelligent children

hence why they tried to equip themselves to have a good impact on their children:

I need theory to guide her in values and behaviours, but I did not have awareness or plan. ...I need to learn about pregnancy and how to raise children. There are two levels of preparation. The shallow level, which is about physical and biological and the deep level, that is about scientific way to teach* [教育] children. [Zhengce, YF 44]

When she was pregnant I read lots of books on how to take care, teach, food, clothing and bathing, develop his intelligence, how to play games before he went to bed. [Ma, YF 44]

However, they also declared that they needed more support and guidance from outside of the family, which included more structured learning opportunities for fathers, which included the notion of a ‘fathering school’:

There are more and more fathers who do not care about their children. Fathers do not have good characteristics themselves ... and need to have more self-management. ...There needs to be a fathering school. [Wang, YF 44]

In addition, some of the younger men wanted wider support from the community, government and NGOs:

Government, community and educational departments all work

together for a better fatherhood. ...The community can do advocating and free training on fatherhood. The government can provide funding and the media. Not only government, but the NGO also can contribute. [Zhengce, YF 44]

These examples illuminate fathers' desires to be well equipped for fatherhood and to evaluate and reflect on their fathering practice:

Being a father is not just having a child. It is to train and provide for the children and also to socialize with people. Being a father is a process in which you never stop learning. Lidui [YF 47]

In summary, this section has shown how many of the men in this study appeared to struggle in terms of their emotional engagement with their children which stemmed from traditional notions of detachment associated with Chinese masculinity and fatherhood. However, it has also demonstrated that many men desired closer relationships with their children and had various arrangements in their lives to make a space for it, such as older men wanting to be more involved in their role as grandfathers. Linked to this was the notion that men wanted to appreciate what their children achieved rather than simply scolding them. However, it was also clear that this expressive aspect of fatherhood was also perceived as having had an impact on the masculine identity of contemporary men in China and increased fears that men no longer acted like men. Thus, there was a concern in the degree to which men should change to a more expressive fatherhood and this led men to want more knowledge in relation to their fathering practice. Whilst they were able to gain certain knowledge from those around them and other sources, such as the internet, these men also made the case for more structured forms of knowledge driven by the state that could help men in their quest to become better fathers.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on contemporary aspects of fathering and fatherhood in China and has also demonstrated some of the interconnecting ways in which Chinese men make sense of their roles as both men and fathers. As in the West, these participants defined good fathers primarily on the basis of their role as 'providers', which fulfilled important aspects of their masculine identity as 'good' men. However, they also highlighted the potential pressures on men to provide what they considered to be the ever increasing array of goods and services that marked them as adequate in their role as breadwinner. The chapter also illustrated the shift to a more involved fatherhood that appears to have been driven by the increased role of women within the workplace. In making sense of these changes it was also apparent that men have incorporated certain aspects of involved fatherhood into contemporary masculine identities in which men not only take greater responsibilities within the home but they are also superior to women in terms of certain tasks. The chapter has also demonstrated the apparent tensions and conflicts that these men experienced between their roles as workers and as increasingly 'involved' fathers and how they often struggled to balance work and family life. In charting these contemporary shifts in Chinese fathering identities, which incorporate more caring responsibilities, many of the men referred to fatherhood as engendering positive feelings and the potential benefits for their children. However, it was also evident that men thought they lacked knowledge in relation to their children and the degree to which a softer and more involved fathering may actually be damaging not only their children but also Chinese society. As such, these men highlight some of the contemporary contradictions and tensions facing men in their role as fathers.

Chapter Seven

Discussion and conclusion

Introduction

This thesis set out to explore men's perceptions and experiences of fathering and fatherhood in China, which has not previously been the focus of extensive qualitative research. It was informed by a growing body of research that has charted apparent changes in notions of fathering and fatherhood in the West (e.g., Lamb 2000; Miller 2011; Roy 2004) and highlighted the need to take account of masculine identity when exploring men's identities as fathers (e.g., Dolan 2013; Reich 2008; Wall and Arnold 2007). In presenting its findings, the thesis has demonstrated apparent changes in the understandings and expectations associated with fatherhood and fathering in China and the connections between men's masculine and fathering identities, though it recognises that Western theorisations regarding fatherhood and masculinity cannot simply be imposed on men's experiences in China. As such, these findings contribute to an emerging knowledge base regarding fathering and fatherhood in China and also to international perspectives and debates regarding fathering and fatherhood.

This chapter begins by discussing the four main themes that emerged from this study. The chapter then moves on to outline the contribution this research makes to the knowledge-base, including the fit or lack of fit between current theorisations and debates concerning fatherhood and masculinity in the West and the perceptions and experiences of these men in China. The chapter then provides some discussion of the limitations of the work before finishing with recommendations for future research.

Fathering and fatherhood in the context of rapid social and cultural change

The first key theme identified within this study was the ways in which men's views and experiences of fatherhood were contextualised by certain social,

economic and cultural changes that have taken place in China over the last thirty-five years. The quota system, for example, which required men to work long hours simply to provide for their family, meant that many fathers had insufficient time to spend with their children. As a consequence, some men felt they had failed to fulfil certain core responsibilities as fathers, particularly their role regarding the importance of self-discipline and obedience that distinguishes Chinese fatherhood from fatherhood in the West. In contrast, many of the younger men who had grown up during this period were determined that their practices as fathers and their desires for their children were going to be different from the predominantly detached and relatively insular father-figures they remembered from their own childhood. They also acknowledged that the recent social changes which have taken place in China had given them a greater sense of individualisation and sense of freedom regarding their ideology and practice as fathers, which they regarded as beneficial in terms of their father-child relationships.

Clearly, men's roles as fathers and their increasing aspirations for their children in terms of educational attainment and socio-economic circumstances cannot be divorced from the changes in China, particularly the shift towards industrialisation and consumerism. However, whilst 'Open Up' was often perceived as bringing new opportunities, as least for those who were in a position to take advantage of these changes, the shift away from collectivist towards individual interests could also have negative implications for many men in terms of their role as fathers. For example, a number of men appeared to lose certain privileges in relation to childcare and many appeared to be at increased risk of unemployment (cf. Sheng and Settle 2006). Alongside this, men's experiences as migrants also had implications for them as fathers. On the one hand, their migration to Guangzhou represented the chance of improvements in their standards of living, particularly if they could gain Urban Hukou status that gave their children the right to better schools and health services (cf. Zhang and Zhao 2001). Yet, on the other hand, Urban Hukou status was not easy to obtain and their relatively low incomes could force men into poor quality housing that were often inadequate for their families. Many of these men described how these inequalities in standards of

living and in residential status made them feel inferior and could force them to leave their children behind in their hometowns, in effect depriving themselves of the role as fathers (cf. Gao et al., 2010; Jia et al., 2010).

Another significant social change pertaining to these men as fathers related to the One Child Policy though evidently this was one aspect of their accounts where men may have felt 'constrained' in what they felt able to say. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, a number of these men expressed agreement with the aims of the One Child Policy, though their reasons for doing so were considerably varied. Among older men, justifications for the policy tended to demonstrate nationalistic-patriotic attitudes in that they were more likely to focus on the national good rather than individual desires, which often appeared to stem from traditional notions that 'the country is prior to family' (Hu 2008). In contrast, some of the younger men agreed with the policy because it was in alignment with their own desires to have fewer children and thereby reduced the financial pressures associated with raising children. These attitudes also appeared to be in line with the shift to a more individualist society that encouraged people to focus on their personal preferences, which were perceived to be more common among young people (cf. Fong 2006).

In general, the men's views and experiences in relation to the One Child Policy were more likely to reflect the contradiction between their personal wants (i.e., their expressed wish for more children) and what they generally acknowledged was in the best interests of society (i.e., a suitable size of population). This dilemma was most evident when men talked about their desire to have a son. It was clear that fathers traditionally valued sons over daughters, not only because they continued their lineage but also because they traditionally provided greater security in later life and because they generally had greater expectations regarding their son's futures and were more involved in the raising of sons than daughters (cf. Ng et al., 2002). Thus, whilst these men wanted to obey the state, not having a son raised a number of concerns. That said, given the traditionally subordinated status of girls/women in China, this study also demonstrated evidence of an apparent

shift in the status of girls and a greater acceptance of daughters, which these men deemed to be a by-product of the One Child Policy (cf. Fong 2002). For example, a number of the men placed the same expectations on their daughters as they would if they had been sons and drew attention to women's employment and the growing expectation that daughters support their parents in older age. In turn, men reported that they treated their daughters as they would do sons, which included providing them with the same degree of support as a son to enable them to attain success.

The men in this study also discussed a number of potential concerns with the One Child Policy both in relation to them as fathers and in relation to their children. For example, a number of the men perceived a decline in the discipline and moral attitudes of children that was potentially damaging for China's future. This was driven by the acquiescent behaviour of parents and grandparents and has become known as 'little emperor syndrome' (Hesketh et al., 2002). However, not only were only children perceived to have less favourable personality traits, such as self-centredness, they were also perceived to experience greater loneliness and unhappiness as a result of a lack of interaction with siblings. It was also thought that the familial expectations and pressures placed on only children could result in them experiencing poorer mental health, which appears to be borne out with recent increases in self-harm and suicide among only children (Lee et al., 2007). Moreover, being restricted to a single child also meant that fathers could not build experience in childrearing as there was no opportunity for them to use the knowledge gained as first-time fathers to benefit of subsequent children.

It was also clear from these men's accounts that the implementation of the One Child Policy is not straightforward and that many families found ways to circumvent the policy. However, although China has a highly disproportionate birth-rate for males compared to females (Sedgh et al., 2007), none of these men reported that they had sought to select the gender of their child/children through the use of termination. Instead, men simply reinforced the notion that such action was not considered an option. Given sensitive nature of the topic and the fact that they were discussing it with a young woman it was perhaps

understandable that these men simply chose not to broach the issue. Nonetheless, given the perceived problems associated with the policy and the inequities in its implementation a number of fathers suggested that the One Child Policy should be revised or in some cases even abolished. Since this study was carried out the state has announced it is to consider replacing the One Child Policy with a Two-Child-Policy (Flor Cruz 2014; Irene 2014) though the main reasons relate to concerns regarding the population structure rather than the issues raised by these men.

Traditional fatherhood in China

The second key theme to emerge related to how these men viewed and enacted traditional aspects of fathering and fatherhood, in particular the expectations that Chinese fathers should take the lead regarding their children's moral development and be the main source of discipline within the family (Chao and Tseng 2002; Chiu 1987). Both older and younger fathers frequently cited that the main personal characteristics fathers expected to instil within their children were good manners/behaviour and hard work, which incorporated both filial piety and loyalty to the state. In making these assertions men also raised concerns about what they considered to be a recent decline in moral standards within China, evidenced by a shift in personal values and social codes of conduct. In so doing, men echoed other studies that have suggested that the shift to a market economy, which encouraged individualist philosophies, may have led to decline in moral standards (Hanafin 2002; Lee and Ho 2005). In addition, these men also made reference to other fathers who they believed had failed in their responsibilities; i.e., they did not provide proper moral guidance to their children, which contributed to their concerns regarding the perceived moral decline within society as a whole. However, it was also clear that a number of these men experienced certain difficulties in realising their roles as the main source of moral guidance and discipline.

It was clear, for example, that educational attainment was considered to be a key aspect of inculcating a good work ethic and was one of the main domains by which fathers appeared to evaluate their performance in relation to their

children's moral development; i.e. it was a marker of good fathering (cf. Louie 2004). Yet, a number of the men reported how they struggled to find time to instruct their children in their academic work. It was apparent, for example, that the time these men spent with their children was often occupationally determined with men working long hours to enable them to provide for their families, which often kept fathers apart from their children. As a result, a number of these men believed that they had not done as much as they would have liked in terms of instilling certain ethics and discipline evidenced by their children's relatively poor educational performance, which could lead men to define themselves as suboptimal fathers. The emphasis men placed on the role of fathers in the moral development of their children also demonstrated the hierarchical nature of father-child relationships within China. It was clear, for example, that children were expected to follow the guidance of their father well into adulthood. These men used examples in relation to employment, marriage and housing to demonstrate how fathers continued to exert their influence on their children's decision-making. This could lead to a sense of resentment at what was perceived as continual interference in men's lives, as well as resulting in a sense of dependence and a loss of confidence among men who found it difficult to cope when their fathers relaxed their authority.

The authority of fathers was also clearly evident in men's role as the main disciplinarians within Chinese families. All of the men in this study talked about the strictness and discipline of their own fathers, which they believed had instilled certain values and attitudes, though they also remembered resenting their fathers when they were younger. Many of these men also reported being strict with their children and supported the use of corporeal punishment within the home, which could lead them to smack their children. Smacking was defined as an acceptable father-child interaction and as necessary for the development of their children and ultimately the long-term benefit of society as a whole (cf. Shek 2007). However, it was also apparent that some men drew upon their own experiences of being fathered as a justification for them attempting to execute a less authoritarian approach that questioned the use of smacking as the only disciplinary tool. For example, a number of the younger fathers had tried other means of directing their children,

such as the positive reinforcement of good behaviour, rather than resorting to corporeal punishment. In many cases, they referred back to their experiences as a child for why they wished to adopt a less authoritarian approach and/or because they experienced feelings of guilt and empathy towards their own children when they used harsh forms of discipline.

Despite their best intentions to adopt a different approach, it was also clear that men often lacked the patience to manage their children's behaviour in less authoritarian ways and could quickly resort to harsher forms of discipline, including smacking their children. It appeared, therefore, that some of these men, particularly some of the younger fathers, were in the process of redefining their fathering practices and often discussed their intent to combine what they considered to be more lenient attitudes alongside certain strict fathering practices. However, they lacked confidence and knowledge regarding other strategies of managing their children's behaviour and so tended to revert back to traditional methods of fathering and/or their own experiences of being fathered.

Alongside and linked to this were men's general concerns regarding the negative impact on the country as a whole if fathers adopted a less authoritarian approach towards their children. A number of the older men commented negatively on their sons' fathering practices and often believed that their sons were not strict enough with their children, which had implications for the moral foundation of China. Both young and old fathers linked this perceived lack of authority among fathers to wider changes in society, including the apparent shift towards individualism that weakened men's traditional attitudes towards fathering along with other influences such as the different cultural representations of fathers that emanated from Western films and television programmes (Happy 2013). As previously mentioned, many of the men in this study also felt that the introduction of the One Child Policy had impacted on the traditional roles of fathers as it appeared that men (and other family members) found it more difficult to discipline their only child. In short, therefore, while all of the men in this study believed they had ultimate responsibility for the discipline of their children,

they also could feel uneasy or uncomfortable about using corporal punishment to instil certain behaviours.

Contemporary fatherhood in China

The third theme explored in this thesis examined how men made sense of contemporary fatherhood in China, particularly in relation to their role as economic providers and the apparent shift to what has been termed a 'warmer' or more 'involved' notion of Chinese fatherhood (Shek 2007). As the previous sections have demonstrated, all of the men's accounts pointed to the continued centrality of paid employment in their conceptualization of good fatherhood (Fox et al., 2002). It was also clear that the array of goods and services that men were expected to provide for their families had widened beyond traditional notions of food and shelter, especially in relation to their children's education, which placed men under greater pressures (Vojdik 2005). It was suggested, for example, that the need to secure a strong financial foundation was one reason why men delayed marriage and thereby fatherhood (cf. Xu et al., 2007). On the other hand, there was also the suggestion that younger men had begun to care more about their own wants and that modern day men were not as committed to this aspect of fatherhood as in the past (Fong 2006). That said, regardless of the associated difficulties, these men situated themselves firmly within the traditional template of the respectable Chinese father whose main role was outside of the home as the primary wage earner.

It was also apparent that many of these men had begun to rethink certain cultural and gendered expectations regarding their participation in household tasks and in the care of their children, which appeared to be driven by two main factors. First, with many of their partners also in employment, a number of these men, particularly the younger men, reported that they had started to contribute to what they had previously regarded as 'women's work', though they sought to align their involvement with certain masculine ideals such as expertise and success. Second, men tended to define their greater involvement in the care of their children in terms of wanting better father-child relationships than they had experienced (cf. Jankowiak 2007). However, there

were a number of tensions within these men's lives that could act as barriers to them forming closer bonds with their children. For example, as previously mentioned, a number of the men highlighted the potential conflict between their role as workers outside of the home and them also finding the time and energy to undertake childcare tasks and build relationships with their children. In addition, pressures from work which resulted in tiredness and irritability were other factors that could result in men having little desire to spend time with their children (cf., Genesoni and Tallandini 2009; Shirani et al., 2012). Whilst some men did report feelings of guilt in terms of not spending enough time with their children and could therefore perceive themselves to be somewhat lacking as fathers, given the increasing monetary pressures on families, many men felt they had little option but to focus on the traditional provider aspect of fatherhood (Hu 1988).

It was also the case that showing affection and being expressive towards children were not traditional aspects of fatherhood in China. Indeed, the emotional distance of fathers, which included the inculcation of fear among children allied to their role as disciplinarians, was a sign of paternal authority. Thus, many of the men in this study believed that traditional aspects of fathering could inhibit fathers from building closer relationships with their children. This was reinforced by their experience of their fathers who had often been lacking in expression and warmth, which provided men with little guidance as to how to form such relationships. In describing their desires for closer father-child relationships, men often contrasted father's and mother's relationships with their children and in particular the close bond that women formed with children when they are infants (cf. Bentley et al., 1999). This lack of a natural connection between fathers and children was also seen as informing men's lack of knowledge regarding children and childcare, which could preclude them from building closer relationships with their children. Their lack of knowledge regarding children also raised concerns as to whether they were making the 'right' decisions in relation to their children. A number of the men in this study expressed the desire to have more support and guidance in their roles as fathers, which included more structured learning opportunities such as fathering classes or fathering schools. It also appeared

that some men, particularly the younger men, actively sought to gain knowledge through the internet regarding children's intellectual and social development (cf. Tohotoa et al 2000). Many of the younger fathers also tried to organise more activities in which they and their children could participate as a way of spending more time with their children. Men also described how they had observed their children more as a means of finding opportunities to connect with their children.

Men's desire for better father-child relationships regarding their children was also regarded as a marker that differentiated younger fathers from the previous generations of fathers. However, given that a number of these men turned to their parents for help with childcare responsibilities, it appeared that a number of older men were also taking greater responsibility for caring roles in their capacity as grandfathers. The evidence from some of the older fathers in this study also indicated that older men wanted to build better emotional relationships with their children and grandchildren (cf. Thiele and Whelan 2006). Indeed, a number of older fathers reported that spending time with their grown up children and their grandchildren was considered the best part of being a father (cf. Li et al. 2012). Younger men also reported that their fathers' increasing openness and willingness to express their own feelings had resulted in them experiencing improved child-father relationships (Chen et al., 2010; Goh 2006). However, although the involvement of grandparents was generally viewed in positive terms, as previously mentioned some men criticised the lack of discipline rendered by grandparents, which they linked to the introduction of the One Child Policy and the increased status of children within Chinese society. In addition, other men found it difficult to bond with their children because of their children's close ties with their grandparents.

In contrast, it was also the case that apparent changes in contemporary fathering practice were perceived by some men to have had a potentially negative impact on children in China. For example, the apparent shift to a warmer or more involved fathering and men's desire to gain knowledge to improve father-child relationships was criticised by some men who simply believed that fathers should continue to be strict with their children. The

apparent shift away from more authoritarian fathering practice was also linked with a perceived decline in morality and concerns about children's increased involvement in a range of problematic behaviours. The accounts of some of the men in this study also revealed certain concerns regarding their fathering practice, particularly their fears that a shift to a 'softer' fatherhood could have a negative impact on their sons. In short, men were concerned that having closer relationships with their sons would not instil the necessary masculine attributes required by men in later life in relation to leadership and valour.

Men, masculinities and fatherhood in China

The fourth and final theme explored in this thesis related to the ways in which aspects of masculine identity could influence how these men negotiated the terrain of fatherhood in China. In examining aspects of gender and fatherhood, the thesis drew upon Connell's (1995) conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity to identify dominant notions of Chinese masculine identity. For these men, dominant masculine ideals were associated with characteristics of leadership, valour, loyalty, restraint and authority. This can be viewed as the template by which these men constructed their masculine identities, which were interwoven with their identities as fathers. Clearly, however, the men in this study were not all similarly positioned in relation to these ideals. For example, their differing socio-economic and residential status determined to a great extent their abilities to live up to dominant notions of masculinity and 'good' fatherhood and could, therefore, assign men to subordinate or marginalised positions relative to other men. It was clear, for example, that some of the men in this study, such as those men who had migrated to Guangzhou and those who lacked Urban Hukou status, struggled to fulfil certain aspects of their masculine and fathering identities, particularly those fathers who also faced separation from their children.

As previously mentioned, it was clear that all of these men identified paid work as a central and highly valued feature of Chinese masculinity and fatherhood. It was also clear that, within the home, men's traditional investment in their children's lives was linked to men's power and authority as head of the household, which underpinned the concept of filial piety and the notion that

children should demonstrate 'reverential awe' to their fathers (Chao and Tseng 2002). We have also noted that men generally reiterated the traditional role of the father as one of inculcating a culture of obedience, duty and honour among their children, both towards themselves and to China itself. In contrast, they did not equate other aspects of fatherhood such as the 'hands-on' care of children, especially of young children, with traditional hegemonic cultural ideals. As such, men were distinguished from women in terms of their lack of nurturance and emotional expressivity. Clearly, therefore, the implication of these dominant masculine identities and associated ideas of 'good' fatherhood was that certain configurations of men's practices as fathers gained dominance at the expense of other less powerful forms, which underpinned deeply ingrained assumptions about men's role within the family.

Yet, it was also evident that subordinated/marginalised groups could challenge aspects of hegemonic masculinity and related fatherhood, evidenced by the perceived shift to a 'warmer' or more 'involved' fatherhood that embraced parenting qualities more commonly associated with mothers, such as empathy and emotional reciprocity. In making sense of these changes in fathering practice, those men who desired change viewed themselves to be similar to other men in that they recognised the need for discipline but also wanted better father-child relationships. However, as noted, it was also clear that most men appeared to lack the necessary knowledge to achieve their aims. Thus, whilst men wished to adopt 'softer' fathering practice they were likely to resort to authoritarian responses as they struggled to make sense of their children's behaviour. In other words, it appeared that aspects of their masculine identities, which underpinned their lack of knowledge, were potentially incompatible with their hopes and aspirations to become more involved and effective as fathers.

Moreover, it was also apparent that men continued to draw upon identifiable markers of Chinese fathering practice, such as authority and discipline, as a means of maintaining masculine identities, particularly in the face of criticism regarding the potential negative impact on children and on China as a whole. As Connell (1995) has noted, men construct, negotiate and reconstruct

masculine identities through interactions within their social and cultural contexts. Clearly, however, the promotion of change in relation to fatherhood is not a conventional route by which Chinese men may signify a strong masculine identity. It was clear, for example, that general concerns regarding recent declines in children's behaviour could heighten the risk of certain types of fathers being defined as failures, which could assign them to lower-status masculine positions relative to other men. Thus, whilst men sought to implement change they appeared concerned that their actions as fathers could be defined as promoting weakness or disobedience within their children, particularly their sons. In short, it appeared that socially normative ways of demonstrating manhood continued to circumscribe men's thoughts and behaviours regarding fatherhood and fathering practice and, as such, these men did not seek to distance themselves entirely from traditional templates for respectable Chinese men/fathers. They continued to promote the centrality of paid employment and reaffirmed male responsibility for standards of discipline and moral aptitude.

Contribution of the study to the knowledge-base

To date, the majority of research on fatherhood and fathering in China has tended to be dominated by quantitative studies that have focused on men's roles as fathers. Whilst this has provided increased understanding regarding the ideology of fatherhood and patterns of fathering in China, it has provided a relatively limited understanding of how men *as men* make sense of the complexities and contradictions associated with fathering and fatherhood. In contrast, this study, which adopted a social constructionist approach allied to a qualitative research design, has been able to access men's gendered perceptions and experiences of fatherhood and fathering practice. It is also able to locate this within the wider social, cultural and economic context that forms the backdrop against which men understand the concept of fatherhood and live out their roles as fathers. In short, it is able to highlight the dynamic interaction between a changing social, cultural and economic context, dominant notions of masculine identity and associated notions of fatherhood and fathering practice. In presenting its findings, this thesis has also been able to engage with aspects of continuity and change in the current landscape

of fathering and fatherhood in China, which do not feature to any great extent within previous studies in the field. In addition, it has been able to demonstrate the impact of state policies, such as the One Child Policy, and the shift to industrialisation and consumerism on family life, not only in relation to fathers, but also mothers, siblings and grandparents.

Aspects of continuity were evident in the strong emphasis men placed on traditional concepts of fatherhood signified by men's responsibilities for ensuring loyalty, discipline, and obedience among their children, along with their role as the main breadwinner within the family. This finding concurs with other research on Chinese fathers (e.g. Reed 1995) in that it reiterates men's responsibilities and desires for appropriate standards of behaviour and moral aptitude among their children together with the importance of paid work. However, this study goes further in that it also demonstrated some of the difficulties and dilemmas that men faced in fulfilling the main duties associated with fatherhood, such as men having the time and energy to manage all aspects of the role. Linked to this is the relationship between general improvements in socio-economic circumstances and the increased pressures on men as fathers to satisfy widening material and social expectations within their families, which has also been evident in Western studies on fatherhood (Dolan 2014). Thus, as with men in the West, the men in this study also reflected on the struggle that many of them faced in their desire to fulfil both the public (economic provider) and private (father-child interactions) aspects of their fathering role. That said, the roles of fathers within the home in China appear to be significantly different to fathers in the West. The evidence suggests that in the West it is mothers who spend a significantly higher proportion of their interaction time in functional and education-related activities compared to fathers, who spend a significantly greater proportion of their interaction time in play activities (Miller 2011).

This study has also clearly demonstrated how aspects of fathering and fatherhood are changing within China. It was evident, for example, that men were willing to reorient their fathering practice to form strategies to enable them build better relationships with their children. Their motivation for changes

in notions of fatherhood and fathering practice were linked to wider societal influences; i.e. women's increased participation in the workplace, and were shaped by men's desire not to replicate their childhood experiences. As in the West, men often portrayed their fathers as representing a 'negative model' of fatherhood (Brandth and Kvande 1998: 300). This study also illustrated fathers' dilemmas and the potential problems they faced regarding their wish to implement a range of more 'child-friendly' fathering practices; i.e. that did not resort to corporeal punishment. As such, these findings provide a more nuanced picture than other Chinese studies (e.g., Shek 2007) that have simply suggested that modern fatherhood in China is 'warmer' or more 'involved' than in the past. In other words, whilst fathers may have wished to have different types of father-child interactions to what was perceived to be the norm and which they had experienced with their own fathers, they were uncertain as to how to achieve such relationships and could quickly revert to the archetypal fathering practice. It is also important to note that men's quest for parenting knowledge could contradict certain masculine ideals, particularly the notion that men do not ask for help with emotional problems, which may preclude men from accessing help and advice with their fathering practice (cf. Dolan 2014). Moreover, the perceived internal and external pressures men felt in relation to them 'failing' as fathers/men illustrate the complex and often challenging relationship between men's desire for change and their fulfilment of traditional Chinese fathering/masculine ideals.

Clearly, therefore, whilst it appears that change is taking place in both the ideology of fatherhood and in fathering practice this may not yet represent a shift to a more 'involved' fatherhood, at least not in terms of how the concept has been developed in the West where it has become widely used to convey more emotionally involved, caring and 'hands-on' fathering practices. In the context of China, this term does not take enough account of the complex structural and cultural constraints that many fathers appear to face. Instead, it appears that a 'hybrid' form of fatherhood has emerged, in which men recognise certain benefits associated with a more emotionally engaged fathering, but whose default position continues to be driven by concerns that their children may not fulfil their social obligations to their families and/or

society in general. Their notion of what constitutes good fathering, therefore, continued to fit within socially acceptable parameters of 'proper' fathering and masculine identities. This means that certain fatherhood practices endure and continue to be primarily shaped by traditional Chinese ideologies and values rather than by men's desire for change.

This study has also illustrated the impact of state policies, such as the One Child policy, and shift to industrialisation on family life. For example, whilst this is not the first study to illustrate some of the issues facing the children of migrated parents (see for example, Wong et al., 2007; Zhao 1999), it is the first study to explore the perceptions and experiences of fathers regarding their decisions to migrate and the impact on their children. This illustrates the tension between the potential for improved living standards that industrialisation offered and the apparent loss of collective interests that left some men feeling like second-class citizens and somewhat lacking as fathers. In addition, whilst the West has seen a growing literature on the role of grandparents in the lives of children (see for example, Goodfellow and Lavery 2003), this is the first study to examine some of the issues relating to the role of grandparents, particularly grandfathers, within China. This aspect of the study demonstrates how men's relationships with their children changed as their children moved into adulthood. For example, men noted how the role of their fathers could shift from an authoritarian position to a more passive and even more caring role. It was also evident that some older men felt increasingly redundant as they lost their authority in their children's lives (cf. Laidlaw et al., 2010). Finally, this study has demonstrated how the One Child Policy was perceived to have challenged certain patrilineal norms within Chinese families and to have elevated the position of girls born under the One Child Policy. This aspect of the study, therefore, adds to our understanding of the ways in the One Child Policy impacts on family life in China and in particular the apparent challenge to traditional ideology regarding daughters and their role within Chinese families.

Limitations of the research

As with all research, this study has certain limitations. The number of men recruited was relatively small and all lived in the same city. As a result the findings are not likely to represent the whole population of fathers within China or even more specifically within Guangzhou. Thus, it would be beneficial to explore the perceptions and experiences of fathers from different regions and cities within China. Secondly, as with all interviews, these men constructed and conveyed their fathering and masculine identities through what was said in the interview process and we should therefore exercise caution when interpreting men's representations of how they say they behave, which may differ from how men actually behave. Therefore, an ethnographic study that included an element of observation would further extend our understanding as being able to observe men's interactions with their children would provide greater insights into father-child relationships. Thirdly, men who had divorced were not investigated in this study. This decision was made on the basis of the low divorce rate in China and the fact that men who divorce do not occupy an honourable position within society. Therefore, it was felt that these men would not wish to participate in this study. However, the views of fathers who have divorced would undoubtedly add to our understanding of fatherhood in China. Fourthly, it would be useful to investigate mothers' and children's perspectives on fathers and fathering in China and to triangulate these views with men's accounts. Finally, I feel that the early stages of the fieldwork process could be improved. Undoubtedly, the confidence I gained as I carried out more interviews with men, the majority of who were older than me, enabled me to gain greater skills and experience as the fieldwork progressed. However, whilst these limitations have been acknowledged, it is my belief that this study has made a significant contribution to understanding fathering and fatherhood in the context of China.

Recommendations for future research

This study has provided a greater understanding of men's perceptions and experiences of fatherhood and fathering in China. However, a single study cannot hope to fully explore the topic area and, therefore, a considerable amount of empirical work remains to be done. As mentioned, future research

should pursue the experiences of men from different regions and cities within China and include the experiences of men from different ethnic minorities within China. Only by obtaining a greater variety of accounts will a fuller understanding of fatherhood and the meanings and processes involved in constructing fathering and masculine identities in China become visible. Further research should also focus on the issues related to change and continuity within men's accounts of fathering practice and ideologies of fatherhood. Further research on men's desire and needs in terms of support in relation to fatherhood and fathering should also be considered. Finally, future research could further explore the impact of state policies, such as the One Child Policy, on family life more broadly to encompass the views and experiences of siblings, mothers and grandparents, in addition to fathers.

Concluding remarks

This study has demonstrated some of the complexity and contradictions regarding fatherhood and fathering practice in China through the accounts of men who have located their views and experiences in both the traditions of Chinese society and in context of recent social, cultural and economic change. At most, this study represents a small piece of our understanding in relation to fathering and fatherhood in China. However, having experienced being a part of the process of widening understanding, I hope to continue to work in this field and to add to our understanding of fatherhood and fathering in China in the future.

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Glossary

Criticized	挨斗
limited quota of food	口粮
basic subsidies	有饭吃
have food	有饭吃
live	混
have food	混饭
work unit	单位
do labour work	打工
struggle	勉强
train	管
secure for life	衣食无忧
unemployment due to Open Up	下岗
without worries	安心
children who wander around with no parents to care for them	流浪儿
a labour worker	打工仔
housing built by collective funding from individual purchasers	集资房
grand-parenting	隔代
discipline	管
have food	有饭
look after	管
having sons to take care of the elderly	养儿防老
train and nurture	培养
successful	出息
he will be honoured by others	脸上有光
birth permit	准生证
wish to become a dragon	望子成龙
manage	管理
train	教育
teach	教育
opposition party	国名党
train	管教
educate	教
teach by modelling rather than just by words	言传身教
moral characteristics should be good	品行端正
teach	教
outstanding man	精英
how to communicate with people	待人
train	教
train	管
son not well educated, father to blame	子不教父之过

disciplined	管
feel pained	舍不得
worry that the children would feel pain	可怜
succeed	成材
hope for children's success	望子成龙,望女成凤
having a good future	出息
monitor/ guardian	监督/监护
saying nice things to the children to stop them from misbehaving	哄
the head of the household	一家之主
the elder	长辈
feel hurt	舍不得
spoil	宠
personal contacts	关系
smacked	管教
made the wild field cultivated	开荒
socio- economic situation	条件
migrated workers	打工族
the cornerstone of the house	顶梁柱
have disputes	计较
male chauvinism	大男子主义
lose their face or their reputation	失派
use this as an advantage over him	欺负
feel guilty	亏欠
matter-of-fact	务实
stick to	粘
thousands of horses competed for the single-beam bridge	千军万马过独木桥
Big Dyehouse	大染房
only children certificate	独生子女证
China Worm	中国虫
Diligence	勤劳
Frugality	俭朴
a vain heart	虚荣心
doing things according to rules	规矩
lost temper	暴躁
elite	人才

Appendices

Appendix I

INFORMATION SHEET

Fathering and Fatherhood in China

This information is for you to decide whether to take part in a study about men's views on fatherhood and being a father.

I am asking if you would agree to take part in a research project that is interested in talking to men about their views and experiences of being fathers in China.

Before you decide if you want to join in the study it's important to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve for you. So please take time to read this leaflet carefully.

Who will be doing this study?

My name is Pinmei Huang. I am a PhD research student at University of Warwick in the UK. I will be doing this research as part of my PhD.

Why am I doing this study?

The aim of this study is to find out about men's views and experiences of being fathers. Very little is known about what Chinese men think about fatherhood and about being fathers. This information will widen our knowledge in this area and it may also be a useful resource for other men in China who are fathers or who are thinking about becoming fathers.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you are a father. I would like to interview younger fathers, who had fathering experiences in the 2000s and older fathers who had fathering experiences in the 1980s and 1990s. This will help me find out about fatherhood at different time points.

No one is being paid for taking part in the study. However, it will be an opportunity for you to tell your story of being a father in a setting where you will be listened to by someone who is interested in understanding your experience.

If I am interested in taking part in the study what will happen next?

If you decide to take part in the study, you can contact me directly (my contact details are at the end of this information sheet) or I will contact you if you agree for your details to be passed to me by the person who has given you this sheet. I will then contact you to explain what is involved. If you are interested I will arrange a convenient time to talk to you about your views and experiences; what is generally termed an 'interview'. If you agree to take part then you will sign two copies of a consent form (one is for you and the other is for me).

What does the interview involve?

Every man who agrees to take part will be interviewed on his own by me at a time and place convenient to him. If you choose to have an interview in your own home, please make sure there will be at least one adult family member present in the house during the interview. Interviews are useful because they will enable me to better understand your views and experiences of being a father.

Each interview will last for about one and a half hours and will cover a number of areas; such as your experience of being fathered, and your own experience of being a father. The interview is informal and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

Can I refuse to answer questions?

You can refuse to answer any questions, without giving a reason.

Why might the interview be audio-taped?

With your permission, I would like to audio-tape the interview to enable me to get as complete an account of our conversation as possible.

If you agree to the interview being audio-taped and then change your mind during the interview you are free to stop the recording at any time.

What if I want to be part of the study but do not want to be audio-taped?

You can still participate in the study but I will not audio-tape our conversation. The decision is entirely up to you.

Some of the information asked may be personal. Will anyone else know I am doing this?

I know that some of this information is personal, but it will help me to understand more about fatherhood. No one else will know that you have taken part. All the information you give me will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be used on the recorded or written version of the interview and I will use a number and a fictitious name for the purpose of my PhD.

Your details will be kept safely locked away at all times and the recording of the interview will be destroyed ten years after the study has ended. When writing up the research I may use direct quotes from the interview but the fictitious name will be used and I will not identify individuals when publishing the findings of this study.

Are there any disadvantages to taking part in this study?

It is unlikely, but the interview may bring up memories or feeling which are painful or stressful to you. If that does happen, I will provide you with the details for local counsellors or local support services you may find helpful.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may find it helpful to talk about your experience of being a father.

What if I decide to take part in the study, but later change my mind?

That's fine. You are free to change your mind at any time without giving a reason.

Who is organizing this study?

I am a PhD student at the University of Warwick in the UK. I am conducting this study with the support of my supervisors at the University of Warwick (Dr

Alan Dolan and Dr Clare Blackburn/Dr Christine Harrison). In addition, I will be affiliated to Sun Yat-Sen University when I am conducting the interviews

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been given ethical approval by the Humanities and Social Science Ethics Committee at the University of Warwick.

Complaints

This study is being supported by the Modern Educational Center at Sun Yat-Sen University. If you have a concern about any aspect of the study you can contact Professor Feng who is the director of Modern Educational Center at Sun Yat-Sen University (fengzj@sysu.edu.cn ; 0086-84113281) who will then contact my supervisors.

What will happen at the end of the study?

Once completed, the research will be available in the form of my doctoral thesis and possibly journal papers.

Contact for further information or to take part:

If you have no further questions and feel you would like to take part in this research please telephone or email me or return the reply-slip in the stamped, addressed envelope you will have been given with this sheet. I will then contact. If you would like to talk about this study further please feel free to contact me:

Pinmei Huang, Dongxiang Village,

Guangzhou, Guangdong, 510075

Tel: 13017836122

Email: pinmei.huang@warwick.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Chinese version of Information sheet

信息书

中国父亲

提供一些信息关于你是否要参与这个研究：询问你作为父亲的想法

我要作什么研究？

我会询问你是否同意参与这项研究：了解现代中国父亲的想法与经历

在你决定是否要参与这项研究之前，很有必要了解为什么要开展这个研究，以及在这个研究中你会有怎样的角色。请仔细阅读。

为什么我要做这个研究？

这项研究的目的是去了解男人做为父亲的经历以及看法，这对丰富中国父亲研究有重要作用。

谁在开展这项研究？

我的名字是黄品妹。我是华威大学的学生，我会开展这项研究。

你为什么被邀请参与这项研究？

我希望采访两组父亲：年长（25-45）跟年轻（55-75）的父亲。

你是否愿意参加这项研究？

大家都是志愿以及免费参与这项研究。这项研究给你提供机会与平台去讲述你做父亲的经历，也可以帮助其他父亲增加了解。

如果你有兴趣参与这项研究，接下来你要做什么？

如果你决定参与这项研究，你可以直接联系我（联系方式在此书的末尾）。然后我会联系你，并解释在此项研究中你将会做什么。然后，安排一个方便你的时间去谈论你作为父亲的经历与看法；这个过程叫做访谈。

访谈包括什么？

每一个同意参加的人，在约定的时间与地点，本人接受访谈。访谈地点可以包括你的家，社区的活动室，以及你的工作地点。如果你选择在你的家里接受访谈，请确保有个安静的房间以及有其他成人在场。访谈特别有用，那是因为通过它，我可以更好了解你的看法以及经历。这也将会给其他对父亲感兴趣的人带来帮助。

每个访谈会持续大概一个半小时，会包括一系列的领域：你与你父亲的关系，你自己作为父亲的经历。访谈是非正式的，回答没有对与错。

我能拒绝回答问题吗？

你可以选择不回答任何问题，这不会给你带来任何结果。

为什么访谈要被录音？

在你的许可之下，我会录下访谈内容，这样可以帮助我得到尽可能完善的谈话内容。

如果你同意访谈被录音，然后再中途改变主意，你可以拒绝访谈被录音。

如果我想参加访谈，但不想访谈被录音，怎么办？

你仍然可以参加访谈，访谈不会被录音。这个由你来决定。

有些问题可能会比较私人，其他人会知道吗？

我知道有些信息是私人的，我询问的原因是它会帮助那些感兴趣的人。没有其他人会知道这些是出自你的口中。所有的信息会严格保密。你的名字不会在访谈的内容中出现，反而会以一个编号来代替。你的信息会被锁起来，在5年之后会被摧毁。当我写论文的时候，有些信息可能会被引用，但是不会出现你的名字。当我发表文章的时候，你的名字也不会出现。

参加这项研究，有什么害处吗？

在采访过程中，极不可能引起痛苦的回忆。但是，如果这确实发生了，我会提供当地咨询机构的信息给你。

参加这项研究，有哪些可能性的好处？

你可能会发现谈论作为父亲的经验对于你自己对这个角色的理解有帮助。

如果我中途改变主意，不想参加这项研究，怎么办？

完全可以，你可以随时改变主意，不用给出任何理由。

谁组织这项研究？

我会开展这项研究，并我在华威大学的导师也会帮助我。我也附属于中山大学。

谁检查过这项研究？

在任何一项研究开展之前，它们都要经过伦理协会的检查。它们要确保这项研究是可行的。这项研究已经通过了华威大学人文与社会科学协会的检查。

有问题向谁咨询？

如果有任何问题关于这项研究，你可以咨询中山大学的冯教授（fengzj@sysu.edu.cn）。然后他会联系我的导师。

当地大学的支持

这项研究获中山大学现代化教育研究中心的支持，如果有任何问题，请联系 fengzj@sysu.edu.cn。

这项研究的成果会是怎样？

一旦完成研究，它会以博士论文以及学术杂志的形式发表。如果你想要此研究的概要，我会发给你一份。

详细联系方式

如果你没有其他问题，想要参加这项研究，请邮寄这个信息书（信封以及邮票都已提供）。在收到你的回复之后，我会在 2 周之内联系你。如果你同意参加这项研究，你会签 2 份同意书，你我各一份。如果你想了解更多的资讯，你也可以联系：

黄品妹：

东乡村，

广州，

广东，510075

电话: 13430317842

邮箱: pinmei.huang@warwick.ac.uk

感谢您的阅读，如果有问题，请尽情询问。

你想要参加这项研究，你要做什么？

在同意书上填写并签字。我们可以安排一个时间与地点进行访谈。

Appendix II

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Fathering and Fatherhood in China

Name of researcher: Pinmei Huang

Please tick if you agree with the following:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet and that I have been able to ask questions and have had these answered satisfactory

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason

I agree to take part in the above study.

If I tell something that concerns the researcher, such as I harmed my children, I give permission to the researcher to report that to the relative institution.

I agree for the interview to be audio-taped.

I want to take part in the study, but do not want my interview to be audio-taped.

Please sign and print your name:

Researchers name and date

When completed, one copy for participant; one copy for researcher file.

Chinese version of Consent Form

受访对象编号:

同意书

项目名称: 中国父亲的经历

研究员: 黄品妹

如果你同意下列项目请打钩:

Items	X
我确认我已经阅读并了解信息书的内容；我能够询问信息书得相关问题，并得到满意的答复。	
我知道我的参与是自愿的，我也知道我可以退出访问，不用给出任何理由。	
我同意参加这个研究。	
如果在访谈过程中，我提及一些事情让研究院担心的，比如我打小孩，我允许研究员报告给相关机构。	
我同意者个访问被录音。	
我想参加这个研究，但是不想我的访问被录音。	

请签名:

你的名字 日期 签名

研究员的名字 日期 签名

当签完同意书之后，受访人员与研究员各保留一份。

Appendix III

Interview guide; younger fathers

Introduction

We have had a discussion about what the study involves and you have voluntarily agreed to participate. You are free to withdraw at any time and to decline to answer any questions if you wish. The interview will be confidential. Please could you confirm your understanding and willingness to proceed with the interview?

Background

Can I start by asking you some general background questions so that I can describe, in broad terms, the kinds of men who take part in my study?

How old are you?

How old were you when you left full-time education?

Are you married/ living together with your partner / separated/ other?

How many children do you have? Boys or girls? Their ages?

Where do you live? Do you own your home/ rent/ other? How many bedrooms does your home have? How long have you lived there?

Do you have family members who live nearby to help to bring up the child/children?

Are you in employment? (What do you do?) How many hours do you work for?

What is the shift pattern? How long have you been doing that particular job?

What types of employment have you had in the past?

Views and experiences of being fathered

Thanks for giving the information on your background. Now can I ask you about when you were growing up and your relationship with your father when you were young?

Where were you born? What kind of place was it?

Tell me what it was like when you were growing up.

Was your father around when you were young? What did he do with you? If the participant said his father was seldom around, I will ask why this happened, and what impact this had on him.

Was he similar or different to other fathers at the time? How etc?

What's your relationship like with your father now (if father still alive)?

Do you think being a father was different for men when you were young, than it is today?

Views and experiences of being a father himself

Thanks for talking about your experiences of being fathered. Now can you tell me about your own experiences of being a father?

Did you always want to have children?

Did you plan to have a baby (did you talk to your wife/partner)? If planned, when did you decide to have a baby?

In your opinion what is the best age for a man to become a father? Did you have a preference for a boy or a girl? Why? I will ask about each child if more than one. If you didn't get the child of the sex they preferred, how did this make you feel?

When your child was small, what did you do with him/her (e.g., play, tutoring), what's your feeling/thought toward that? (The child may well still be young so I will need to ask about what they do) in terms of feeding/bathing and more 'fun' things like play.

How much time do/did you spend with your child? Would you like to have spent more time?

How is your relationship with your child? When he/she has problems, will he/she come to you? What happens when your children are naughty? Who takes responsibility for sorting things out?

What are your daily routines like (work, after work, time with children)? What do you do on weekends? What are the childcare arrangements?

What does fatherhood/being a father mean to you? In your opinion what should be the main fathers' responsibilities in terms of raising children?

What kind of father do you think you are? (Probe for strict/kind/loving/fair/tough)

What is the best thing about being a father?

What are difficult things about being a father? What makes these things difficult (probe about work patterns, wages, other commitments, etc)?

You've told me about some of the things that make being a father difficult (only if they say it's difficult). What kinds of things are helpful to you in being a father? (Probe about family, friends, money, policies etc.)

Are you aware of fathering experiences of your family, friends and colleagues? How do you know, via conversation, observation, or other ways? What's your thought on that?

What do you think are the main expectations on fathers? Do you think there are images of a good father around? What does it mean to be a father in this society? Do you have ideas that fatherhood might be different for some groups of men? If this is the case, how it might be different?

Being a father in China is probably different to being a father in other parts of the world. I want to ask you some things specifically about being a father in China.

Are there particular things in China that affect how men as fathers? I am interested in the way that Chinese culture might affect you as a father. How about the culture (e.g., culture on father as the strict, filial piety, son preference)?

Some people talk about the way that the government and employers affects what we can do. Do you think these things affect you in particular ways? Can you tell me does One Child Policy have any effects on your experiences of being a father? Compared to other parts of the world, do you think are there any differences in parenting in between? What are the differences? What makes the differences?

Masculinity

Do you think men and women have different roles in parenting?

Do you think that men have different views about being a parent than women? Compared to mothers, how do you think being male affects men as parents?

Are there particular pressures on men as parents?

Do you think men need to be dominant (probe for emotional distance, strong provider image, etc)? How are these different to those for women?

How do men learn to be fathers? What kinds of things influence the kind of father they are?

Somewhere I need to ask about how their own fathers influenced them as fathers – this may come out when they are talking about growing up and their own fathers but if not, I will ask it here.

What influenced you to be the kind of father you are?

Conclusion

Thank you for giving me so much helpful information. I have asked all the questions I wanted to ask. Are there any things I haven't covered but you think would be helpful for me to know?

Remind the participant what you are now going to do with the data. Remind them about how I keep it confidential etc.

Interview guide; older fathers

Introduction

We have had a discussion about what the study involves and you have voluntarily agreed to participate. You are free to withdraw at any time and to decline to answer any questions if you wish. The interview will be confidential. Please could you confirm your understanding and willingness to proceed with the interview?

Background of fathers

Can I start by asking you some general background questions so that I can describe, in broad terms, the kinds of men who take part in my study?

How old are you?

How old were you when you left full-time education?

Are you married/ living together with your partner/separated/other?

How many children do you have? Boys or girls? Their ages?

When your children were young, where did you live? Did you own your home/rent/other? How many bedrooms did your home have? How long had you lived there?

Did you have family members who live nearby to help to bring up the child/children?

When your children were young, were you in employment? (What did you do?)

How many hours did you work for? What was the shift pattern? How long had you been doing that particular job? What types of employment had you had in the past?

Views and experiences of being fathered

Thanks for giving the information on your background. Now can I ask you about when you were growing up and your relationship with your father when you were young?

Where were you born? What kind of place was it?

Tell me what it was like when you were growing up.

Was your father around when you were young? What did he do with you? If the participant said his father was seldom around, I will ask why this happened, and what impact this had on him.

Was he similar or different to other fathers at the time? How etc?

What's your relationship like with your father now (if father still alive)?

Do you think being a father was different for men when you were young, than when you were a father of young children?

Views and experiences of being a father himself

Thanks for talking about your experiences of being fathered. Now can you tell me about your own experiences of being a father?

Did you always want to have children?

Did you plan to have a baby (did you talk to your wife/partner)? If planned, when did you decide to have a baby?

In your opinion what is the best age for a man to become a father? Did you have a preference for a boy or a girl? Why? I will ask about each child if more than one. If you didn't get the child of the sex you preferred, how did this make you feel?

When your child was small, what did you do with him/her (e.g., play, tutoring), what's your feeling toward that?

How much time did you spend with your child? Would you like to have spent more time?

How was your relationship with your child? When he/she had problems, would he/she come to you? What happened when your children were naughty? Who took responsibility for sorting things out?

What were your daily routines like (work, after work, time with children)? What did you do on weekend? What were the childcare arrangements?

What does fatherhood/being a father mean to you? In your opinion what should be the main fathers' responsibilities in terms of raising children?

What kind of father to you think you are? (Probe for strict/kind//loving/fair/tough)

What is the best thing about being a father?

What are difficult things about being a father? What makes these things difficult (probe about work patterns, wages, other commitments, etc)?

You've told me about some of the things that make being a father difficult (only if they say it's difficult). What kind of things are helpful to you in being a father? (Probe about family, friends, money, policies etc.)

Are you aware of fathering experiences of your family, friends, colleagues and your own children (if they have children)? How do you know, via conversation, observation, or other ways? What's your thought on that? Do you think being a father was different for you when you had young children, than it is today? What do you think are the main expectations on fathers? Do you think there are images of a good father around? What does it mean to be a father in this society? Do you have ideas that fatherhood might be different for some groups of men? If this is the case, how it might be different?

Being a father in China is probably different to being a father in other parts of the world. I want to ask you some things specifically about being a father in China.

Are there particular things in China that affect how men as fathers? I am interested in the way that Chinese culture might affect you as a father. How about the culture (e.g., culture on father as the strict, filial piety, son preference)?

Some people talk about the way that the government and employers affects what we can do. Do you think these things affect you in particular ways? Can you tell me does One Child Policy have any effects on your (children's¹⁵) experiences of being a father? Compared to other parts of the world, do you think are there any differences in parenting in between? What are the differences? What makes the differences?

Masculinity

Do you think men and women have different roles in parenting?

Do you think that men have different views about being a parent than women?

Compared to mothers, how do you think being male affects men as parents?

Are there particular pressures on men as parents?

Do you think men need to be dominant (probe for emotional distance, strong provider image, etc)? How are these different to those for women?

¹⁵Old father might not experience One Child Policy, hence I asked their thought about the effect of the One Child Policy on their children of being parents.

How do men learn to be fathers? What kinds of things influence the kind of father they are?

Somewhere I need to ask about how their own fathers influenced them as fathers-this may come out when they are talking about growing up and their own fathers but if not, I will ask it here.

What influenced you to be the kind of father you are?

Conclusion:

Thank you for giving me so much helpful information. I have asked all the questions I wanted to ask. Are there any things I haven't covered but you think would be helpful for me to know?

I will remind the participant what I am going to do with the data- e.g., put it together with that of other fathers and write my thesis. Remind them about how I keep it confidential etc.