Chinese Immigrants' Fertility Behaviour in Canada

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Abstract

China is one of the top three sources of immigrants to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016a). As a result, many scholars now recognize the importance of studying Chinese immigrants (Guo, 2013; Mah, 1995; Chow, 2004; Fong & Ooka, 2006; Tang, 2001; Mao, 2015). However, so far, most studies have focused only on this group's economic attainment, their educational performance, and their sociocultural dynamics. As yet, there has been little discussion of their fertility. Indeed, in my opinion, far too little attention has been paid to the upbringing of these immigrants in the context of China's unique efforts at population control, culminating in the official One-Child Policy of 1979.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following three research questions about Chinese immigrants living in Canadian society:

- Do the Chinese immigrants conceive their fertility with reference to the One-child policy?
- What factors do they attribute to this policy, either as benefits or as drawbacks, in terms of their fertility?
- Do their discourses reveal any evidence of internalization of the One-child policy, despite their exposure to competing fertility norms in Canada? Or on the contrary, has the immigration process disrupted their subscription to the one-child norm?

My study draws on fifteen semi-structured interviews with Chinese immigrant women. This paper presents its main results as the following: 1) the one-child policy has indeed influenced Chinese people's view of fertility, which since 1982 has changed from a pronatalist

philosophy to one favouring fewer births; 2) Chinese immigrants to Canada have in fact internalized the one-child norm; 3) The experience of immigration has not disrupted the one-child habitus. Rather, the immigrants' exposure to the Canadian environment—in terms both of workplace and community—has contributed to its reinforcement.

Of course, it may not be possible to generalize from the results of my local research (conducted in Ottawa, Ontario) to *all* immigrant women across the country. Nevertheless, I am confident that this study will prove to be a valuable contribution to discussions on the issue of Chinese fertility in Canada.

Chapter One: Introduction

Canada introduced the points-based system of eligibility in 1967 (Fong & Ooka, 2002), opening the door to increasing numbers of immigrants—of which a significant number have been Chinese. According to Statistics Canada (2016a), China was one of the top three sources of immigrants: it accounted for 10.6% of the immigrant population. These immigrants now comprise the largest group of visible minorities, with a total population of 863,945.

As a result, many scholars now recognize the importance of studying Chinese immigrants (Guo, 2013; Mah, 1995; Chow, 2004; Fong & Ooka, 2006; Tang, 2001; Mao, 2015). However, so far, most studies have focused only on this group's economic attainments, their educational performance, and their sociocultural dynamics. As yet, there has been little discussion of their fertility behaviour. What research has been done on this subject mostly attributes their observed tendency to have fewer children to the economic insecurity and social discrimination that many immigrants experience (Tang, 2001; Tang, 2004).

In my opinion, however, far too little attention has been paid to the upbringing of these immigrants in the context of China's unique efforts at population control, which culminated in the official One-Child Policy of 1979. An individual's fertility behaviour cannot be understood in isolation from their background and society. People's fertility concept embraces their attitudes and perceptions about reproduction, including the reproduction purpose, number of children, and the children's sex (Zhou, 2007). The construction of a fertility concept depends on the social environment, in terms of government policy, family norms, and workplace requirements. In China, the implementation of the one-child policy

used official compulsion to reconstruct people's fertility concept. For almost forty years, Chinese people have had to accept the fact that they can have only one child.

When the one-child policy was implemented in 1979, with the goal of reducing China's burgeoning population growth, the Chinese people did not seem to realize its long-term benefits on the national economy, politics, and population development. As people's fertility behaviour changed, fewer births meant that parents invested more energy in raising and educating their single child (Zhu, 2005). In China, this coercive measure (complete with legal sanctions against offenders) forced compliance with the policy. However, one might wonder if Chinese citizens who immigrate to Canada would still maintain the habit of lower fertility that they were socialized into in China. Or would they adapt their reproductive behaviour to the norms of their new country?

In order to clarify these questions about the immigrants' fertility concept and behaviour, I interviewed fifteen Chinese-Canadian women. These subjects were all, by definition, married; and all were aged 22 to 38 (that is, born between the late 1980s and the early 1990s), and from different demographic groups. My study asked the interviewees three specific questions.

- Do the Chinese immigrants conceive their fertility with reference to the One-child policy?
- What factors do they attribute to this policy, either as benefits or as drawbacks, in terms of their fertility?

- Do their discourses reveal any evidence of internalization of the One-child policy, despite their exposure to competing fertility norms in Canada? Or on the contrary, has the immigration process disrupted their subscription to the one-child norm?

My goal, with this study, is to create an important body of research about how (and why) a group of immigrants might either reproduce or reject the fertility pattern under which they grew up—even though they now live thousands of kilometers away from their homeland.

This study comprises six sections.

Chapter Two, the **literature review**, describes previous research on different aspects of Chinese immigrants' lives in Canada. It also looks at China's population policy and their fertility concept accordingly.

Chapter Three identifies gaps in our knowledge about the relationship between the one-child policy and Chinese immigrants' fertility in Canada. It then describes the specific **research questions** of this study, along with my **theoretical framework**—one based explicitly on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *field*, *habitus*, and *capital*. I also introduce my methodology, the qualitative method I used.

Chapter Four examines the **contemporary fertility concept;** provides a brief bibliography of the interviewees; and lays out my main findings.

Chapter Five looks at **the formation of the one-child habit**, and analyzes the different experiences through which Chinese immigrants reproduce the one-child norm in Canada.

Lastly, Chapter Six, the **conclusion**, recapitulates this study's main findings, including a brief mention of its limitations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

1. Introduction

In our mobile modern society, the study of immigration cannot focus only the immigrants' integration into the receiving country (Guo, 2013; Li, 2002). I have taken care to situate my research in relation to the broader study of **transnationalism**, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of immigration practices. This is necessary to understand how the process of immigration influences people's lives, especially their fertility behaviour.

In this chapter I also briefly describe the lives and activities of **Chinese immigrants in Canada**, including their economic performance, their educational attainment, and their sociocultural dynamics—as well as their fertility behaviour. As well, I provide a brief review of **China's population policy** in relation to the fertility concept of the Chinese people.

2. Transnationalism

In their 1995 study, Linda Basch et al. defined transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (p. 359). Luis Guarnizo and Michael Smith (1998) go further, positing the existence of two ideas of transnationalism. "Transnationalism from above" refers to international political and economic activities, while "transnationalism from below" refers to the everyday activities of individuals and groups. In the literature, the term is used to refer to "occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders" (Portes et al., 1999, p. 219).

Many scholars of transnationalism agree that immigration is not a simple linear process, one that ends when immigrants are completely assimilated into the host society (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Portes, 2003). Rather, the process often involves some element of back-and-forth, with immigrants alternating between allegiance to their original country and to their country of adoption. Some feel that this mindset may slow, or even prevent, the process of integrating into the host society (Faist, 2008). In contrast, Claudia Paraschivescu (2011) argues that this lifestyle does *not* necessarily hinder the process of integration. Indeed, some transnational practices may give immigrants greater opportunities to assimilate into the host society, while keeping alive elements of their own culture (Levitt, 2001a). For example, Alejandro Portes et al. (2002) show that economic practices such as sending home money from abroad may encourage immigrants to engage with the job market of their host country.

A recent study by Peggy Levitt and B. Nadya Jaworsky (2007) finds that the most common transnational activities are the occasional and informal ones, such as practices of cultural exchange, economic remittances, and religious practices. Paraschivescu (2011) shows that immigrants may still develop emotional transnational ties without regular visits to their home countries. Further, Eric Fong and Emi Ooka (2006) introduce the notion that local ethnic communities may also maintain transnational ties through informal social contacts.

Of course, immigration between countries is hardly a new phenomenon (Portes, 2003; Levitt, 2001a). Still, contemporary immigration differs significantly from the historical process in ways that are worth considering. Factors such as today's advanced communication and transportation technologies; the increased economic ties between countries; and the emergence of dual citizenship status—all these give immigrants more opportunities to establish connections between their countries of origin, and their host countries. They also

allow them to maintain both formal and informal interactions with both places (Levitt, 2001a).

Peggy Levitt also shows that sustained contacts and social networks between immigrants and non-immigrants create transnational "social fields" (2001a). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) define this concept as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships, through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (p. 1009). Such a field allows the transmission of social remittances, which are defined as "the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from host to sending the countries" (Levitt, 2001b, p. 54). Levitt groups social remittances into three broad types:

- normative structures (values, norms, etc.)
- systems of practice (religions, political participation, etc.)
- social capital (Levitt, 1998).

Levitt (2001b) analyzes Dominican migrants to America to illustrate how social remittances are transferred from Boston to Miraflores: how ideas, as well as financial capital, flow from the host country back to the country of origin. Conversely, Liu (2016) finds that among the families of international students, one of the most common activities is sending money from the home country to the host country, in the form of support for tuition and living expenses. Yunyi Chen's 2016 study of Chinese immigrants, however, illustrates their tendency to transfer cultural capital from their home country to the host society. Her research shows that in Canada, Chinese people still tend to live with their parents and grandparents, as they normally do in China. She interprets this as a sign of direct transmission of traditional family

values: immigrants base their new mode of life on the norms and ideas formed in their home countries (Chen, 2016).

Levitt postulates that immigrants with low education, and poor language skills, are more likely to move back and forth, since they are less likely to perform well in either their home or their host country (2001a). However, other authors—such as Portes (2003), and Fong and Ooka (2006)—report the opposite: that *higher* education increases the probability of engaging in such a transnational pattern. Portes (2003) further argues that transnational life is less the preserve of marginalized people, and more of those with greater resources of human capital. As well, Portes et al. (1999) argue that the transnational tie remains strong in the first generation of immigrants, but weakens in subsequent generations. This idea contrasts with that of Levitt (2001a), who argues that the rise in dual citizenship means that such ties are *less* likely to wane. Other factors, she observes, are the socioeconomic disadvantages generally experienced by immigrants in the host society, which function to keep their transnational ties strong. These two factors work to maintain ties over several immigrant generations.

To illustrate this point, Yali Li (2002) uses a Chinese idiom: "*luo ye gui gen*," meaning "the leaves fall back to the roots." In other words, immigrants—like leaves fallen from the branches of their country's tree—still keep up their traditional ways. We can interpret this as meaning that no matter where Chinese citizens go, they still carry with them their history and culture. Li's view is supported by Liu (2016), who asserts that such idioms record the experiences and behaviours of Chinese people living abroad. In his own study, Li (2002) points out that the tie to their homeland is vital to Chinese immigrants, who are made even prouder of their identity by any discrimination they face in the host society.

The transnational tie between immigrants and their home country is a strong one. In Canada, Chinese immigrants frequently engage in three broad categories of transnational practices: economic activities, educational activities, and sociocultural activities. Recent evidence suggests that those three factors—economic opportunities, a liberal education system, and great community involvement—are attractive to Chinese wishing to immigrate to Canada, and work as a driving force to influence their desire to enter this country (Guo, 2013).

3. Chinese Immigrants in Canada

In 1644, under the Qing dynasty, China closed its doors to Western powers for over a hundred years, with the goal of protecting itself from what it perceived as undesirable foreign influence. However, by 1850 the Opium Wars had turned China—which then had a population of some 430 million—into a semi-colonial country (Zhu, 2005). A combination of the increasing population, natural disasters, and warfare drastically reduced the food supply for almost a century, from the onset of the First Opium War in 1839 to the onset of World War II in 1939. During that period, some 10 million Chinese left the country, forced out by poverty and starvation (Zhu, 2005).

In Canada alone, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway during the 1800s attracted over 15,700 Chinese immigrants (CCNC, 2004). Those “coolies” were viewed as cheap labour, earning on average $25 per month—a figure 30–50% lower than the wages of white labourers (Chan, 1983). Worse, after the railway was completed, Chinese workers were not treated as valuable immigrants, who had made a significant contribution to their new country. Instead, the Canadian government allowed them to work in Canada only as contract labourers (Zhu, 2005). They were treated as outsiders, strangers, and foreigners—a

discrimination that many Chinese people still feel in the present-day society (Zhu, 2005).

That discrimination went all the way up to the level of the federal government—as illustrated in a speech made by John A. Macdonald in a House of Commons debate on May 5, 1885.

> The Chinese are foreigners. If they come to this country, after three years' residence, they may, if they choose, be naturalized. But still we know that when the Chinaman comes here he intends to return to his own country; he does not bring his family with him. He is a stranger, a sojourner in a strange land, for his own purposes for a while; he has no common interest with us; and while he gives us his labour and is paid for it, and is valuable, [he is] the same as a threshing machine or any other agricultural implement [that] we may borrow [for a while] (quoted in Zhu, 2005).

In 1886, a "head tax" was imposed upon Chinese immigrants: in order to be allowed into the country they were forced to pay the Canadian government $10 each. This fee increased to $50 in 1896, $100 in 1900, and $500 in 1904 (Chan, 1983). However, this tax was levied only on poor immigrants. Middle-class and upper-class Chinese, such as businessmen, diplomats, and graduate students—who could contribute to Canada's economic development—were exempt (Chan, 1983). Obviously, this was a transparent ruse to prevent lower-class Chinese from entering Canada. Not until the points-based eligibility system was adopted in 1967 were Chinese immigrants granted the unimpeded right to enter Canada (Fong & Ooka, 2002). Today, China is one of the top three sources of immigrants.

3.1 Economic Performance

Although most immigrants think of Canada as a land of opportunity, several studies have revealed that immigrants of all types suffer in the job market (Guo, 2013; Guo & Devoretz, 2006; Fong & Ooka, 2002). The major barriers are poor language skills, lack of Canadian job experience, and lack of professional credentials in this country (Guo, 2013; Guo & Devoretz, 2006). It is a common experience for immigrants to find their foreign education, credentials, and work experience devalued, to the extent that some are unable to find employment, and suffer downward social mobility (Guo, 2013). As Philip Kelly and Tom Lusis (2006) assert, foreign credentials and degrees—people's institutional cultural capital—usually lose their value in the process of immigration. In 2006, Shibao Guo and Don J. Devoretz examined the adaptation experiences of Chinese immigrants in Vancouver. They found that almost three-quarters of the workers in their survey (72.5%) had post-secondary education, yet only a few reported that this (or their work experience in China) was helpful when searching for jobs locally. Most respondents (60%) indicated that their annual household income was less than $31,000. Moreover, Guliz Akkaymak (2017) finds that immigrants from non-traditional source countries like China, India, and the Philippines are more likely to have to take lower-level jobs in Canada, despite their education.

Besides the concept of *institutional* cultural capital, Bourdieu (1984) also identifies *embodied* cultural capital—which, in his view, includes language capacity. This is a common stumbling block for new immigrants, who often lack appropriate English skills. (This lack may include speaking with a strong accent, for instance, and a lower level of conversational competence.) Zhu (2005) argues that due to this fact, Chinese immigrants tend to avoid jobs that require

verbal communication; they also often unwilling to engage in negotiations about salary and working hours.

Another unfortunately common experience in the job market is racial discrimination. Timothy P. Fong (1994) reported that many immigrants encounter this, especially those who come from countries other than Europe and the U.S. (Akkaymak, 2017). In his 2013 study in Calgary and Edmonton, Shibao Guo reports on their experiencing a glass ceiling at work (Guo, 2013). He found that employers are more likely to screen out people with Chinese names, as well as Indian or Pakistani ones (Akkaymak, 2017).

To avoid long-term unemployment, many Chinese immigrants tend to seek work opportunities in Chinese businesses. Fong and Ooka (2006) write that Chinese immigrants maintain strong ethnic networks, which enable them to find work in Chinese restaurants, grocery stores, laundries, import companies, and so on. (Fong & Ooka, 2002). Obviously, social capital plays a vital role in this process (Akkaymak, 2017; Kelly & Lusis, 2006). On the one hand, social capital and networks allow immigrants to access the "hidden" job market (Akkaymak, 2017). On the other hand, such ethnic networks may lead to job segmentation: for example, Philippine immigrants in Toronto usually end up in nursing jobs, since all the other Philippine immigrants also work in that sector (Kelly & Lusis, 2006). Lloyd L. Wong and Michele Ng (2002) argue that many Chinese entrepreneurs in Vancouver maintain frequent contact with their families and business partners in China. Interestingly, most participants in Wong and Ng's 2002 study reported a strong desire to help their children develop a transnational identity and perspective. They hoped to combine Canadian and Chinese cultures and values in their children's education.

3.2 Educational Achievement

The literature shows that after migrating to Canada, Chinese students maintain their traditionally high level of academic performance (Chow, 2004; Ma, 2006). This fact is so noticeable that in the United States, some scholars label them a "model minority" (Ying et al., 2001). A large and growing body of literature has investigated the relationship between the Confucian view of education and Chinese students' higher achievements (Chow, 2004; Ma, 2006; Mah, 1995). Historically, Confucianism was the core curriculum in Chinese schools, and was promoted as a state religion (Liu, 2016). One of the core values of Confucianism, and of traditional Chinese culture in general, is filial piety; and this plays a vital role in the country's education system. Students are driven to excel academically because, as Simon Marginson puts it, "an educated child brings honour to the family, and better protects continuity with the ancestors" (2001, p. 598).

A Confucian proverb says that "those who labour with their brains should govern those who labour with their brawn." For both classes, however, hard work is considered a must; and this habitus remains unchanged after migrating to Canada. Chinese immigrants emphasize education because they believe that working hard in school will lead to a better life, and upward socioeconomic mobility. Liu's 2016 study reaches the same conclusion: Chinese parents want their children to have a good education, so they can enjoy a higher income and social status.

Many studies consider Confucianism to be the "ethnic capital" of the Chinese people (Ma, 2006). Henry Chow (2004) defines this term as "an individual's degree of ethnic connectedness, and internalization of ethnic cultural values" (p. 321). This provides the

impetus for achieving academic excellence. Chow's 2004 study examined the effects of ethnic capital on the school performance of young Chinese immigrants in Calgary, finding it positively related to several factors: close parental supervision, advanced bilingual skills, and internalization of the value of hard work. Ma (2006) comes to the same conclusion: Chinese students, with their greater cultural capital, are more likely to succeed in the Canadian education system. Mah too, in 1995, attributed high academic performance to parental supervision. Moreover, Hong Zhu (2005) concludes that because Chinese parents emphasize their children's accumulation of cultural capital, they therefore prioritize education. All these aspects of Chinese culture influence immigrant students' educational experiences in Canada.

3.3 Sociocultural Dynamics

Following a 2002 study that analyzes Canadian national surveys of attitudes toward immigrants, from 1974 to 1991, Li concludes that as a group, Chinese immigrants are the least likely to be accepted, or even tolerated, by the dominant social group (Li, 2002). This may be the reason that immigrants tend to maintain close ties both with their homeland, and with their ethnic communities in Canada (Mao, 2015; Fong & Ooka, 2006). Such experience of discrimination might reasonably make newcomers more likely to keep to their own ethnic groups, and less likely to participate in the host society (Powers & Ellision,1995).

A similar argument was also made in Fong and Ooka's 2002 study: that working in an ethnic company limits immigrants' opportunities to interact with the wider society. In tandem with this, their later 2006 study also found that an increasing number of ethnic organizations promote opportunities for newcomers to participate in activities among their own kind. For instance, the recent blossoming of Chinese media has facilitated the establishment of

transnational ties (Fong & Ooka, 2006). These media allow immigrants to easily keep up with what is happening in their home country.

The rise of the Internet has also promoted the emergence of transnational habitus (Nedelcu, 2012). Studies of Chinese immigrants' media preferences (such as Mao's 2015 research) found that they prefer to seek information from Chinese websites, newspapers, and personal social networks. In line with Mao's study, Zhu (2005) found that Chinese immigrants possess more "bonding" social capital (such as family members and ethnic community members) than "bridge" social capital, which must be acquired from the larger Canadian society. Akkaymak (2017) suggests that volunteering may help immigrants to establish social networks in the new country. However, according to Zhu (2005), Chinese immigrants participate very rarely in volunteer activities.

Transnational activities, which allow immigrants to stay in touch with their original culture, permeate almost every aspect of their lives with traditional norms and values. Having briefly examined economic performance, educational achievement, and sociocultural dynamics, I now turn to a more intimate aspect—and one that has been almost entirely overlooked in the literature: the role of culture and politics in Chinese immigrants' fertility choices in Canada.

3.4 Fertility

In studies that examine the topic of immigrants' fertility behaviour, four hypotheses dominate. These are the disruption hypothesis, the minority-status hypothesis, the assimilation hypothesis, and the socialization hypothesis. In this section I briefly describe those hypotheses, and then look specifically at research conducted in Canada. The few

studies that have examined the fertility of Chinese immigrants (such as Ng & Nault, 1997; and Goldscheider & Uhlenberg, 1969) have mostly been American.

- **The disruption hypothesis.** Ng and Nault (1997) argue that immigrants need time to adapt to a new style of life and begin the process of acculturation; and this disruption may temporarily depress their fertility.
- **The minority-status hypothesis.** Goldscheider and Uhlenberg (1969) argue that when people immigrate to a new country, they are often treated as a minority group, and marginalized. However, they challenge previous investigations of fertility patterns, positing that it is insufficient to focus solely on immigrants' social and economic characteristics. Instead, they suggest looking at the insecurity and marginality of a minority group and treating them as independent factors in the process of making fertility choices.
- **The assimilationist hypothesis.** Nadja Milewski (2007) concludes that over the long term, immigrants' fertility rates will converge with those of the host country.
- **The socialization hypothesis.** Conversely, Jonsson and Rendall (2004) suggest that immigrants' fertility behaviour continues to follow the reproductive norms of their home countries. Immigrants from high-fertility countries will have high rates in the host country; those from low-fertility countries will continue to have low rates.

To the best of my knowledge, the only author to analyze the Canadian fertility context is Zongli Tang. In a 1997 quantitative study he used statistical tools to examine the impact of socioeconomic factors, minority status, and immigration processes on immigrants. His findings suggest that the prime cause of lower fertility among Chinese immigrants (as

compared with Canadians of British stock) is the pervasive feeling of economic insecurity. More recently, Tang (2001, 2004) used the 1991 Canadian census to examine the effects of that economic insecurity. He employed the tool of relative economic status, which he defined as "the ratio of annual income per schooling year of minority members, divided by the same value of majority members" (Tang, 2001, p. 40). He concluded that higher levels of economic security, and lower levels of discrimination, would enable Chinese women in Canada to have more children.

However, I am not aware of any qualitative study that examines Chinese immigrants' fertility behaviour in Canada in the context of China's one-child policy.

4. China's Population Policy and Fertility Concept

People's fertility concept embraces their attitudes and perceptions about reproduction, including the reproduction purpose, number of children, and the children's sex (Zhou, 2007). The notion of fertility concept is read in two ways. Fertility concept is a research tool devised by social scientists in order to produce knowledge with the goal of making sensing of procreation dynamics in society. On the other hand, fertility concept also refers to mental representation among women. It accounts for a process of making a decision regarding fertility. In this study, my use of fertility concept refers to the latter. These attitudes are usually the product of social policies and environmental influences. Compared to other developed countries, the Chinese people's fertility concept was mainly enforced by the government's official policy (Chen & Wu, 2008).

China's modern population policy developed in roughly **three stages**. The **first stage**, from the 1950s to the early 1970s, was characterized by Chairman Mao's idea of "revolution plus

production" (Lee, 2007). This philosophy emphasized the importance of population growth, since Mao believed that a larger population was vital for constructing a better society. In the seminal book *The Institutions for Reproduction*, Xiaotong Fei (1999) explained that in traditional Chinese society, economic productivity and human reproduction both took place at the family level. In a small-scale peasant economy, each family was responsible for providing its own farming manpower. The defining purposes of marriage and reproduction were to maintain the continuity of family life and ancestry; and to increase the family's labour force. Ideally, more children translated into a wealthier life. It must be remembered that traditional societies did not provide pensions to its elderly citizens, so taking care of them when they got too old to work was the responsibility of the children.

As well, since traditional Chinese society was extremely patriarchal, the man was the centre of the family; and only the oldest male offspring had the right to inherit the family wealth and power. From this perspective, not having a son meant not be able to show filial piety to the ancestors (Fei, 1999). So the pronatalist fertility concept (Lee, 2007) was informed by all those needs: economic, labour-force, and insurance against old age.

Between 1973 and 1978, however, the official order was suddenly reversed with the arrival of the **second stage**. Now the official slogan was "*wan, xi, shao*," meaning "late, sparse, less." Propaganda signs and posters were plastered in all public places, confronting citizens with phrases like "one is not too few, two will do, and three is too many" (Lee, 2007). Women were encouraged to defer marrying until the age of 25; to have no more than two children; and to allow at least three or four years between each child (Zhao, 1994). During that time, China was undergoing a transformation that led to an unstable social environment (Chen & Wu, 2008). Despite the government's push for *wan, xi, shao*, the ingrained fertility

concept of the Chinese people had not changed significantly. Most were still instinctively pronatalist, at least in rural areas. However, urban citizens were beginning to take a different view (Chen & Wu, 2008). Because of the limited living spaces, and their busy work lives (often in factories), most dual-employee families averaged only two or three children (Zeng, 2006). Moreover, most urban workplaces provided state-sponsored contraceptive and family-planning advice, which led to a slight change in people's fertility concept (Zeng, 2006). In contrast, families in rural areas continued to rely on farm work to survive, and their fertility concept had not changed much (Zeng, 2006).

By 1979, even two children per couple was considered excessive, and the People's Republic instituted its one-child policy—the **third stage**. The aim of family planning law was to achieve zero population growth and to restrict China's population to 1.2 billion by the end of the twentieth century (Zhao, 1994). Although every province implemented the policy based on its own conditions, overall the rules were strictly enforced (Mei, 2016). At this point, the fertility practices of the Chinese people changed dramatically; and would stay changed for more than 40 years. The idea of fewer births guided people's fertility behaviour until the policy was rescinded in 2015, replaced by the two-child policy (National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2015). This encourages citizens to "voluntarily" restrict their families to no more than two children.

Article 25 of the 1982 *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* says that the state "promotes family planning so that population growth may fit the plans for economic and social development" (Constitution, 1982). When, in 2001, a subsequent Family Planning Law came into effect, the Chinese government encouraged citizens to bear children only after the age of 25, and allowed each couple only one child (Article 18 of the Constitution). It

rewarded those who practised family planning with various social privileges and benefits (Articles 23 and 25), such as the Honour Certificate of a Single Child (Article 27). Conversely, couples with more than one child had to pay "social upbringing charges" (Article 41); and those who refused to comply with the law, or who hindered its implementation, were censured or punished (Article 43).

The state imposed those social upbringing charges in order, it said, to compensate for the natural and social resources used to raise a second child. But there was no unified standard; the charges were calculated and regulated by both local and provincial governments (Article 41). For example, in Beijing in 2013, parents had to pay between ¥241,000 and ¥806,000 (roughly $50,000 to $150,000 Canadian) if they wanted to have a second child (Mei, 2016).

From the 1980s onwards, the Chinese government enforced a harsh policy on birth control (Lee, 2007), often by violent means such as coerced abortion and forced sterilization. Threatening slogans abounded, such as "those who fail to practise family planning are doomed to a broken family and a dead person" (Nie, 2014, p. 281). Recently, though, Jingbao Nie believes that the state has toned down its approach a little, justifying its interventions on the grounds of "common social good." It now promotes the one-child policy as a way to improve the quality of people's lives. The stick has given way to the carrot: fewer punishments are imposed, and more rewards given—such as old-age benefits, paid breast-feeding leaves, child subsidies, etc.—in the hope of inducing voluntary compliance. The goal of this change is for citizens to internalize the one-child policy, and regulate themselves (Lee, 2007).

Some scholars argue that the softer strategy has been successful. For example, Gigi Naga Chi Lee (2007) found that none of her survey respondents perceived the messages they were exposed to at school or in the media as propaganda; rather, they described the one-child norm as just "common sense." Antonio Gramsci argues that common sense can be understood as resulting not from critical thinking or reflection, but rather as a habitual form of cognition—perhaps akin to brainwashing (Gramsci,1971). Such "common sense" encourages people to accept some perceptions uncritically, without much thought—as some of Lee's participants did. Other scholars, however, argue that the one-child policy ignores traditional Chinese preferences. Lee (2007) also found that some of her respondents wished for two children, a son and a daughter. (One of her important findings is that the one-child policy reinforces the preference for a son—which, in some cases, can lead to sex-selective abortion. Women who find themselves pregnant with a daughter may terminate that pregnancy, not wishing to waste their one chance on a girl child.)

Chapter Three: Research Questions, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology

1. Research Questions

The Canadian situation is quite different from China's here, the government wishes to encourage a higher birth rate. Despite its efforts, since the 1970s Canada's birth rate has consistently been below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman; and average fertility has been pegged at only 1.6% (Statistics Canada, 2016b). As a result, the issue has received considerable attention. To reduce the financial burden of raising children, and to help with the problem of child poverty, in 2016 the Liberal government replaced the former Canada Child Tax Benefit with the Canada Child Benefit—a monthly tax-free payment for families with children under the age of 18. The amount is determined by the number of children in the household, and by the family's net income (Government of Canada, 2016).

However, although Chinese immigrants are one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada, very little research has been done on their fertility behaviour. As I noted before, Chen (2016) pointed out that Chinese immigrants in Canada tend to live with their parents and grandparents, as they did in China; and she interpreted this fact as their following traditional family values. But if immigrants reproduce the residential pattern of their home country, would they not also reproduce the fertility pattern?

In my view, the crucial question is whether these immigrants still tend to have only one child, despite living in an environment that promotes high fertility; and if that is the case, how do they explain their choice? The existing literature fails to provide answers. To me it

seems insufficient to only consider structural factors such as income, education, and social status. Surely Chinese cultural and political attitudes with regard to fertility should also be considered? For that reason, the goal of my study is to examine how Chinese women immigrants feel about their fertility. How did they react to China's one-child policy, and how do they think it influenced their personal choices? With a view to eliciting that information, my study posed the following questions.

- Do the Chinese immigrants conceive their fertility with reference to the One-child policy?
- What factors do they attribute to this policy, either as benefits or as drawbacks, in terms of their fertility?
- Do their discourses reveal any evidence of internalization of the One-child policy, despite their exposure to competing fertility norms in Canada? Or on the contrary, has the immigration process disrupted their subscription to the one-child norm?

The women I selected for my study were all born and raised in mainland China, and have Mandarin or Cantonese ancestry.

2. Theoretical Framework

As I indicated earlier, an important element of my study is Pierre Bourdieu's three interrelated concepts of *field*, *habitus*, and *capital*. In my view, these ideas play a major role in attempts to understand the transformation of people's reproductive behaviours in different settings. In his 1993 work *The Field of Cultural Production* (in collaboration with editor Randal Johnson), Bourdieu introduces the concept of *field* as a social network. The structure

of a society affects individuals' behaviour and thoughts; at the same time, those individuals influence the development of the social structure. A decade earlier, he had defined *habitus* as "a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices"—in other words, the internalization of the external environment (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170).

Habitus is also a historical construction, according to Bourdieu: an individual's habitus embodies the norms and history of a society, as well as an individual's personal experience. Kelly and Lusis (2006) vividly described it as "bodily history." The same idea is echoed by Folke Vedder and Paul Glastra (2010), who described habitus as a "culturally embodied cognitive structure" that stays in immigrants' bodies as they immigrate. So an individual's position in the field is the product of the interactions between their habitus, their capital, and the unique rule of the field. In other words, to maintain their position in a given social environment, people draw on different capitals, and develop certain habits.

Bourdieu (1984) divides society into different types of fields, consisting of the relationships between various agents. More important than the agents themselves, however, are the relationships; these constitute the unique operating rule of each field. Bourdieu perceives these fields as an abstract game space: individuals who believe that they can obtain rewards from this "game" will participate in it.

Applying Bourdieu's concept, I propose the term "fertility field" as a tool for my analysis. Its rules of operation were set by China's government, in the form of the one-child policy: people who refused to change their fertility behaviour to comply with the law were punished. As Bourdieu wrote (1984), the monopoly of capital happens in any field; and in the fertility

field, that capital is political power—used, in that specific place and period, to control individuals' personal reproductive choices.

Also, as I said earlier, the Chinese government enforced the idea of a "common social good": having only one child benefited not only yourself and your child, but society as a whole. Not only did this idea intentionally give more value to the "choice" of having only one child, it also reinforced the preference for sons. In the fertility field, the number and sex of an individual's children represented a symbolic identity that determines their positions. Couples with only one child—especially a son—held a higher position within the field than those with more than one child, especially when those were daughters. Although those rules of operations were initially enforced by the state, they were eventually internalized by Chinese citizens. People's desire to gain rewards and avoid punishments constantly reinforced the one-child rule, meaning that everybody knew how to think and behave.

If we regard the fertility field as an objective structure of behaviour, the concept of habitus emphasizes individual habits—which, according to Bourdieu (1984), are "durable and transposable." On the one hand, is usually rooted in people's minds, and resistant to change. On the other hand, it may change with new settings, and new experiences of education, work, and social interactions (Wacquant, 2007). The transportable and transformable character of habitus is important in studying immigrants, since it can be re-established. People may internalize the externalities, establishing a "system of dispositions" (Appelrouth & Edles, 2016). In this sense, an individual's fertility habitus can be viewed as essentially a series of internalized dispositions and perceptions. However, differences in family and educational backgrounds mean that not everyone has the same habitus (Wacquant, 2007). We would expect immigrants from the rural countryside to have different fertility behaviours and

attitudes than immigrants from China's modern cities. For this study, though, I argue that having only one child has become a standard fertility habitus for Chinese immigrant women.

Immigrants carry their habitus to the new country they settle in (Bauder, 2004), which was certainly the case with the women of my study. All had already been socialized in Chinese attitudes when they arrived in Canada as adults, so their fertility habitus was fully formed. And even if this were not the case, the close ties between immigrants in their new Chinese communities and networks in Canada still allow a traditional habitus to spread.

As noted earlier, the immigration process may change an original habitus by exposing it to a different context (Friedmann, 2002). But this is not an easy task: more commonly, individuals tend to reject the proposed changes and continue to behave according to their habitus. One recent study, for example, found that European scientists who immigrated to Singapore discovered some workplace expectations that conflicted with their rationalist habitus. In order to integrate, they had to change their habitus to fit the new environment (Sidhu, Yeoh, & Chang, 2015). The authors argue that transnational mobility requires immigrants to adjust their original habitus based on the new circumstances. In terms of my own research, however, I think it unlikely that female Chinese immigrants will alter their ingrained views—at least without a concerted efforts being to educate them on Canadian-style fertility mores. Left to themselves, this group will most likely continue to view the one-child fertility habitus as normal, and "just common sense." That concept is non-place-bounded, and accompanies the immigrants into Canada.

We cannot discuss habitus and field without mentioning the other significant concept that Bourdieu (1984) put forward: capital. There are three forms of this. *Economic* capital refers

to the financial assets of an individual; *social* capital refers to their social networks and connections; and *cultural* capital refers to symbolic assets, such as degrees, work skills, and languages spoken (Kelly & Lusis, 2006). According to Bourdieu (1984), these three forms of capital are inter-convertible and exchangeable; however, they may also be devalued in the immigration process (Kelly & Lusis, 2006). For example, immigration may diminish a person's social capital, which will need to be re-established; or their degrees and qualifications may not be accepted in the host country.

In addition to Bourdieu's ideas, I also draw upon Louis Althusser's idea of "ideological state apparatuses," which offers another way to understand the various factors at work. In educating its population, the state acts on it through agents rather than directly. Althusser's influential 1970 essay described these as realities that take the form of "distinct and specialized institutions" (Althusser, 2006, p. 92). Althusser distinguishes two forms of state apparatuses, ideological (ISA) and repressive (RSA). The former is represented by institutions such as churches, schools, communities, families, etc.; and the latter by violent means such as the army, the police, prisons, etc. (Althusser, 2006). Both are ways for the state to control production. In Althusser's view, these functions are not exclusive: both may operate at the same time. Applying Althusser's idea to my own context, the one-child policy was formed through an RSA, with its attendant coercive measures; while the one-child ideology was inculcated by an ISA, through different agents and institutions.

We may also look to Friedrich Engels for guidance—specifically, his 1973 book *The Origin Of the Family*, *Private Property*, *and the State*. It emphasizes the role of family as agents in the state's governance. Engels believes that the state is the product of irreconcilable conflict between different social classes: "the modern representative state is an instrument of

exploitation of wage labour by capital" (Engels, 1973, p. 283). In other words, the state is merely a tool to allow the dominant class to realize and maintain its superior position. And since the family is the most basic unit in all societies, Engels asserts that its meaning and function can only be reflected in a certain social form. Families in primitive societies, slave societies, feudal societies, capitalist societies, and socialist societies—all have their own different characteristics.

Historically, individual families began to splinter off from the communist ideal with the advent of private ownership. Increasingly, they became the basic economic unit of society. Indeed, Engels believes that the appearance of monogamy itself was clearly influenced by economic factors. Once a community is made up of such independent economic units, governance of the state is achieved by redistributing capital among the dominant class of monogamous families. That is to say, families act as agents to support the exploitation of capitalism. For example, through kinship and inheritance taxes, the state controls the flow of a family's wealth.

In China, in addition to the outside forces of government and society, family (especially parents) plays a significant role in teaching young people about social norms and values. This non-coercive force nevertheless propagates the one-child norm. As Ronald Freedman notes, when citizens observe each other's smaller families, this serves "to legitimize, and thereby increase, these new fertility behaviours" (Freedman, 1997, p. 6).

3. Methodology

As I mentioned earlier, my research population consists of fifteen married Chinese immigrant women aged 22 to 38. At the higher end of the age group are women born after 1980, whom

I chose because they had been exposed to the one-child policy. According to Ryder (1973), immigrants who arrive in a new country after the age of 21 have already been socialized in the norms and culture of their original country.

For the purposes of my research, I also chose to exclude women from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and rural China, along with some ethnic minorities (Zhao, 1994). These exclusions are due, in part, to the geographic complexity of China: the one-child policy was implemented only on the mainland. Another reason is that in some situations, under Article 18 of the Constitution, women could be exempted from the policy. The major exemptions were ethnic minorities; women who lived in rural regions, and whose first child was a girl; and women from Xinjiang, Qinghai, and Xizang provinces (Zhao, 1994). For the sake of consistency among my interview subjects, I did not include women who fitted those descriptions.

As an initial step, I familiarized myself with the large volume of relevant literature on the subject of Chinese immigrant studies. This allowed me to identify the gaps in previous research, and also its limitations. From this process, I developed the three research questions I aready presented on page 27.

In my understanding, the qualitative method was the most appropriate for investigating a relatively unexplored field such as this, where the goal was to assemble as much research data as possible. I was supported in this approach by John Creswell (2007), who believes that the varied situations and experiences of participants constitute multiple realities. Since my goal was to understand both women's *ideology* in terms of fertility (Chen & Wu, 2008), and their *habits* (that is, their internalized dispositions), it seemed to me that the best approach consisted of semi-structured interviews. In this type of information-gathering, researchers

have a prepared script; however, based on the respondents' narratives during the process, researchers may usefully change the interview questions to encourage further discussion on specific points. Creswell (2007) further argued for the utility of asking open-ended questions, to encourage interviewees to share their life experiences. Finally, it goes without saying that researchers must always keep an open mind during interviews, and listen respectfully to the participants' understanding of their situations (Creswell, 2007). To increase the respondents' comfort level with the process, all interviews were conducted in Mandarin .

The interview guide I created consisted of four parts.

- In Part 1, I asked respondents about socioeconomic factors, such as when they moved to Canada, what their working situations were, what new social networks they had, etc.
- In Part 2, I asked interviewees about their birth family: the size of the family, the number and sex of siblings (if any), and their overall relationship with that family.
- In Part 3, I asked participants about their fertility behaviour, such as the number of children they already had, whether they would like to have more, and their gender preferences.
- In Part 4, I asked questions designed to elicit their attitudes about the one-child policy. Since this topic may have been a politically sensitive one for some people, I chose to put those questions at the end of the interview.

As well, since I myself am a Chinese woman, I took steps to ensure that the participants were not worried about speaking frankly with me. (It was a possibility, though remote, that they

might have suspected me of being an agent of the Chinese government, sent to examine them for any disloyal thoughts about the state.) I introduced myself and my thesis, and explained the purpose of my research. I also emphasized the fact that I would use pseudonyms instead of their real names; and that the electronic recordings of the interviews would be destroyed once I had transcribed them. I believe that these steps encouraged the respondents to present their personal experiences openly and honestly, and to share with me their genuine opinions of the one-child policy.

I recruited the fifteen respondents through a personal connection. A friend organizes a local "moms group" for Chinese mothers, and this informal setting allowed me to approach the group and describe my research. Once I had established a relationship of trust with the ladies, I found it easy to recruit potential participants. Many more than fifteen qualified women initially expressed interest. However, due to time constraints (gathering, translating, collating, and interpreting the data is a labour-intensive process, over a relatively short period), I decided to limit the interviews to only fifteen. I selected participants with diverse profiles in terms of their socioeconomic backgrounds; all were married, though with some differences in their situations.

After choosing the interviewees, I emailed them some information explaining my research purpose. I also stressed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntarily. Before the actual interview started, I asked each participant to sign a consent form. During the interviews I followed the interview guide I had created; however, occasionally I either changed the order of the questions, and/or asked some follow-up questions, to encourage the respondent to express herself in more detail. All the conversations were recorded for further analysis.

After transcribing the interviews, I translated them from Mandarin into English, and began to analyze the data. I categorized the information into several themes, examining the women's opinions on fertility and the one-child policy through a number of perspectives: family background, workplace environment, and the community.

I also made a concerted effort to avoid any personal subjective bias on the topic. Creswell (2007) has observed that when conducting qualitative research, researchers must recognize that their own values, background, history, culture, and personal experiences may affect their research, and shape the way they interpret their findings. For this reason, he believes that researchers should openly describe any potential biases. In my own case—being myself a Chinese woman who was born and brought up under the one-child policy—it is indeed difficult for me to avoid subjectivity on the issue.

Let me briefly describe my background, as if I were one of my own research subjects. I was born in 1991 in China, to parents who both had university degrees. As the sole child in my family, I had a happy childhood—with all the love and companionship that my parents and grandparents could give me. I lived with my grandparents until I was five years old, because my parents were too busy establishing their careers to take care of me. Despite this, I have always had a really close relationship with both my parents—who belonged to the "pre-one-child-policy" generation. My mom has an older sister and an older brother, and my dad has four older sisters. Since both my parents were the youngest in their respective birth families, they had a lot of care and help from their older siblings, with whom each still has a great relationship. My parents often said that they could not have finished their schooling without the help of their siblings.

Since I have not yet married, so far I have not talked seriously with my parents regarding the number of children I might like to have. But we do sometimes talked about my cousin Lily, the daughter of my aunt. Lily has one baby already, and plans to have a second. Probably due to my parents education, they view Lily's decision differently than my aunt. My parents believe that Lily's current economic situation will make it impossible for to raise a second child; but my aunt and Lily don't regard a settled financial state as an essential prerequisite for having another baby.

Although I did sometimes feel lonely, overall the experience of being a single child was great. I came to Ottawa in 2014 by myself, and am currently working on an MA in sociology at the University of Ottawa. Since that isn't a popular subject among Chinese students, most of my classmates are non-Chinese. I have both Chinese and Canadian friends in Ottawa, which has allowed me to integrate into Canadian society while at the same time maintaining ties with the Chinese community. From a sociological viewpoint, I find it interesting to observe Canadian society, especially with regard to its population policies.

I acknowledge my own life experiences, both as a single child and as a Chinese student at a Western university, in order to defuse any idea that my research might be performed with a pre-set agenda. In this study, I have tried to explore the respondents' experiences from their own viewpoints, respecting the unique life experiences of each person. Since there is no unified way of representing their opinions, my findings present their views in their own words, through the use of quotations from the interviews.

Chapter Four: The Contemporary Fertility Concept

Although the concept of fertility itself is a constant one in any human society, popular ideas about it do not necessarily remain the same over time—and this is particularly the case for the Chinese people (Zeng, 2006; Chen & Wu, 2008). The way people think of fertility is a product of their particular political and socioeconomic conditions, which are internalized by individuals. As the various external factors and conditions change, so too (sooner or later) do people's decisions about fertility.

In the case of China, direct and indirect propaganda in support of the one-child policy has caused people to incrementally accept it, leading to the transformation of former views of fertility. The traditional patterns of "early marriage and childbearing" and "more children bring more happiness," have been replaced by "late marriage and childbearing" and "fewer and better births." This change, in turn, has affected their reproductive behaviour. As a national tool of social control, the one-child policy has not only exerted considerable direct influence on population levels; it has also acted to change people's ideas about fertility. At the same time, the policy has provided a macro-political environment in China for the internalization of the one-child norm.

In this chapter, I first give a brief biography of each of the fifteen participants, presenting their family contexts, personal experiences, and their fertility choices. (All the names used here are pseudonyms.) This biography includes some mention of the women's economic status, including whether they and/or their husbands work. By definition, none of these respondents are in the so-called DINK demographic—that is, "dual income, no kids." All have at least one child, and some of the women don't work outside the home.

I then move on to a detailed discussion of how the one-child policy has reconstructed these women's concept of fertility from three perspectives: the purpose of reproduction, the number of children, and the gender preference for children.

1. The Participants

Cindy is in her early 30s, and the mother of an infant son. Before she came to Canada she lived in a big city in China, where she worked for two years in a financial company. In 2011, she became pregnant, and her manager tried to persuade her to have an abortion. She declined, and as a result she did not receive the promotion she was aiming for. Born under the one-child policy, Cindy has no siblings. She came to Ottawa to do her MA at a Canadian university. Two years after graduating, she found a job with a commercial bank in Ottawa. From the interview, we know that:

- she has no intention of having another child
- she thinks that a child is a valuable "tool" for maintaining the stability of a nuclear family
- she doesn't want to have to rely on her son when she and her husband get old

Betty is her late 20s, and has an infant daughter. She grew up in China with her parents and a younger/ sister. Betty's mom was dismissed by her company for having a second child, and she and her husband had to pay many government fines. Betty moved away to Canada by herself in 2015, and completed her MA at a Canadian university. From the interview, we know that:

- she does not want to have a second child, even though her mom often tries to persuade her to
- her mom has some health problems after giving birth to Betty's sister, so the younger girl was raised by her grandmother
- Betty has expressed interest in raising her daughter by herself
- she has not yet found a job, which makes her feel unable to properly integrate into Canadian society.

Della is in her 30s, and mother to an infant son. She is the only child in her family. She has lived in Canada for more than ten years. She earned a BA from a Canadian university, and now works in the art industry. She loves painting and travel. From the interview, we know that:

- Della places a very high value on her career
- her parents respect her decision to have only one child
- she is very independent, and does not want to rely on her son when she gets old
- she thinks her independence is the result of growing up as a single child.

Emily is in her early 30s, and has an infant son. Emily was the sole child in her upper-middle-class family in China. She graduated from a Chinese University, and came to a Canadian University to earn an MA degree. After graduating, she has worked for a Canadian company for several years. From the interview, we know that:

- Emily thinks the experience of being the only child in her family was beneficial for her
- she is married to a Chinese man who was also the sole child in his family.
- she and her husband are very busy at work, and they both have opportunities for promotion
- her husband wants to have a second baby, but she doesn't.

Flora is in her late 30s, with an infant daughter. In Flora's birth family, she had no siblings. After getting a BA from a Canadian university, she went to work for a Fortune 500 company. From the interview, we know that:

- Flora strongly agrees with the idea of "fewer and better births" promoted by the one-child policy
- she emphasizes the need to cultivate her daughter's interests
- Flora thinks that her academic education in Canada makes her different from traditional mothers in China
- although she wanted a sibling when she was a child, now she has no intention of having a second child.

Grace is in her late 30s, and mother of a teenage son. She is the only child in her family. She came to Canada with her husband. The language barrier has prevented her from finding work. From the interview, we know that:

- for several years, Grace's parents tried to persuade her to have a second child; but now that she is almost 40, they have stopped
- Grace's parents and her uncles and aunts had a poor relationship, and this has influenced her decision not to have another child
- since she doesn't have a job, her family income is relatively low
- Grace holds to the traditional belief that when her son marries, she and her husband must buy him a house.

Jane is in her early 30s, and at the time of the interview she was pregnant. She has no siblings. She came to Canada in her early twenties, got a BA from a Canadian college in Ottawa, and currently works in a clinic. From the interview, we know that:

- Jane and her husband do not want to know the sex of their baby in advance, preferring to be surprised
- she believes it is costly to raise a child in today's society
- she feels she has learned a lot of about child-raising from her Chinese Christian church
- before she became pregnant, her relatives put pressure on her to have a baby.

Irene is in her early 30s, and mother of an infant daughter. Irene came to Toronto with her parents under the Immigrant Investor Program, a government initiative to help businesspeople to invest in Canada's economy. Irene has not worked outside the home since her daughter was born; her husband runs a small Chinese store in Ottawa. Irene, her husband,

and their daughter lived with her parents for several years. From the interview, we know that:

- Irene wants to give her daughter a higher quality of life than she has herself
- her parents-in-law, who still live in China, want her to have another baby
- her husband supports her decision not to have another baby
- her father has a terrible relationship with his siblings.

Ashley is in her late 20s, and has an infant son. She is the only child in her family. She earned an MA at a Canadian university, and now works in a Chinese company. Her husband works in a Chinese restaurant. From the interview, we know that:

- Ashley thinks that for a woman, it's essential to be a mom
- she found it hard to find a job in Canada, even with a masters' degree
- despite having a son, she shows a slight preference for a girl child
- she and her husband are feeling pressured financially.

Jess is in her early 30s, and mother of an infant daughter. Jess is the only child in her own family. She had worked at an technology company in China before coming to Canada. She earned her MA at a Canadian university, and found a job in Ottawa right after graduating. From the interview, we know that:

- Jess lost her job in China when she became pregnant with her daughter, and is afraid of losing her current job if she gets pregnant again

- her parents want a grandson, but she and her husband do not have any gender preference
- she actively promotes the idea of gender equality.

Helen is her late 30s, and has a teenage son. She has no siblings. Due to health issues, Helen is not working right now, but she regularly volunteers at a Chinese school. Helen married a man whose family is from the Chinese upper class. From the interview, we know that:

- she has enrolled her son in many interest groups and classes
- Helen believes that she and her husband must buy her son a house when he marries
- her mother-in-law wants her to have another child
- Helen thinks raising a child is too time-consuming and expensive, so she doesn't want to have a second.

Chloe is her early 30s, and has an infant daughter. She has a younger brother. She began a BA, but ran out of money, so quit in her second year. Chloe and her husband run a small business in Canada. From the interview, we know that:

- Chloe thinks her parents love her brother more than her, because they have a strong son preference
- she has a negative attitude toward having a younger brother in her family
- her parents and her brother still live in China, and she only visits them once a year.

Anne is 30, and has an infant daughter. She has a younger sister and a younger brother. She came to Canada to study at a Canadian university. Since she married, she has not worked. Initially she did not want to have children, but after her husband found a job she eventually had a daughter. From the interview, we know that:

- Anne's parents were very busy, so the responsibility of taking care of her brother and sister fell to her
- her parents focused most of their attention on her brother
- as a child, Anne felt ashamed of having siblings
- she appears to support the one-child policy.

Nancy is 30, and the mother of an infant daughter and a son. Nancy is the only child in her family, but her husband has two older sisters. Her husband is the Chief Executive Officer of his family company in Canada. Nancy accompanied her husband to Canada five years ago. She was an actress in China, but has not worked since moving to Ottawa. From the interview, we know that:

- although she claims to love babies, Nancy initially didn't want to have two children
- it was not Nancy's choice to have a second child
- because her husband's family owns a large company, she felt that her parents-in-law had pushed her to have a second child
- if the second baby had not been a boy, she felt she would have been pushed to get pregnant again until she had a son.

Sara is in her late 30s, and she has a teenage son and an infant daughter. She is the only child in her family. She came to Ottawa to do her undergraduate studies. She married a British-Canadian man, and gave birth to her son the same year. She loves children, and has worked as a teacher for more than 10 years. From the interview, we know that:

- Sara's parents initially did not want her to marry a non-Chinese man, but they eventually accepted him
- she and her husband decided together to have a second child
- although she has some Chinese friends, she and her husband socialize mainly with Canadians.

As we can see, only two respondents out of these fifteen women have more than one child. I consider these women as special cases, as outliers in my study; and I will discuss them separately later in Chapter Five. The other respondents, with only one child, I examine in Chapters Four and Five.

2. The Transformation of the Fertility Concept

2.1 Reproduction Purpose: Economic and Psychological Benefits

Why do people have children? Yao, Wu, and Li (2010) refer to this as reproduction purpose. Whether women's behaviour is intentional or unintentional, it expresses their fertility concept. As I mentioned earlier, Xiaotong Fei (1999) pointed out that traditional Chinese families were responsible for providing their own labour forces by means of reproduction. In small-scale peasant economies, marriage and childbearing existed mainly for the continuity

of family, clan, and ethnic culture. People regarded reproduction as the main—or even the only—purpose of their family lives. In essence, producing children was a method to satisfy the family's expectation of accumulating economic capital.

Before the Mao era, the Chinese government advocated and even rewarded a higher birth rate, for the purpose of national development (Zhao & Xie, 1988). For over a thousand years, the traditional fertility concept was "the more children, the better" (Fei, 1999). Having children was a clearly utilitarian function. And although all our participants were born after that time, their *parents* were born during the more officially fertile period. In the interviews, all the women said that their parents had at least two siblings. Two typical comments are these by Jane and Flora.

> Flora: "My mom has six siblings. In the past, all the salary earned by my mom, my aunts, and my uncles had to be given to my grandparents."

> Jane: "My grandmother has eight siblings. She told me that the more children in your family, the better the life you would have. More children brought more labourers and better crop yields to the family. She often jokes that having children then was not a way to spend money, but a way to make money."

As these views demonstrate, in a traditional society material wealth flowed from the young to the elders in a family; therefore, raising children was profitable. But when the one-child policy strictly regulated the number of children in a family, people's views on the value of their children changed. Since parents now had to provide more material and educational resources to their sole child, with no prospect of return for many years, the economic utility

of the child vanished. In fact, the economic flow was fundamentally reversed: instead of children creating wealth for their parents, parents now had to invest in their children. This gradually led to the disappearance of the economic purpose of having children.

In contrast, women now tend to regard reproduction as a personal pleasure, a psychological experience, even a way to have more fun. People now pay more attention to the meaning of having children, rather than to the material utility of a child. Respondents often expressed thoughts such as these:

- "a child is the crystallization of the love between a couple"
- "raising a child is an indispensable life experience"
- "children are cute"
- "a child improves the stability of a family, and increases its happiness."

In fact, the women I talked to all spoke of fertility solely from the perspective of themselves and their partners—rather than for the sake of other people, or their extended family, or society as a whole. Their desire to pursue a meaningful life experience through childbearing was only to satisfy their own emotional and psychological needs—as illustrated by these three comments.

> Sara: "I'm a kindergarten teacher, so I really enjoy spending time with kids. You know, children have the unique ability to make the world more beautiful and peaceful. The most important reason I want to have children is that both my husband and I love kids so much."

> Cindy: "For a family, I think the triangle-shaped relationship is the most stable structure. Many couples have conflicts and problems in their relationship, but because of their child, they choose not to get divorced. So I think the child plays a critical role in ensuring a stable family relationship."
>
> Irene: "Raising a child is so costly now, but I think the happiness that my daughter has brought to me and my husband is worth all my efforts. I don't expect her to be excellent; I only hope she will be happy and healthy."

From these comments, and others like them, we can conclude that nowadays the essential purposes of childbearing have become:

- maintaining the stability of a family
- bringing pleasure
- obtaining emotional and psychological satisfaction.

The original function of having children—accumulating family wealth—has been made irrelevant by the higher cost of raising them. In the current economic climate, we might even view children as luxury goods.

Although no participants mentioned propaganda about the psychological benefits of having children, some government slogans against the concept are still rooted in people's minds. Back in the 1980s, for instance, Chinese citizens would often be exposed to signs and radio spots saying things like: "If you want to become rich, have fewer children and plant more trees." These slogans portrayed being rich, and having children, as contradictory—the

reverse of the traditional ethos. Although that kind of propaganda no longer exists, its messages have become axiomatic among the people. Since the 1990s, the Chinese government has softened its approach (Nie, 2014). Instead of blunt slogans, it now spreads "information" more subtly, in invisible and largely subconscious ways. The phrase one mother used, about children being "the crystallization of the love between a couple," was quite a popular one in China: it was created by the government, one of their mechanisms for inducing change in people's reproduction purposes. Importantly, it replaces the fertility purpose of "economic gain" with one of "personal emotional fulfillment."

Of course, the woman who said those words surely had no idea that she was merely repeating government propaganda. To her, the "crystallization of love" idea must seem just as much "common sense" as the one-child policy did to others. Even though the respondents are presumably unaware of any explicit link between the change in their reproduction purpose, and the official policy, it is evident that the latter has infiltrated the fertility concept of the Chinese people with—this time—invisible and non-coercive force. Another example of this newly subtle propaganda is that government portrayals of a typical family—in advertisements, TV shows, posters, newspapers, and on social media—always show three people: a father, a mother, and one child.

As well, having children is no longer viewed as the sole purpose of marriage either.

> Della: "The most significant thing in our generation is to pursue personal development. My husband and I both agree that the nature of marriage is not the continuity of the family, but the enjoyment of life's journey. Since we do not expect our child to take care of us in the future, there's no reason to devote

> our valuable time to raising more children."

Other participants did view having a child is an indispensable part of marriage, and of a woman's life. Several felt that there was an emotional and psychological purpose to having children. The rooted notion of women having a reproductive obligation still existed too. Aside from the issue of emotional and psychological satisfaction, some participants evidently felt a strong belief that it was their responsibility to have a child. Even though the purpose of childbearing has changed, many women still consider it their duty.

> Ashley: "I think a family without a child is incomplete. Women have to have the experience of being a mother once in their lives."

> Jane: "Although I waited until I was 33 to have my first child, it was so important to me; otherwise, my life would have been incomplete. Also, since I got pregnant so late, my friends and relatives used to always asked me about why I had not had a baby yet."

> Cindy: "I know there are a lot of DINK families, but only a few can remain childless. There is too much pressure from society and the extended family, especially the husband's parents."

Most respondents believed that motherhood is one of the most crucial roles that women need to play in their lives. In China, the acceptance of Double Income, No Kids (DINK) families is lower than in other countries (Zhou, 2007). Ma (2012) conducted a research regarding the acceptance of DINK family among educated university students in China. In her research, there are more than 85% of her participants reported that raising a child is an indispensable

life experience. Possibly this is an unconscious reflection of the government propaganda I mentioned earlier, publicly promoting the ideal of a three-person family. An example is the publicity posters that travel agencies put up in the subway stations. On one, promoting its sales on summer family vacations, the slogan says: “provide a beautiful childhood for your child.” The accompanying image shows a three-person family in a baggage-laden car, in front of several world landmarks. The implication is that with just one child, parents can enjoy happy holidays. These images work to enhance the “typical” family structure in people’s minds.

Since children are no longer an economic tool, or viewed as necessary to maintain family continuity, the reproduction purpose of the Chinese people has been transformed. Now its main function for a woman, I found, is either acquiring mental and psychological satisfaction, or the satisfaction of performing her duty. The Chinese state no longer uses such concrete coercive systems as fines, courts and prisons; instead, it exercises its invisible symbolic power over people’s reproduction decisions. Bourdieu, Thompson, and Raymond (1993) argue that such an invisible and intangible force has “a power of constituting the given through utterances; of making people see and believe; of confirming or transforming the vision of the world.” This “almost magical power,” they point out, enables people—or, in this case, the state—to “obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force”.

In addition to its conventional violent exercise of force, the Chinese government has, through the symbolic power of slogans and portrayals, invisibly and gently inculcated “common sense” axioms about fertility. This driving force has changed the reproductive purpose of the Chinese people. The one-child policy not only functioned as a coercive form of population control, but has also infiltrated the everyday lives of individuals.

2.2 Number of Children: Quantity versus Quality

The historically entrenched culture of pronatalism collapsed as Chinese society became less agrarian, and the government adjusted its population policy. In traditional agricultural society, people's lives were so dominated by the farmland (Li, 1984) that there was a direct correlation between the number of children in a family, and its wealth. The deep-rooted idea of "the more children, the better" led parents to focus on the quantity of their children rather than the quality (Tian, 2009). In modern times, however, China's population grew so large that it threatened to outstrip the country's resources. It was to deal with this serious problem that the government implemented the one-child policy.

Now, since people's desire for more children cannot be satisfied, they can only focus on better educating their single child; and this has brought a new emphasis to the task of child rearing. To examine this shift from quantity of children to quality, this study asked respondents about the number of children they have chosen to have, and the reason behind their choice.

> Jess: "It's like gambling. In the past, with many children—five, six, or even more—there was a greater chance of a child with a promising future. But now that every family has only one child, it is all about cultivating that child. My daughter is my only hope. So she is exhausted; children are under too much pressure from their parents these days. My daughter goes to kindergarten every day, and she still needs to study for a very long time after class, even on weekends."
>
> Ashley: "David is my only child. Of course, I cultivate him at any cost. I hope he can go to Harvard in the future."

These interviews reflect a common fact in modern-day China: many parents have very high expectations for their children's education and future careers. Indeed, traditional Chinese parents have always wanted to view their son as a dragon, and their daughter as a phoenix (two mythical beasts that in China are potent symbols of power, dignity and honour). The best way to achieve their expectations is to invest in education—easy enough to do, with the advent of the knowledge economy. My respondents showed a strong desire to foster their children's interests and hobbies from an early age.

> Flora: "My daughter is three, and last month my husband bought her a piano. Although she cannot learn it now, she will definitely learn it sometime later."
>
> Della: "I love painting so much. I think my son also has some talent for art, so I found him a teacher. Now he learns to sketch every weekend."
>
> Helen: "I think that people in the past only knew how to give birth to children, but they did not know how to raise them. They are different concepts! Now the most important thing is to cultivate them. Since he was in kindergarten, I have registered my son for lots of different interest classes, such as taekwondo and painting. Although they may not always be useful in the future, it is a sentiment that I am cultivating in him. These days, my son regularly goes to a violin class, and I think it gives him a great opportunity to develop his interest in music."

These comments reveal that the participants—since they are not continually having more children—spend their energy and money on their children's education. One reason for this

emphasis on "quality"—that is, a broad-ranging education—is the requirements of the labour market: competition today has become fierce. If parents want to increase the chances of their children's future academic and professional development, they have to start early. As a result, the cost of bringing up a child has risen accordingly. Even among those interviewees who would have liked a second child, this reality of rising costs has forced them to abandon the idea of more children to focus their resources on the one(s) they already have.

> Irene: "I raise my daughter as a princess at home. I want to improve her self-image, so I bought her lots of pretty dresses. You know, it's so costly. I do not want to have another baby. If the second was a girl, she could wear her elder sister's dresses; but if it was a boy, I would need to buy lots of new clothes and toys for him."

> Jane: "It's so expensive to raise a child now. In addition to basic needs, such as food and clothes, you have to take them travelling to broaden their horizons; to enroll them in interest classes after school; and to summer camps. The cost of raising two kids is so high, not everyone can afford it."

> Chloe: "We are in Ottawa, so I hope my daughter will be able to speak a little bit of French. It will help her academic and professional development, so I found a French-speaking university student to tutor her in French on weekends. Raising only one kid is exhausting, both economically and physically—let alone two."

Although these three respondents were concerned about the high cost of raising their children, they also hoped that their investments would give their children valuable future advantages. We can analyze this transition using Bourdieu's (1984) theory, which holds that capital can shift between different forms. In our case, the mothers evidently hope that their current *outlay* of economic capital will equate with an *input* to their children's later cultural and social capital.

Again according to Bourdieu, since the economy controls the distribution and redistribution of capital among individuals, having a child now reduces a family's capital. Since the desire to pursue capital is usually constant, people voluntarily reduce the number of children in their families in order to minimize that economic loss (Bourdieu, 1984). In contemporary society, if families cannot *increase* their economic capital by having children, they will at least *minimize their loss* by reducing the number of children.

Economically, it is also undeniable that in China, people's standard of living has improved slightly since the one-child policy came into effect. In Wenzhou, for instance (the third-largest city in Zhejiang province), the *Wenzhou News* (2006) reported that disposable family income in a single-child family was 1.8% higher than before. Many couples have recognized this benefit to having just one child, and therefore accepted the restriction. When asked their opinions on the subject, most respondents gave positive answers.

> Della: "Having one child is a win-win situation for both the child and the parents. I can spend more time with my husband, and we can do the things we love, like travelling or just watching a movie. And our son can have all our love, with no need to vie with brothers or sisters."

> Flora: “No matter how many children you have, the key is to cultivate. I can spend all my time and money on my daughter, so I appreciate the one-child policy.”
>
> Jess: “I think it’s better to have only one child. In addition to the time and money I spend on my daughter, we can enjoy our life more, and can also provide a better environment for her.”
>
> Grace: “Rather than having two children in relatively poor living conditions, I would like to have only one child, and a well-off life. I think most people prefer the one-child family structure now.”

Such comments illustrate the fact that most Chinese immigrants have internalized the long-term influence of the one-child policy, and have formed their reproductive behaviour accordingly.

2.3 Child Gender Preference: Boy, Girl, or Either

Some couples prefer a son, others a daughter, and some have no preference (Ye, 2014). In the traditional Chinese agricultural society, sons were perceived as increasing a family’s labour force, since they were strong enough to work in the fields. This would guarantee security in later life (Fei, 1999). The patriarchal tradition was a strong influence too: the man was the centre of the family. The oldest son had the right to inherit, and to redistribute the family property. As well, having a son showed filial piety to the ancestors (Fei, 1999). Under those conditions, sons obviously had a far higher value than daughters; consequently, so boy preference was dominant.

But over the years, as Chinese society became less predominantly rural, the importance of boys as manual labour gradually declined. And after the one-child restriction, people just had to accept the sex of their first child. This led to sons and daughters being equally valued, and equally cultivated: parents today make the same educational and material investment in sons and daughters. This fact has gradually weakened the differences between men and women, both academically—females increasingly have the opportunity to go school—and professionally. More importantly, because gender-role stereotypes have become increasingly vague, people's attitudes have changed from a decided son preference to a non-preference. My respondents' comments reflected this fact.

> Irene: "People's minds have changed now. In the past, people preferred a son because usually a son has better educational and work opportunities than a daughter. But now it seems that sons do not have more benefits than daughters. In today's society, men's and women's professional distributions are more even."
>
> Jane: "I am in my eighth month of pregnancy right now. When I had the pregnancy test, the doctor could have told us the sex of my baby. But both my husband and I want to make this a surprise. Whether it is a boy or a girl, we are happy to have him or her."
>
> Helen: "Although I have a son, a son or a daughter is the same for my husband and me. We would surely give them the same amount of love, and the same level of education. A daughter may just have more dolls at home!"

Most respondents articulated the non-preference, saying essentially that "sons and daughters are the same." Even if this were not true, the one-child policy gives parents who have only a daughter no choice; they are forced to invest all their parental capital in their daughter. This means that today, only daughters enjoy greater support from their parents than those who must compete with brothers. They now have the opportunity to be educated to the highest level; to inherit their parents' wealth; and to become independent. An invisible accompaniment to the one-child policy is the ideological message that boys and girls are equal.

And since most interviewees were educated in Canada for at least a few years, they have been exposed to Western cultural ideas—and insist on the idea of gender equality even more strongly.

> Jess: "Although I only have a daughter, my husband and I do not plan to have another child. A daughter or son is the same for us. The purpose of raising a child is to watch her grow up. It is this process that brings happiness to the family, and either a son or a daughter will bring us the same feeling."

That fertility purpose also played a role in correcting people's son preference. Surprisingly, I found that not only did some mothers express no preference about gender, but others explicitly preferred a daughter.

> Ashley: "I kind of want a girl. My son is so naughty these days. He plays outside all the time. If I had a girl, she would stay with me all the time, and I could do her makeup and dress her up. Imagine how good this would be."

> Grace: "I am quite stressed after my son was born, since now my husband is the only breadwinner for the family. We need to save money for our son to get married, and buy him a house when he grows up. If we have a girl, we would not need to consider those costs."
>
> Helen: "Since my son was born, I am not willing to spend money on myself. Although this is Canada, we still have to save money for his later life. If I had a girl, I would not have this stress."

Though many traditional marriage customs no longer exist in modern China, some obviously still do. In the past, when a son married, it was customary for his parents to buy him a house. Today, with greater gender equality, one might think that the same would be true for daughters as well—or that the custom would be dropped for boys. But apparently neither is the case; so raising a boy undoubtedly puts more financial pressure on his parents. For this reason, some parents now view the cost of raising a son as higher than a daughter, which leads to a change from a son preference to a non-preference, or even to a daughter preference. Another possible explanation for the daughter preference expressed by some participants (such as Ashley) is that women feel more equipped to raise a girl than a boy.

From my analysis, I believe that the modern concept of fertility (as expressed by the immigrant mothers) reflects the combined pressures of social, political, and economic factors. On the one hand, the one-child policy moved the Chinese people's fertility concept away from agnation, causing them to rethink their ideas and habits about reproduction. On the other hand, they have also gradually experienced the economic benefits of having only one child. This turned passive obedience into an active internalization of the new norm.

However, external factors cannot directly act to transform individuals' thinking and behaviour. Bauder (2004) argues that in different fields, external influences can only affect individuals through intermediaries. What intermediate factors might influence the fertility field of Chinese immigrants? In the next chapter, I present three such factors: the family, the workplace, and the community. I discuss in detail how these factors mediate the control of people's reproductive behaviour.

Chapter Five: The Formation of Fertility Habits

1. The Family Background

The concept of fertility (like so much else) is formed during an individual's socialization, forming an internalized guide to their reproductive behaviour. In the early stage of socialization, the family is the most important influence on children: even broader social influences are merely transmitted through its the medium. As I noted before, Althusser (2006) holds that ideological states force people to follow their rules. The dominant group in a society interacts with other people in ways that are sometimes neither abstract nor direct but take place through agents and institutions. In the case of the Chinese government, it achieves its goal (of population control) by using the family to spread its ideological message—in addition to its regulations and policies.

In order to be socialized into beliefs about reproduction, children must:

- acquire knowledge from their families (based on their parents' own fertility concepts and gender preferences)
- establish a disposition system, forming their own fertility concept
- behave based on this system.

1.1 Family Influences

As I said earlier, Chinese people born after the 1980s were the first generation to be profoundly affected by the one-child policy: most of them grew up as single children in their families. Of my thirteen subjects with only one child, ten are themselves the only child in

their families; two have one sibling; and only one woman has two siblings. In this section I talk first about their experiences of growing up as a single child, and then their experiences of having siblings. Of the only children, six out of ten participants reported that this experience was helpful to their personal development.

> Della: "I grew up alone, I think it is pretty normal. Without the companionship of siblings, I become more independent. I wouldn't want to see my child always relying on a sibling."

> Emily: "I didn't feel lonely when I was young, I went out and made a lot of friends. Also, there were so many classmates in school, how could I feel lonely?"

> Grace: "I'm the only child in my family, so when I was a kid, my mom was around me all the time. That was so awesome!"

Those six women had unconsciously internalized the benefits of growing up as single children, and so they felt that it was normal to have no siblings. Under the influence of the one-child policy, they adapted to that family structure. Now, their reproductive decisions will not tend to increase the number of children they have, because of their experiences as only children.

Another factor some participants mentioned is that they had a better life, with more educational opportunities, because they were the only child in their family.

> Emily: "Because of the one-child policy, my parents only had me. So they spent all their money and time on me. They let me study abroad to have the best education. I will do the same for my son, giving him everything I have."

> Grace: “Fortunately, the one-child policy only allowed my parents to have one child. Otherwise, giving the financial condition in my family, if I had a brother it would have been impossible for me to go abroad.”

Most parents will indeed support their children as much as their financial conditions permit; and this is the face whether the child is a girl or a boy. Grace’s comment illustrates the fact that the status of daughters has risen due to the one-child norm, giving them an equal opportunity to receive an education.

However, of those respondents who did not have siblings, four of the ten wished that they had.

> Cindy: “You know, girls always want to have an older brother. If someone had bullied me, my brother could have protected me.”

> Flora: “My parents were always so busy when I was young. If I’d a brother or a sister, I’d have had someone with me all the time.”

It is worth noting that, although those four women wished they had had siblings, they still chose to have only one child themselves—a disconnect between emotion and their actual reproductive behaviour. When I asked why they did not consider having a second child, they gave various reasons: “every family has one child now,” “economic pressure,” and “so busy at work.” This demonstrates the fact that reproductive behaviour is driven not only by an individual’s personal preferences, but also by societal factors. As Bourdieu (1984) observed, when people’s willingness conflicts with the norm in a certain field, in order to survive and

compete for more capital, people must compromise their will. I will discuss this phenomenon again later.

In my sample, three participants had siblings: Anne has a younger sister and a younger brother, Chloe has a younger brother, and Betty has a younger sister. Both Anne and Chloe spoke of feeling ignored by their parents after their brother or sister was born. This is a classic example of sibling rivalry. Before another child came along, they were the centre of the family; but after their siblings were born, they felt that their advantages and privileges suddenly disappeared. Moreover, since Anne, Betty and Chloe were the oldest child in their families, they were expected to help take care of their younger siblings—which led to negative attitudes.

> Anne: "My parents were so busy when I was young, it felt like I was my brother and sister's mom. It was up to me to buy them food and cook for them, to wash their clothes, to play with them, teach them, and basically do everything that a mom does. I know this may be wrong to say, but I felt my brother and sister were a burden for me. I didn't have time to play with the other kids after school, because I had to go back home to take care of them.... Sometimes I think that if I hadn't had a brother or a sister, my life would have been totally different."

Anne told me that her relationship with her siblings was never good, which reinforced her negative attitude to having more children: presumably she would not want to recreate, in her own family, the dynamic she found unpleasant as a child. She and Chloe also reported that their parents showed a strong preference for their brother.

> Chloe: "As a child, I knew that my parents loved my brother more, especially my dad. If my brother did something wrong, I was the one who would get told off. And I only ever had the toys that my brother didn't want anymore. It was unfair."

> Anne: "I was quite sure that my parents would have let my brother take over and manage their business. They wouldn't even give me a chance to prove that *I* had the ability to do the job."

Betty's situation was different. Even though she and her sister always fought over toys and clothes, the companionship she had with her sister was still a great experience. But her upbringing and her sister's, she says, were not equal.

> Betty: "I was brought up by my parents; but after my sister was born, my mom was very ill, so my grandparents took care of my sister in the countryside. I have to say that our educations, and our quality of life, are extremely different between my sister and me. I got my master's degree, but she only got a high-school diploma. I think the environment in which children are brought up, is very important for their future development. That's why I chose to have only one child, so I could bring her up myself."

Apparently even a positive experience of having siblings did not always translate into the willingness to have a second child. And when siblings caused childhood unhappiness, that played a strong role in the woman's decision. Among those who did *not* have siblings, some internalized the one-child norm because their experience of being the only child was a happy

one; while others may have liked the idea of siblings, but this didn't affect their actual reproductive behaviour.

1.2 Parental Persuasion

Another powerful factor that influences young people's reproductive habitus is their parents. Among my respondents, all their parents were born in the late 1950s or early 1960s—a generation that usually had lots of siblings, since they still held to the traditional fertility concept (Tian, 2009). However, by the time my interviewees' parents had reached childbearing age, the one-child policy was in place. For that reason, there was a huge difference between that age cohort's reproductive *intention*, and their actual *behaviour*. To obey the one-child restriction, they had to violate their own norms—leading to strong feelings of regret, and a tendency to pass on their sense of unfulfillment to their children.

It was apparently that feeling of regret that often drove my participants' parents to interfere with their daughters' fertility choices. Most of the women had internalized their parents' urges to have a second child.

> Helen: "My mother-in-law worked for the Chinese government in Beijing. At that time, if you worked in the government, it was utterly impossible to have a second child. She told me that not being able to do that is the biggest regret in her life. Since my husband and I got married, my mother-in-law has often said that as long as economic and health conditions allow, you should have at least two children."

> Anne: "My mom has pushed me hard to have a second baby. She always told

> me that back in her day, the law did not allow them to have more than one child. She and my dad had to pay a huge amount of money to have more children. She says: 'I'm not asking you to have four or five children, just two. If you can have another son, he and his wife will take care of you when you get old.'"
>
> Betty: "My mom said that my daughter will feel so lonely in the family. And if something terrible happens to me when I get old, there'll be no children to take care of me if my husband is already gone."

However, apart from Nancy and Sara, the two special cases (discussed later, in Section 4 of this chapter), none of the respondents have had a second child—despite their parents' best attempts to persuade them.

Generally speaking, in a relatively stable society, the education of one generation plays a vital role in the socialization of the next. This includes their attitudes toward fertility: the habits will remain roughly the same for the two generations. Contrarily, in a society with rapid development, children and their parents may have been socialized in a totally different environments. In those cases the fertility concept may be entirely different. In the case of China, and my participants, attitudes toward a second child certainly differ according to generation.

All the respondent's parents grew up in multi-child families. Even if the one-child policy was implemented suddenly, it would only make their parents passively accept the government's population control. Because the participants' parents were fully socialized before the one-child policy was implemented, the new rules did not change their traditional fertility concept.

In contrast, my respondents—socialized in the one-child environment since they were born—naturally formed different attitudes from their parents. As a result, the respondents showed varying degrees of opposition to their parents' second-child suggestions. They mainly explained the reasons for their opposition in terms of four variables: differences in the family structure, in old-age care, and in women's roles; as well as their parents' relationship with their siblings.

1.2.1 Differences in the Family Structure

In the past, in the more patriarchal society, a woman's childbearing was based on the family's interest (and the clan's); and it was subject to the will of her husband and father-in-law (Fei, 1999). However, in today's society, women's reproductive behaviour—along with many other ideas and practices—has basically been freed from the constraints of family and clan. Moreover, children now tend to establish their own nuclear family once they marry, separating their living space from that of their parents. This "splitting" off means that new generations leave the control both of their birth family, and the traditional community, to become a relatively independent unit. This change in family structure gives the young couple the right to determine their own fertility, and mitigates the influence of their parents.

> Chloe: "Now that we don't live with our parents, they can only babble about my having a second baby when we go back to China to visit them. But we can make that decision on our own."

> Grace: "Although my parents did try to talk me into having a second child, I'm an adult now; so it was ultimately my decision."

The separation of living space is prominent among my immigrant participants: most of their parents still live in China. Only two live in Canada, but not with their children. Having lived far away from their families for so long, the respondents feel that their relatives' nagging and persuasions no longer have any force on their fertility decision.

> Irene: "I'm glad we moved to Canada. My mother-in-law always wanted a grandson, so if we still lived with her in China, she'd definitely push me to have another kid. But now we only visit each other a few times a year, so that's a relief for me."

> Della: "My parents didn't try to persuade me to have a second child; but every time I go back to China, my relatives push me. But that's fine. I only see them once a year, so they won't change my mind."

1.2.2 Differences in Old-Age Care

In the past, adult children were the fundamental guarantee of survival for their elderly parents (Zhao & Xie, 1988). In traditional peasant society, people lost their ability to work in their old age, and the Chinese government didn't provide pensions. Therefore, in the absence of a reliable social system for caring for the elderly, it was the son's responsibility to take care of his parents. That need was the principal reason why parents had to have at least one son (Tian, 2009).

In the modern era, however, all my respondents indicated that they (and their husbands) are capable of supporting themselves when they get old. They believe that raising children satisfies their need for psychological comfort, rather than a desire to have someone to take care of them in their old age.

> Della: “Both my husband and I have jobs now, and we have savings in the bank as well. Why would we need to rely on our son to support us when we get old? My husband and I already discussed this, and agreed that after we retire, we will travel around the world. We will leave our son to have his own life.”
>
> Jane: “The reason I chose to have a child was not to have someone to take care of me. I will not be a burden to my kid when I get old. I only hope that she/he will have a better life than mine.”
>
> Cindy: “The pension system has gradually improved in China, but we live in Canada now. We enjoy free medical care here, and nursing homes are fully equipped. Although we have a son, we will not let him take care of us when we are old.”

Most participants expressed some form of the view that Canada’s strong pension system, and its excellent medical system, will make it unnecessary for their children to take care of them. Both factors reinforce their rejection of male preference on the grounds of needing future help. (Apart from anything else, the mothers assume that their daughters would be just as capable of offering any help as their sons.)

The interviews showed a fundamental difference in expectations of old-age care between our participants and their parents. Most people in their parents’ generation considered their children to be their primary caregivers in their old age. But my respondents expect no such support from their child, and are quite willing to go into a nursing home rather than burden their child.

1.2.3 Differences in Women's Roles

In China's past, in the patriarchal society, a man without a son was regarded as lacking in filial piety (Chen & Gu, 2014). But while society seemed to consider men responsible for having a son, of course the actual burden was born by women.

Compared to this traditional role for females, the one-child policy revolutionized their status in Chinese society. The most noticeable difference is that, restricted to having only one child, women's lives were no longer limited to bearing and raising children, and doing housework. This change reduced their dependence on their husbands, and gave them greater freedom. Another important change that resulted from this was shaking the traditional idea that men are the sole breadwinners in a family. With the reduction of women's dependency, child-raising and domestic management were no longer the only roles open to them. Instead, they began to pursue careers outside the family.

In today's society, men's absolute authority over women has been gradually weakened, and fertility decisions are no longer based only on men's intentions. In my interviews, I found that decisions were often the result of discussions between husband and wife. It also appeared that most respondents' husbands understood and respected their wives' choices.

> Helen: "I can understand my mother-in-law's regret at having only one grandchild. But after a serious discussion with my husband, we decided not to have a second child."
>
> Irene: "I'm so glad that my husband agrees with me on this issue. He said that no matter what decision I made, he would support me."

With the rise in their status, under the influence of the one-child policy, women gradually gained the right to decide not only their own reproductive behaviour, but also the meaning of their lives. They no longer regarded childbearing as the sole pursuit, in marriage or in life. Another important factor, for my respondents, was the experience of living and studying abroad. This helped them to break away from the traditional Chinese woman's role, and to gain a greater sense of gender equality, of, independence, and of ambition. Most respondents said that in addition to being mothers, they also hoped to play a role in the larger society.

> Flora: "I've been studying abroad for so many years, I couldn't be a full-time housewife anymore, like many Chinese women. I have my own job now. I don't want to be limited to only being a mom, I hope to have a wider variety of life experiences."

> Jess: "I feel that except for men not being able to have children, men and women are the same in all other areas now. In the past, people thought that only men could work for an IT company; but in my office, a third of the employees are women. Now women also have the right to pursue their careers and realize their dreams. Having another child would definitely have a significant impact on our lives and careers."

As women's status changes, their social gender identity has changed accordingly. They began to want not just the experience of being a mom, but also the opportunity to be a larger part of society. Their sense of gender equality comes from two sources: China's one-child policy, as described above, plus their educational experiences at Western universities. They are more eager to realize their social value, while also being mothers.

1.2.4 Parents' Relationships with Their Siblings

Another way children can form their fertility concept is by observing the interaction between their parents and their siblings (the child's aunts and uncles). All my participants reported that their grandparents' generation had lived through the years of the high birth-rate policy, when the Chinese government had promoted the pronatalist ideology—the idea that a large population was of most benefit to society (Lee, 2007). As a result, all interviewees reported that their parents had more than one sibling; and some of the relationships between the parents and their siblings were disharmonious. Women who had observed that were more likely to form a negative image of having more children.

> Grace: "My mom always tries to persuade me to have a second baby. She says, 'A bigger family is better than a smaller one.' I don't think so! Look at her relationship with my aunts and uncles, who always fight to avoid the responsibility of taking care of my grandma. It's terrible ... I won't have another baby."

> Irene: "My dad and my uncles fought over my grandparents' house for a long time before they became estranged. If my grandparents could see this, they would feel so disappointed. They must regret having so many children."

Those examples show that women who frequently observed such disputes between the parents and their siblings, while growing up, were more likely to view a multi-child family as an unwise choice. They obviously didn't want their own children to squabble like that, and get into quarrelsome situations. Such experiences of larger families led to their own firm rejection of the pronatalist notion.

2. The Workplace Environment

In traditional Chinese society, the standard for a "successful" woman was considered to be childbearing, and taking good care of the husband, the children, and the elderly (Chen & Gu, 2014). The only possible roles females to play were in the context of the male-dominated family: wives, sisters and daughters. In contemporary society, however, women have another role to play: that of female employee. The social and economic emancipation of women now offers the possibility of professional self-realization; yet women's new work roles still conflict with their traditional roles. This conflict affects both women's professional development, and their reproductive behaviour.

2.1 How Childbearing Affects Women's Careers

In China, the workplace is crucial to people's social networks—the place where they can both *obtain* economic, human, and social capital, and also *redistribute* different forms of capital (Zeng, 2006). If a person is forced to leave the workplace, they lose access to those vital resources. Therefore, during the one-child 1980s, when many enterprises were state-owned, the workplace was a key site for both **propaganda** and **punishment**.

The former was carried out by the birth-control department, a key element of each state-owned company. The duty of these propaganda departments was supposedly to raise awareness of contraceptives; in fact, their job amounted to strictly supervising the fertility of female employees (Mei, 2016). Partly this supervision was beneficial. The Chinese government regulated the rights of pregnant women in the workplace: they enjoyed 98 days of paid maternity leave, and employers were not allowed to reduce their wages or terminate their contracts during that time (Labour Protection of Female Workers, 2012).

At the same time, however, if a woman violated the policy, her employment status and promotion opportunities would be seriously affected (Lee, 2007)—which might well be considered as punishment. Even a first pregnancy would negatively impact career development (Zeng, 2006). It was rare for female workers to be actually dismissed during their maternity leave; however, other forms of discrimination commonly came into play when she got back to work. If their position was filled by someone else while they were away, their contract might not be renewed. She might also lose the opportunity for further training or promotions.

> Jess: "I worked in a Chinese IT company, and I took a one-month maternity leave after I gave birth to our daughter. When I went back, unsurprisingly they had replaced me with someone else. So I lost my job; and just then my husband got an offer from Carleton University to do his master's there. That's why I decided to move to Canada."

> Cindy: "My boss once tried to persuade me to get an abortion, because I was up for a promotion. However, I did not do that, so I lost the promotion. It was worth it, though. I would never trade my baby for a promotion."

> Betty: "My sister works for a private company in China, where the competition is extremely high—especially for women. She didn't dare to take maternity leave when she was pregnant. You can't imagine how hard it is for a female to get into that kind of company; and the management are cold-blooded and ruthless. If you're pregnant, they find someone to replace you. So my sister worked to the last minute before giving birth, and then was back at

> work as soon as she could."

In the job market, it's an unwritten workplace rule that a working mother's need to spend all (or even just part) of her time and energy on her child, affects her career development. This institutional discrimination against Chinese female workers causes to internalize their external work environment, recognizing and accepting the fact that having a child entails a risk to her career.

And since the workplace is also a place of socialization, people incorporate this idea as a social norm. In Bourdieusian terms (1984), habitus is formed through socialization, and helps individuals to form a behavioural system that favours the reproduction of the social norm. In the context of my study, I found that in order to minimize the risk of encountering career barriers, my participants chose not to have a second baby. This unwritten "rule" works as an agent of socialization, and is internalized as a norm.

> Jess: "I lost my job in China because I got pregnant. I won't let that happen again. If I lose my job, we won't be able to afford to raise my first kid, let alone have a second baby."

> Flora: "As a female employee in a Fortune 500 company, I have voluntarily given up the opportunity to have a second child. Besides the time commitment I would have to make to raise another child, I'm afraid that the best opportunities would pass me by. I'm currently a deputy director, and up for promotion to director. But if I choose to get pregnant at this point, all my efforts will have been in vain."

> Della: "Two years ago, when I got pregnant, I felt exhausted—probably because I was 32 years old—and my work productivity suffered. During my maternity leave, the company found someone to replace me; and when I returned, I was put in another position. I had been demoted for having a child."

For these two women, their own negative experiences with pregnancy in the workplace—coupled with those they heard about from their relatives and friends—reinforced their resolve not to have more children. And in general, all the respondents expressed reservations about the amount of time and energy they would have to invest, to have a second baby. For over a year, from the beginning of pregnancy to the end of maternity leave, they might find themselves unable to focus properly on their job. This impact on their work would possibly lead to lost promotion opportunities. In other words, a second baby might cause the loss of symbolic capital, and thus their symbolic power in the workplace.

2.2 The Job Market in Canada

Since none of the participants are originally from Canada, they experienced great difficulty in finding a job; and this fact magnified the concern they feel about possibly losing their jobs due to childbearing. Granted, Canada's job market is not the same as China's; but it is not *so* different as to cause the interviewees to relinquish their internalized one-child habit. Although in this country, the idea of gender equality has strengthened women's desire to pursue careers, employers do not commonly reduce their demands on female workers to allow them to accommodate "the second shift": their commitments to their families.

> Jess: “Now that I’ve finally found a job in Ottawa, I have to keep it at any cost. I’m so glad that I had our daughter before we came to Canada, so I won’t lose my current job because of pregnancy.”
>
> Ashley: “It’s so difficult for an immigrant like me to find a suitable job in Canada, even with a Canadian master’s degree. I work for a small Chinese travel agency in Ottawa. There are only four employees; but if I got pregnant, the Chinese boss would replace me immediately.”
>
> Emily: “I’ve worked in a Canadian company for four years. I like the culture of gender equality in our office. If you work hard and have ability, you can get promoted—even if you’re female. I think that our responsibility as women is not just having a child, we need to achieve our career goals in the male world too. So over lunch, I and some of my colleagues always discuss how to improve our work skills. We don’t talk about our children. Even though my husband wants another kid, I’m firmly opposed.”

Because Canada has always promoted gender equality, many women here value their careers deeply. Under the influence of her company’s culture, Emily believes that women should strive for self-realization just as men do, and should no longer sacrifice their careers for their families. This is the norm that Emily has internalized, and refers to when discussing her fertility intention with her husband.

Pierre Bourdieu believes that people’s habits are aligned with the rules of a specific field; and as the people in that field interact, the individuals are gradually influenced by the whole

disposition system—the internalization of the external social environment (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004). The habits may be persistent, but individuals are able to adjust their habits according to changes in the environment (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004).

In my study, the respondents felt the disadvantages of being Chinese immigrants in the Canadian job market—an external change that made them cherish the work opportunities they did find. At the same time, those opportunities increased their worries about the possibility of losing their jobs if they chose to become pregnant. Therefore, although their external working environment has changed, this change has actually *reinforced* their former one-child habit—rather than replacing it.

3. The Community: School and the Mass Media

Each culture, community, and group has its own environment and culture, which guide people's individual behaviour. This is also true of reproductive habits. Therefore, in addition to the factors of family and workplace I discussed earlier, another factor in constructing people's fertility habits is the community. This may be a concrete physical place (like Ottawa's Chinatown), or an abstract community—even a space on the Internet. Interactions between people in a community happen not only directly, via face-to-face contact, but also indirectly, via the educational system, the mass media, and social media. Either way, these community interactions influence people's ideology and norms, including their childbearing behaviour.

In today's society, of course, physical closeness is not necessary for people to interact. Television, radio, phones, and the Internet, as well as traditional mass communication media

such as books, newspapers, and magazines, allow people to easily communicate with one other regardless of spatial distance—and to assimilate other people's behaviours. (Perhaps less benignly, they also provide a global platform for the Chinese government to promote its fertility ideas.)

With respect to my main group of respondents, almost half (six) live in the Barrhaven suburb of Ottawa, and frequently interact with other Chinese residents in that area. The other seven had different levels of interaction with various Chinese communities.

3.1 The Chinese Community

In the interviews, eleven of my participants said that their social lives primarily revolved around Chinese communities, and that most of their social interactions are with other Chinese people. This indicates that Ottawa's Chinese community has a non-negligible influence on women's reproductive habits.

> Flora: "My friends are all Chinese. When I was at university, I participated in lots of activities at the Chinese student union. Since graduating, I participate in some activities held by Chinese organizations—like this mom's group."
>
> Irene: "I live in Barrhaven, and there are lots of Chinese families and young Chinese couples there. When I walk around the neighbourhood, I find many Chinese people to chat with."

In Chinese communities, the widely shared concept is that parents will give their children the best-quality education they can manage. Because Chinese immigrants appreciate the value of education, there is often an invisible competition between parents over their educational

investments in their children. In order to win, people must increase their expenditure on education—and, in order to afford it, reduce the number of children they have.

> Flora: "My neighbour, a Chinese mom, told me that she spent thousands of dollars on a piano for her daughter. Then I felt I must buy my daughter one too, or else I'd feel guilty for not giving her the opportunity to learn."

> Grace: "I don't want my child to lose at the starting line. Things that other children have, my son must have too. I won't miss any chance to give him a better education. For the summer vacation, I've already registered him for an international summer camp."

> Jane: "Moms now don't chat about how many children you have, just what kinds of interest classes your kid takes after school."

To help their children get a good place at that "starting line," the social environment of educational comparison and peer pressure causes Chinese parents to increase their material investments in their children. This often leads to the intention to have only one child.

> Irene: "Even though we live in Canada, and the government provides subsidies for raising children, we're still Chinese parents! The government offers only basic funding, but I want to give my daughter more than that. That's what Chinese parents do, so I don't see a reason to have a second baby."

We might say that this intense competitiveness in childrearing simply mirrors that of today's workplaces. The respondents certainly believed that only children who receive an excellent

education have a chance to "win"—that is, find well-paid and fulfilling work in society. Although the cost of superior education is high and rising, Chinese parents go all-out to offer their children the best they can afford. This kind of competitive peer pressure between Chinese immigrants led my study participants to internalize that educational "keeping up with the Joneses" attitude, giving a powerful financial incentive to the one-child habit.

3.2 The Chinese Schools

All my participants were born in China, and they all received some level of education—whether high school, or just elementary school—there. School is an important place for people to be socialized, as well as educated; but unlike Canada, Chinese schools have no "sex-ed" classes. Sexuality and fertility are considered topics too intimate to be discussed frankly in schools, even high schools. However, in the interviews I found that despite the lack of formal education, a number of peer judgments and attitudes were still picked up in school. Anne, for instance, recalled that because her parents had violated the one-child policy, she and her siblings were disliked by their classmates. This negative attitude that she experienced created in her a firm opposition to the idea of having more than one child.

> Anne: "In my elementary school, all my classmates except me were the only child in their families. I was treated as unusual by my classmates. And my neighbours as well—they all had only one child, and when they saw my sister, my brother, and I, they always shook their heads at us. They looked at us strangely, as if we were disgusting to them."

Her classmates and her neighbours' attitudes toward her and her siblings made Anne feel that they were somehow deviant. Because of that shame she felt during her childhood, she

doesn't want her daughter to experience the kind of judgement she did—even though in Canada, of course, it is perfectly ordinary for a couple to have two children, or even more. This is an example of the community exerting pressure to support the one-child norm.

3.3 The Chinese Mass Media

It is worth mentioning that most of my respondents reported that they still obtain information primarily from Chinese newspapers, social networks, and TV channels. Like many people in the modern world, these women have also been influenced in their reproductive behaviour by TV shows and by public figures, who act as role models. Some famous Chinese women have played a role in the respondents' fertility decisions.

> Ashley: "I think Qing Dong is a fantastic example who Chinese women should learn from. She's the host of that TV show *The Reader*. She's charming, with a good educational background—she reads a lot, and knows a lot. Look at her, she only has one child. I think if she had to take care of lots of children at home, she would not have achieved as much."
>
> Chloe: "I often watch that reality TV show, *Where Are We Going, Dad*? The families in it are all superstars, but they only have one child each."

One common aspect of the modern technological era is that people can be influenced in their fertility decisions by famous figures they don't actually know, through television, the Internet, and social media. Some participants also mentioned the latter. In China, for instance, a popular social network is WeChat, which has roughly the same function as Facebook.

> Helen: "I'd often heard about the high cost of raising a child, from relatives and friends complaining on WeChat about the hardships of raising two children. That scared me off."
>
> Chloe: "In my free time, I like to watch some parenting channels on Weibo. Yesterday I saw that because of the parents' inappropriate handling of conflicts between two offspring, one child showed symptoms of autism. It was such a pity."
>
> Irene: "Whenever you watch a TV drama or look at a magazine, raising children is associated with economic pressure. Almost everyone I know complains about the high cost of having more than one child."

An interesting perspective that three of the respondents mentioned having seen on the Internet is the idea that having a second child is a luxury, and not everyone can afford one. This notion is often portrayed by the Chinese mass media and social networks, and has caused some of my respondents to pass up on the opportunity to have a second child. This, of course, is the result of their ongoing tendency to get their information from Chinese sources, as if they were still in China. Consequently, these immigrants are still socialized in a Chinese environment: their field hasn't changed. Their one-child habit will not change without more interactions with Canadian society, which encourages a higher birth rate.

4. Special Cases

Not everyone in a specific field will exhibit the same behaviour, and this is true of reproductive behaviour. On the one hand, it's controlled by the social norm in the field; on the other hand, it may vary based on individual characteristics. The decision people make regarding the number of children they want is a combination of macro and micro effects; of the social environment, and of personal factors. Furthermore, a person's habitus is linked with their specific position in the social field. The two "outlier" participants I discuss here—Nancy and Sara, who both have two children—are married to husbands from higher social classes than the other thirteen. As a result, the system of rules they need to obey may differ from the others. In this section, my study examines why these two women did internalize the one-child idea.

Nancy

Before she married, Nancy did not want to have more than one child; but she now has a four-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son. Obviously, her marriage had a significant effect on her reproductive behaviour, which seems to contradict her former unwillingness. Nancy's husband, Ben, is the scion of a very traditional Chinese family, with an established real-estate business. In that situation, only the oldest son may take over the company when his father retires. Because Ben's parents (who still live in China) had two girls before he was born, they had to pay a huge amount of money in government fines for the privilege of having Ben. As the only son, the responsibility of continuing the family business is unavoidable for him; and

as the current CEO of the Canadian branch of his family company. Ben himself must have a son to carry on the company.

This traditional system put a lot of pressure on Nancy. When she and Ben decided to get married, Ben's mom had a serious conversation with her—telling Nancy that she had an obligation to bear a son. In order to marry Ben, she had to accept that obligation. Unfortunately, her first child was a girl; so, her mother-in-law pushed her to have a second child.

> Nancy: "I had a second baby because my first was a girl, and my parents-in-law needed a male child to inherit the family company. I was so lucky that my second baby was a boy. Otherwise, I would have needed to get pregnant again and again until we had a son."

Obviously, when a family has great wealth, a woman's reproductive behaviour may differ from the norm. (As mentioned above, when a second child is a luxury, only wealthy people can afford it.) In such cases, the patriarchy rules: fertility is usually controlled by the male leader in the family, and subjugated to the family's need, based on the interests of the clan. In such a family, the woman's role is still one of caregiver.

> Nancy: "I was a fashion model when I first met my husband. But after we got married, I became just a wife and mother. Sometimes you need to give up something when you want to get something. I enjoy a high social status, lots of free time, and a great material situation; but in return I had to give up my career. But frankly, I didn't earn a lot of money by myself—so I would actually rather stay home with my children, and let Ben be the breadwinner."

Since Nancy's income would not be a major influence on the family's economic and social status, she has accepted the reality that Ben provides for the family, and her own role is only to take care of their children, and Ben. That was the norm that Ben was socialized into, appropriate for his family's socioeconomic position. In that field, the rule is to have a son; and once married to Ben, Nancy had to follow that rule too.

Sara

Sara has lived in Canada for 20 years. Ten years ago, in 2008, she married Tim, a British-Canadian, and they now have a ten-year-old son and a six-year-old daughter. Sara and Tim both love kids, and they decided together to have a second child. Interestingly, Sara has a different view of how to raise children than the other respondents.

> Sara: "I don't think it costs us too much to raise our kids. I know some of my Chinese friends buy their kids super-expensive clothes, and take them out to luxury restaurants. They give them way too much attention—I don't think that's a good way to raise children. I buy my kids' clothes from Walmart, I don't want them to value material things too much."

Sara's focus on not spending much money on material things extends to making use of community services for children, which other participants didn't mention (or even know about).

> Sara: "I love taking my children to the public library. In addition to the large number of books for kids, there's also a children's playground, including LEGO, toys, and

> painting areas. My Canadian friends always tell me when music lessons and outdoor activities for kids are offered. All of those are free."

It's possible that Sara's divergent opinions have been influenced by her current non-Chinese social environment.

> Sara: "I have a few Chinese friends here, but we don't get together frequently. Since I met Tim, most of the time I socialize with him and his Canadian friends."

I mentioned earlier that immigrants usually stick to their ethnic communities and activities, and so they often lack ways to get information and resources from the larger society. In the matter of raising children, there are usually an abundance of social services and easily accessible resources for kids, to make the task more affordable; but only Sara, with her Anglo-Canadian husband, takes advantage of those resources. (Her work as a kindergarten teacher may also expose her to knowledge about what the community offers.) Sara has become more "Canadian-ized" than the other participants, and has internalized different rules and norms with respect to her reproductive behaviour.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

At every stage of a woman's social development, her reproductive behaviour reflects the particular policy context she is embedded in. However, changing attitudes toward fertility is a complex process that takes place over a long period. The fertility field is a continuously constructed network, one that constantly changes its form due to changes in the political and socioeconomic environments.

The views of the study participants, which I have presented in this study, clearly reveal the degree to which the women have been influenced by the direct and indirect propaganda of the one-child policy—obviously an effective means of controlling their fertility concept. They witnessed the economic and social benefits that the one-child policy has brought to Chinese families and society, and unconsciously internalized the one-child norm. None of the respondents explicitly mentioned being exposed to propaganda about the one-child policy; but their ideas about reproduction are strongly aligned with it.

The participants' opinions allow us to conclude that the purpose of reproductive behaviour had already changed. It had moved from the traditional motives of continuing the family line, and obtaining the economic benefits of children, to the goal of achieving personal emotional satisfaction. As well, the respondents differentiated between the passive act of merely having children, and the active, intensive process of cultivating them—of bringing them up according to high standards. This is reflected in the mothers' desire to invest economic capital in their children's education, in the hope that this investment would enable their adult children to acquire more social and cultural capital. Finally, we found that the preference for sons is gradually disappearing, and is being replaced by an attitude of non-preference.

Because of the lingering traditional custom of parents buying their sons a house (but not their daughters), some participants with sons even showed a level of daughter preference.

It also appeared that most of the respondents who were the single child in their birth families had internalized the benefits of that condition, which formed their own one-child habit. On the other hand, respondents who did have siblings were not likelier to have more children. Instead, the reverse was the case. The responsibility they had experienced, of having to take care of the younger siblings, strongly counteracted their desire to have a second child. Another factor here was their parents' gender preference: women whose parents overlooked them in favour of a son, also did not want to have a second child.

Another finding was that the efforts of parents and relatives, to persuade immigrant women to have more children, are not as effective as they had been in the past. The influence of such persuasion has been gradually weakened by four factors.

The first factor is the changes in the family power structure, coupled with the separation of child's and parents' living spaces; this is especially true for participants whose parents and extended families still live in China. Since they have been separated from their parents for many years, and see them only briefly during short visits, the parents' efforts to influence their reproductive decision-making don't have much impact. This fact is particularly significant since the parents' ideas, formed under the one-child policy, directly contradict the participants' fertility concept.

The second factor is the differing views on the role of adult children in taking care of elderly parents. Although some respondents hoped that they would be able to support themselves in old age, several said they would be willing to go into a nursing home rather than be a burden

to their grown-up kids. The responsibility of caring for the elderly was a large part of the traditional Chinese fertility purpose, and immigrants are only able to abandon it because of Canada's superior care services and medical system. The new ability of parents to shift part of the burden of elder care from their offspring onto their own savings, has allowed people to switch from expecting their children to support them, to accepting nursing-home services.

The third factor is that, with the rise in women's status, and the modern transformation of their roles, most women are no longer satisfied with only performing traditional family roles. My respondents expected to engage with the larger community not just as mothers and wives, but also as employees, volunteers, and leaders. The experience of studying in Canada made them more open-minded to the idea of gender equality.

The fourth and final factor is the fraught relationships that the participants often observed between their parents and their parents' siblings. These negatively affected their willingness to have a second child.

As well, I found that even though the immigration process caused the respondents to change their work culture and community networks, it did not disrupt their reproductive attitudes. My participants did experience disadvantages as immigrants in the Canadian job market; and this had the dual effect of making them cherish the work opportunities they eventually did find, while also increasing their worries about the prospect of losing their jobs due to pregnancy. Therefore, although their external work environments have changed, this change has merely reinforced the one-child habit.

Another aspect of immigrant life is that they still tend to socialize in all-Chinese communities. Within this social environment, educational one-upmanship and peer pressure

are prevalent. Chinese parents feel compelled to match their neighbours' financial investments in their children's upbringing and education. Since this is an expensive proposition, it in turn reinforces the desire to have only one child. Moreover, since Chinese media are the major sources of information for immigrants, they lack the interactions with the wider Canadian culture that might persuade them to change their one-child habit.

In summation, my research indicates that despite their transplantation to Canada (with its much freer ideas about reproduction), the Chinese women I spoke with are still very much under the influence of the one-child policy. The immigrants brought their fertility habits with them, previously inculcated in China, and still retain the idea of not having a second child.

Before closing, however, I must acknowledge that my study has some inherent limitations. One is the possibility of bias. Being Chinese myself—and brought up under the one-child policy—it is difficult for me to avoid subjectivity when discussing such cultural issues. I have attempted to resolve this challenge by clearly describing my position, and outlining how my personal experience may influence my interpretation of the data.

A second problem is timing and scope. Since this study was a solo project, rather than a team effort, I was the only researcher. Since the process of gathering, translating, collating, and interpreting the interview data was a labour-intensive one, over a relatively short period, I was able to conduct only a limited number of interviews.

Finally, there may be subtle variations in the data resulting from the process of translating the interview responses from Mandarin into English.

These minor drawbacks aside, I believe that my research has some merit, especially in a neglected area. Of course, these local results may not be suitable for generalizing to *all*

immigrant women across the country. Nevertheless, I am confident that this study will prove to be a worthy contribution to discussions of the issue of Chinese fertility in Canada.

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